

LARGO AREA COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Consultation in respect of Universal Service Obligations and Public Call Boxes by Ofcom.

While the Community Council appreciates a need to respond to changing commercial circumstances, the need to provide a PCB service to rural areas should remain a high priority.

Commercially a PCB in a rural area may not generate monetary profit, but this reason alone should not be sufficient to remove the last PCB from a site. Its profit to the community cannot be measured by profit and loss and monetary value. Therefore, commercial crossover or subsidy from generous margin services should continue to be applied. Alternatively a levy could be considered whereby services now open to competition contribute to an invaluable social service and at the same time have the effect of providing a commercial level playing field for service providers.

The suggested shift from the obligation by BT to directly consult Community Councils before the removal of the last PCB from a site to Local Authorities has the consequence that the Community Councils will lose their direct veto, and a C.C. is more closely in direct touch with the needs of the community they live and serve. If direct consultation is transferred to the L.A. it appears, for the C.C., merely to shift the obligation to consult from BT to the L.A. – commercial good sense for the service provider but not the L.A. who must now fund the consultation process AND the C.C. lose their veto. L A's have details of Community Councils. It is hard to understand the difficulty for BT to gain access to contact details.