



Alan Reid MP, Argyll & Bute

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Alan Pridmore
Competition & Markets
Ofcom
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
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Dear Mr Pridmore

Ref. Review of the Universal Service Obligation

I wish to object most strongly to the proposals in the consultation document which remove the right of Unitary and Community Councils in Scotland to veto the removal of a Public Call Box in their area. In a remote area, a PCB could save lives in an emergency.

Although Approach 1 is entitled “Retain the Local Veto”, it actually removes the local veto by instituting the right of appeal to the Competition Appeals Tribunal. This body would not have the necessary local knowledge to make the final decision. The right of veto should be retained by both Unitary and Community Councils.

In a large area, like my own constituency of Argyll & Bute, the Unitary Council often does not have the local knowledge that Community Councils have. The right of veto should lie with the Councils, not Planning Authorities. In part of my constituency the Planning Authority is the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, but its functions are not appropriate for determining whether or not a PCB should be retained.

In order to simplify the process of identifying the relevant Community Councils, BT should only be required to notify the Unitary Council. The Unitary Council would be obliged to pass on the notification to the Secretaries of the relevant Community Councils and also to inform BT of the address of the Secretary of the Community Council in whose area each PCB lies.

I agree with the proposal to extend the consultation period to 90 days. The existing 42 day period has proven to be too short to allow proper notification and debate, particularly during holiday periods.

I have no view to express on the definition of a “site”, since in my constituency, the PCB’s tend to be miles rather than metres apart.

Contd

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The right of veto should only be exercisable if it is made on the grounds of the use of the PCB to make calls. This would eliminate many frivolous objections.

There should be no revenue threshold. A tiny community in a Highland glen outside range of mobile phones is entitled to have a PCB to use in an emergency.

Yours sincerely

Alan Reid MP

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