

Planning and Development Department

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Mr A. Pridmore
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23 February 2005

Dear Mr Pridmore

UNIVERSAL SERVICE OBLIGATION – CONSULTATION OFCOM'S REVIEW RESPONSE FROM GREAT YARMOUTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Following receipt of your letter dated 10 January 2005 I am responding at officer level on behalf of Great Yarmouth Borough Council to the above consultation document.

Following the removal of a number of BT public call boxes in recent years, our authority wholeheartedly supports the proposal that BT focuses even more on the needs of people with low incomes. Great Yarmouth is a borough where unemployment levels are consistently high and a large number of urban wards feature as having significant levels of deprivation as highlighted in the national Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

Public call boxes are important to people who do not have a telephone or mobile telephone. Many disadvantaged and vulnerable people also rely on public call boxes.

With regards to the 'local veto' this can only be decided locally, in consultation with local people and organisations. Our organisation would certainly want to be included in this consultation. Ofcom's suggested review of the local veto system would appear to be a comprehensive approach, but the importance of the emergency calls each public call box handles should not be underestimated. There are public call boxes in rural localities in close proximity to the Broads river network and others located in proximity to public beaches (for example) that should be carefully considered with regards to local circumstance. The local input for each site specific public call box should remain.

The process of talks between BT and local people and organisations should also be improved. It is agreed that the process should be lengthened from 42 days to 90 days and that an appeals process will help to deal with disputes. The Chief Executive of a Local Authority should have the final say on a 'local veto'.

It is hoped that these comments prove useful in your consultation.

Yours sincerely

D Glason
for Borough Planning & Development Officer