

## **Consultation Response from John Lamont MP to the Review of the telephony universal service obligation: Proposals on public call boxes and other changes**

I represent a mainly rural constituency covering most of the Scottish Borders. Naturally, there are many pockets of no or very poor mobile signal. This means that public call boxes remain an important part of communication infrastructure.

This was highlighted by the recent effects of Storm Arwen. Due to electricity outages people were unable to charge their mobile phones. For those with a working mobile phone, there were many areas where the masts were without power or damaged and there was no signal available for around a week.

In an emergency, it goes without saying the difficulties that could follow from no communication infrastructure.

It is my understanding that these proposals will remove the veto of local authorities when removing public call boxes. I believe that this could prematurely remove most of them from my constituency. This would have a detrimental impact on local residents, especially during emergencies.

I therefore believe that if the veto of the local authority is removed, then stronger criteria is required than that proposed.

Specifically, I believe the criteria currently used by Scottish Borders Council for the retention of public call boxes should be used. I believe that this would protect communities who are in need of the a public call box the most.

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