

Guidance on procedures for the removal of public call boxes

1. Introduction and overview

1.1 Ofcom published on 14 March 2006 a Direction setting out:

- Procedures for the complete removal of Public Call Boxes (PCBs) and Call Box Services (CBS) from a Site¹;
- Procedures for requests for new PCBs and related CBS; and
- A requirement that at least 70% of PCBs offer cash payment facilities.

1.2 This guidance is intended to promote consistency of decisions between Relevant Public Bodies². It also provides examples of circumstances in which the Universal Service Provider (currently BT plc and, in the Hull area, Kingston Communications) might reasonably remove the cash payment facility from a PCB.

2. Status of this guidance

2.1 Compliance with this guidance does not guarantee compliance with any legal requirement.

2.2 Except insofar as the context otherwise requires, words or expressions shall have the same meaning they have in the Direction.

3. Overview

3.1 The following diagram shows the various stages in the procedures for the complete removal of PCBs and/or CBS from a Site. Each stage is described in more detail in this guidance

¹ Site means any area within a walking distance of 400 metres from that PCB

² Relevant Public Body” means: in relation to England, the relevant local District Council (in two-tier local authority areas), London Borough Council, Metropolitan Council, Unitary Council, the Corporation of London or the Council of the Isles of Scilly; in relation to Northern Ireland, the Unitary District; in relation to Scotland, the Unitary Council; in relation to Wales, the County or County Borough Council; or any successor bodies or organisations.

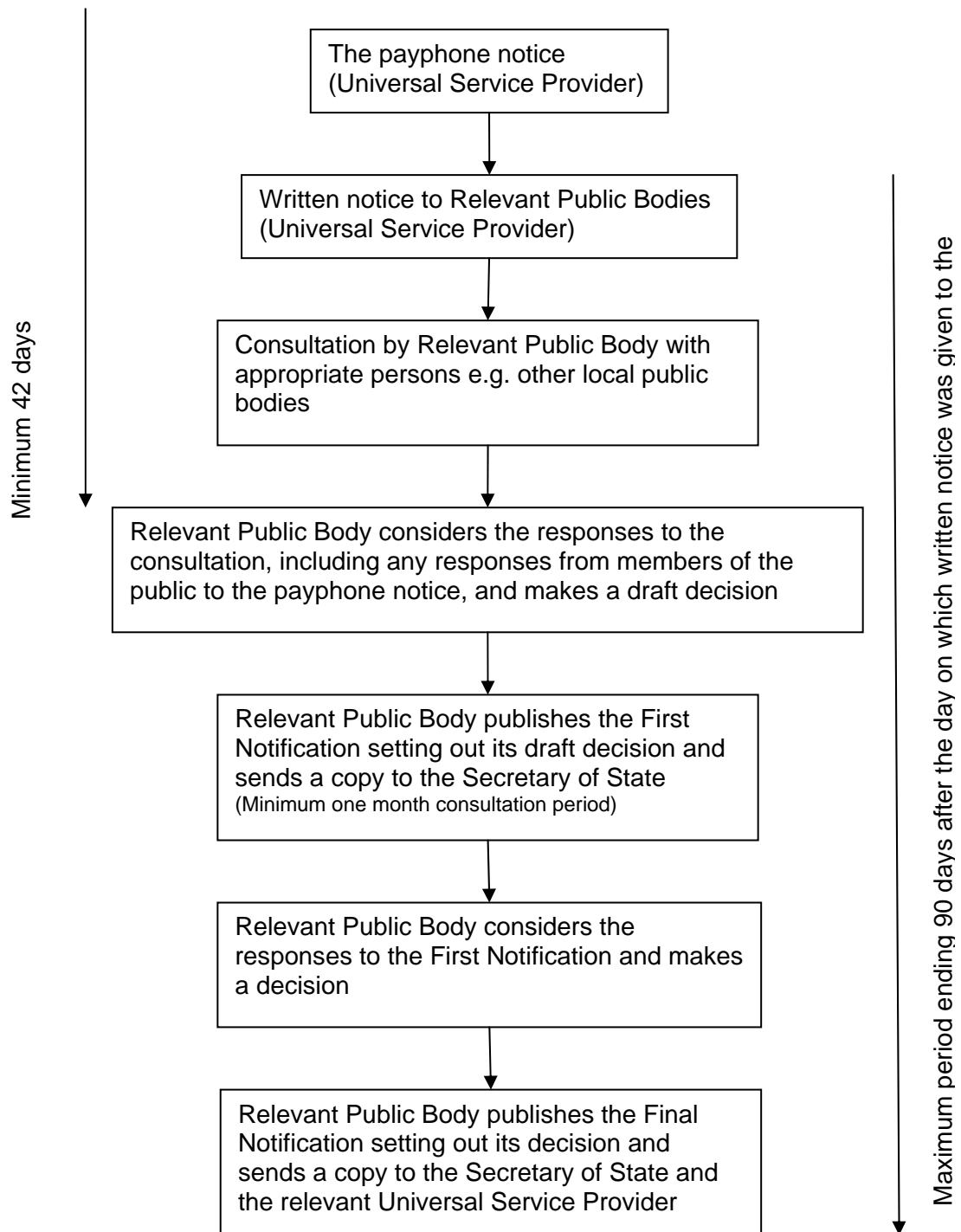


Diagram: Procedure for the complete removal of Public Call Boxes from a Site

4. The payphone notice

4.1 Under paragraph 2.2 of the Direction, the Universal Service Provider must display a notice in a prominent place on the PCB which it proposes to remove or re-site and/or to which it intends to cease to provide CBS ('the payphone notice') informing the public of the proposed change and setting out :

- The nature and effect of the proposal;
- The period within which members of the public may make representations about the proposal, which shall be 42 days after the day on which the notice is first displayed;
- A free-call telephone number which can be used by the public to check the location of the nearest alternative PCB providing CBS; and
- The Relevant Public Body to whom representations may be made about the proposal.

5. Written notice to relevant public bodies

5.1 Under paragraph 2.3 of the Direction, the Universal Service Provider must also give written notice of its proposed removal or re-siting of a PCB and/or the cessation of the provision of CBS to the Relevant Public Body ('the written notice') setting out:

- The nature and effect of the proposal;
- Any information in support of the proposal;
- The date on which the payphone notice was first displayed on the PCB (and provide a copy);
- A web link to Ofcom's guidance on procedures for the complete removal of PCBs and/or CBS from a site; and
- That objection may be made to the Universal Service Provider by the Relevant Public Body.

6. Consultation

6.1 The Relevant Public Body should bring the contents of the payphone and written notice to the attention of such persons as it considers appropriate, asking for comments on the proposal to be made to the Relevant Public Body within a stipulated period.

6.2 Such persons might include other local public bodies, for example the parish or community council. In Northern Ireland, the Relevant Public Body should also consider which local community groups, if any, to consult with.

6.3 It is likely that Relevant Public Bodies will already have in place various consultation mechanisms and procedures which allow local issues to be discussed with local communities, for example local strategic partnerships and neighbourhood-based systems of local meetings.

7. Responses to consultation

7.1 The Relevant Public Body should consider the responses to the consultation, if any, received within the stipulated period, and including responses from members of the public received by them within the 42 days period after the payphone notice was first displayed on the PCB.

7.2 In deciding whether to consent or object to the proposal, the Relevant Public Body must be satisfied that its decision is:

- Objectively justifiable in relation to the networks, services, facilities, apparatus or directories to which it relates;
- Not such as to discriminate unduly against particular persons or against a particular description of persons;
- Proportionate to what it is intended to achieve; and
- In relation to what it is intended to achieve, transparent.

7.3 The Relevant Public Body must also be satisfied that it acted in accordance with the six Community requirements set out in section 4 of the Communications Act 2003 ('the Act'). These are:

- To promote competition in the provision of electronic communications networks and services, associated services and facilities and the supply of directories;
- To contribute to the development of the European internal market;
- To promote the interests of all persons who are citizens of the European Union;
- Not to favour one form of, or means of, providing electronic communications networks or services i.e. to be technology neutral;
- To encourage network access and service interoperability for the purpose of securing competition in the electronic communication networks and services markets and the maximum benefit for customers of communications providers; and
- To encourage compliance with standards necessary for facilitating service interoperability and securing freedom of choice for the customers of communications providers.

7.4 Where it appears to a Relevant Public Body that any of the Community requirements conflict with each other they must secure that the conflict is resolved in a manner they think best in the circumstances.

7.5 To assist Relevant Public Bodies to consider the responses, and to make a decision to consent or object to the proposal, Ofcom has included at Annex 1 in this guidance factors which it considers relevant to the decision. Relevant Public Bodies should refer to these factors.

8. First notification

8.1 Having considered the responses to the consultation, if any, the Relevant Public Body must publish its draft decision in the form of a notification ('the First Notification'). To assist Relevant Public Bodies, Ofcom has included in this guidance at Annex 2 a specimen notification. The First Notification must:

- State that there is a proposal for the complete removal of PCBs and/or CBS from a Site;
- Identify the Universal Service Provider whose proposal it is;
- Set out the draft decision to consent or object to the proposal;
- Set out the effect of the draft decision to consent or object to the proposal;
- Give reasons for the draft decision to consent or object to the proposal;
- Specify the period within which representations may be made about the proposal to the Relevant Public Body;
- Confirm that the draft decision complies with the requirements of sections 45 to 50 of the Act, as appropriate and relevant to the proposal;
- Confirm that in making the draft decision, the Relevant Public Body have considered and acted in accordance with the six Community requirements in section 4 of the Act;
- Confirm that a copy of the First Notification has been sent to the Secretary of State.

8.2 Except in exceptional circumstances justifying the use of a shorter period, the period mentioned in paragraph 8.1 for representations must be one ending not less than one month after the day of the publication of the First Notification.

8.3 The publication of the First Notification must be in such a manner as appears to the Relevant Public Body to be appropriate for bringing the contents of the notification to the attention of such persons as it considers appropriate.

8.4 Such persons might include other local public bodies, for example, the parish or community council. In Northern Ireland, it might include local community groups. Ofcom would expect the Relevant Public Body to send a copy of the First Notification to the relevant Universal Service Provider.

8.5 The Relevant Public Body must also send a copy of the First Notification to the Secretary of State. Ofcom has included in this guidance a specimen letter for this purpose.

8.6 Under section 50(6) of the Act the Relevant Public Body may if appropriate also send a copy of the First Notification to the European Commission. Ofcom does not believe there will normally be a need to notify the Commission in the case of proposed PCB removals.

9. Final Notification

9.1 The Relevant Public Body may consent or object to a proposal only if it has considered every representation about the proposal that is made to it within the period specified in the First Notification and has had regard to every international obligation of the UK (if any) which has been notified to Ofcom for the purposes of this requirement (none to date).

9.2 Having considered the responses to the First Notification, if any, the Relevant Public Body must publish its decision in the form of a notification ('the Final Notification'). To assist Relevant Public Bodies, Ofcom has included at Annex C in this guidance a specimen notification. The Final Notification must:

- State that there is a proposal for the complete removal of PCBs and/or CBS from a Site;
- Identify the Universal Service Provider whose proposal it is;
- Set out the decision to consent or object to the proposal;
- Set out the effect of the decision to consent or object to the proposal;
- Give reasons for the decision to consent or object to the proposal;
- Confirm that the decision complies with the requirements of sections 45 to 50 of the Act, as appropriate and relevant to the proposal;
- Confirm that in making the decision set out in the Final Notification, the Relevant Public Body have considered and acted in accordance with the six Community requirements in section 4 of the Act;
- Confirm that a copy of the First Notification was sent to the Secretary of State; and
- Confirm that a copy of the Final Notification has been sent to the Secretary of State.

9.3 The publication of the Final Notification must be in such a manner as appears to the Relevant Public Body to be appropriate for bringing the contents of the notification to the attention of such persons as it considers appropriate.

9.4 Such persons might include other local public bodies, for example the parish or community council. In Northern Ireland, it might include local community groups.

9.5 The Relevant Public Body must send a copy of the Final Notification to the relevant Universal Service Provider.

9.6 The Relevant Public Body must also send a copy of the Final Notification to the Secretary of State. Ofcom has included in this guidance a specimen letter for this purpose.

9.7 Under section 50(6) of the Act the Relevant Public Body may if appropriate also send a copy of the Final Notification to the European Commission. Ofcom does not believe there will normally be a need to notify the Commission in the case of proposed PCB removals.

10. The local veto

10.1 The Universal Service Provider must not bring its proposal into effect if it has received any written objection to the proposal by the Relevant Public Body within the period ending 90 days after the day on which written notice was given by the Universal Service Provider to the Relevant Public Body ('the local veto'). It is for this reason that the Relevant Public Body must send a copy of the Final Notification to the relevant Universal Service Provider – see paragraph 9.5 above.

Annex 1

Relevant factors

Purpose

A.1 It is the Universal Service Provider's obligation to ensure the adequate provision of PCBs and/or CBS to meet the reasonable needs of end-users in terms of numbers, geographical coverage and quality of services. It is against this obligation that a Relevant Public Body must assess a proposal for the complete removal of PCBs and/or CBS from a Site.

A.2 This is intended to give guidance on the factors to take account of when considering a proposal for the complete removal of PCBs and/or CBS from a Site. It is intended also to promote consistency of decisions between Relevant Public Bodies. Relevant Public Bodies may consider other factors such as the proximity of the nearest alternative PCB, the nature of the area (for example, a tourist area or close to a children's home or similar accommodation) or, in the case of text phones, use by deaf users. However, any decision of a Relevant Public Body must comply with the requirements in paragraphs 7.2 and 7.3 of this guidance.

A.3 It is likely that Relevant Public Bodies will already have access to information against which they can make an assessment. While the following is not an exhaustive list of sources of information, Relevant Public Bodies might consider:

- ACORN is a demographic tool used to identify and understand the UK population – www.caci.co.uk;
- PRiZM is a commercial product built from lifestyle and demographic data at postcode level - www.claritas.co.uk;
- The National Statistics Service offers access to a range of social and economic aggregate data relating to small geographic areas - www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk ; and
- UpMyStreet let you search and compare detailed information about a specific postcode, city, town, district or region – www.upmystreet.com

Factors

A.4 Set out below are some (not exhaustive) important factors which might be assessed when considering a proposal for the complete removal of PCBs and/or CBS from a Site.

Housing type in the area

A.5 A Relevant Public Body may consider whether the area within the same postcode as a PCB is predominately owner-occupied, privately rented or council housing. The more owner-occupied housing in the area the more likely it is that people living in that area would have access to mobile and fixed telephones. If there is predominantly private rented or council housing in the area, this may suggest

people on a lower income without access to mobile and fixed telephones and support the view that a PCB should be retained.

Number of households in the area

A.6 There may be concerns about alternative access to telephone services for low population densities. A Relevant Public Body may determine the number of households within the same postcode as a PCB. The number of households within 400 metres of a PCB could be seen as the catchment area for that PCB.

A.7 The number of households in the area would not however include any passing traffic or reflect that a PCB might be situated on a main road or busy terminus. Such detail should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

PCB revenue

A.8 BT and Kingston may be willing to provide information about the revenue generated by a particular PCB. This should help measure PCB usage and could be an indicator of its value to the community. The lower the annual revenue that a PCB generates, there could be grounds for its removal.

A.9 Consideration may be given by a Relevant Public Body to the other factors listed above before it relies on annual revenue alone to support a decision to consent or object to the complete removal of PCBs and/or CBS from a Site. The annual revenue of a PCB should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Emergency calls

A.10 Many people place great value on having the option to use a PCB in an 'emergency'. However, not all calls considered as emergency calls by the public are calls to the emergency services, for example police, fire, ambulance and coastguard services. For example, people often cite calls to roadside breakdown as being emergency calls.

A.11 The importance of retaining a PCB for 'emergency calls' should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The body needs to think about whether a particular PCB is more likely to be used for emergency calls than another. For example if there are alternative means of making calls available locally and/or there is good coverage for mobile phones, this may suggest that there is a reduced need to retain the phone box on emergency grounds. But if, for example, the call box is near a known accident black-spot, it may suggest it should be retained.

Mobile phone coverage

A.12 While three-quarters of adults now personally use a mobile phone, people often cite poor, sporadic or the lack of mobile network coverage at a location as being an important factor for retaining a PCB.

A.13 The main mobile networks, including 3, O2, Orange, T-Mobile and Vodafone allow you to check the network coverage in any given postcode area on their websites. While this might not be conclusive, it should help to assess network coverage within the same postcode as a PCB.

Annex 2

First Notification: example templates

Notification under section 49(4) of the Communications Act 2003

Draft decision by [public body] in response to a proposal by [British Telecommunications plc/Kingston Communications (Hull) plc] for the removal of public call boxes pursuant to Part 2 of the Schedule to a Direction published by Ofcom on 14 March 2006 ('the Direction').

1. [Public body], in accordance with section 49(4) of the Communications Act 2003 ('the Act'), hereby make the following draft decision in response to a proposal by [British Telecommunications plc/Kingston Communications (Hull) plc] for the removal of public call boxes pursuant to Part 2 of the Direction.
2. The draft decision is set out in the Schedule to this Notification.
3. The effect of, and [public body] reasons for making, the draft decision is set out in the Schedule to this Notification.
4. [Public body] consider that the draft decision complies with the requirements of sections 45 to 50 of the Act, as appropriate and relevant to the proposal.
5. In making the draft decision, [public body] has considered and acted in accordance with the six community requirements in section 4 of the Act.
6. Representations may be made to [public body] about the draft decision by [time] on [date].
7. A copy of this Notification has been sent to the Secretary of State in accordance with section 50(1)(b) of the Act.
8. The Schedule to this Notification shall form part of this Notification.

[Name]

A person authorised by [public body] to sign this Notification

[Date]

Schedule

[Draft] decision by [public body] in response to a proposal by [British Telecommunications plc/Kingston Communications (Hull) plc] for the removal of public call boxes pursuant to Part 2 of the Schedule to a Direction published by Ofcom on 14 March 2006 ('the Direction').

	Telephone number	Location	Decision (Object/Consent)	Reason(s)
1				
2				
3				
4				

Letter to the Secretary of State – First Notification

Telecoms Regulatory Policy UG22

Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform

1 Victoria Street

London SW1H 0ET

For the attention of Simon Moseley

Dear Sir

Draft decision by [public body] in response to proposals by [British Telecommunications plc/Kingston Communications (Hull) plc] for the removal of public call boxes pursuant to Part 2 of the Schedule to a Direction published by Ofcom on 14 March 2006 ('the Direction').

[Public body], in accordance with section 49(4) of the Communications Act 2003 ('the Act'), hereby make a draft decision in response to a proposal by [British Telecommunications plc/Kingston Communications (Hull) plc] for the removal of public call boxes pursuant to Part 2 of the Direction.

Section 50(1)(b) of the Act requires [public body] to send to the Secretary of State a copy of every notification published under section 49(4) of the Act. A copy of the First Notification is enclosed herewith.

Yours faithfully

Annex 3

Final Notification: example templates

Notification under section 49 of the Communications Act 2003

Decision by [public body] in response to a proposal by [British Telecommunications plc/Kingston Communications (Hull) plc] for the removal of public call boxes pursuant to Part 2 of the Schedule to a Direction published by Ofcom on 14 March 2006 ('the Direction').

1. On [date], [public body], in accordance with section 49(4) of the Communications Act 2003 ('the Act'), issued a notification setting out its draft decision in response to a proposal by [British Telecommunications plc/Kingston Communications (Hull) plc] for the removal of public call boxes pursuant to Part 2 of the Direction ('the First Notification').
2. A copy of the First Notification was sent to the Secretary of State in accordance with section 50(1)(b) of the Act.
3. In the First Notification, [public body] invited representations about the draft decision by [time] on [date].
4. [Public body] has considered every representation about the draft decision duly made to it and Ofcom has not notified [public body] of any international obligation of the United Kingdom for this purpose.
5. The decision is set out in the Schedule to this Notification.
6. The effect of, and [public body] reasons for making, the decision is set out in the Schedule to this Notification.
7. [Public body] consider that the decision complies with the requirements of sections 45 to 50 of the Act, as appropriate and relevant to the proposals.
8. In making the decision, [public body] has considered and acted in accordance with the six community requirements in section 4 of the Act.
9. A copy of this Notification has been sent to the Secretary of State in accordance with section 50(1)(b) of the Act.
10. The Schedule to this Notification shall form part of this Notification.

Schedule

Decision by [public body] in response to a proposal by [British Telecommunications plc/Kingston Communications (Hull) plc] for the removal of public call boxes pursuant to Part 2 of the Schedule to a Direction published by Ofcom on 14 March 2006 ('the Direction').

	Telephone number	Location	Decision (Object/Consent)	Reason(s)
1				
2				
3				
4				

Letter to the Secretary of State – Final Notification

Telecoms Regulatory Policy UG22

Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform

1 Victoria Street

London SW1H 0ET

For the attention of Simon Moseley

Dear Sir

Decision by [public body] in response to a proposal by [British Telecommunications plc/Kingston Communications (Hull) plc] for the removal of public call boxes pursuant to Part 2 of the Schedule to a Direction published by Ofcom on 14 March 2006 ('the Direction').

[Public body], in accordance with section 49 of the Communications Act 2003 ('the Act'), hereby make a decision in response to a proposal by [British Telecommunications plc/Kingston Communications (Hull) plc] for the removal of public call boxes pursuant to Part 2 of the Direction.

Section 50(1)(b) of the Act requires [public body] to send to the Secretary of State a copy of every notification published under section 49 of the Act. A copy of the Final Notification is enclosed herewith.

Yours faithfully