

TIMESCALE FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE COPPER BASED TELEPHONE SERVICE IN ARKENGARTHDALE

Arkengarthdale Parish Council sent an email to Rishi Sunak's constituency office on 29/10/2023 as follows:

BT appears to have been informing people in the Reeth and Arkengarthdale area that they are removing the copper wires, and that traditional analogue landlines will be cut off in the area in February 2024.

I have been unable to find information about the precise timing of this switch online but, as you know, Arkengarthdale currently has no mobile phone service and many people in the dale rely on their analogue landlines, not only during power cuts, but on a daily basis. There is a significant proportion of the population in this remote area that is elderly and therefore vulnerable, and for people relying on alarm pendants that work with analogue technology this news is particularly concerning. Many of the older generation do not use digital technology. Some of them do not have the internet.

If analogue landlines are disconnected this winter in this area a considerable proportion of the local population will be left without a reliable means of communication. And, the at-risk population notwithstanding, all of Arkengarthdale will be without a mobile phone signal as well as without a telephone that works when there is no power, at a time of year that is cold, wet, windy and icy.

Please can you confirm whether or not this time frame is correct and, if so, when the community can expect to be informed of the imminent switch, and how and when it will be provided with the necessary support and information.

With thanks and best wishes

Susan Dray, Clerk, Arkengarthdale Parish Council

Rishi Sunak MP contacted Openreach on our behalf and Openreach replied on 2 November 2023:

Thank you for your email.

Please be assured that Openreach have no plans to remove the copper cables within the constituency in 2024.

BT Group announced they would turn off the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) in December 2025, this is an analogue service that has been in use for decades, and is reaching the end of its life. Everyone will need a digital line by then, however where fibre is not available, residents can continue to use their existing copper based service. If someone decides to switch, upgrade or re-grade their phone or broadband service, and a fibre based service is available to their premises then they can be upgraded to a new digital phone line.

You can find more details on what Openreach is doing to support customers and businesses ensure that safety devices are compatible with the new technology on our website. We would advise customers to contact their communication provider if they have any questions.

In the longer term Openreach has committed to delivering Full Fibre Broadband to 25 million homes and businesses across the UK by the end of 2026 through commercial build plans, this includes 6.2m in the hardest to reach locations (over two thirds of the total premises considered hardest to reach). It's this commitment that makes us one of the largest engineering projects in the UK. Within your constituency we have built to over 12,000 premises already.

Best,

Public affairs manager – North of England and East Midlands

Openreach