

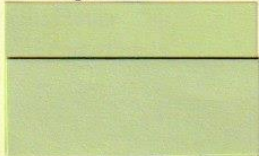
THE RT. HON. RISHI SUNAK MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Susan Dray
Clerk
Arkengarthdale Parish Council



Our Ref: ZA63302

30 October 2023

Dear Susan,

Thank you for your email regarding analogue telephones, it is good to hear from you and I hope that you and the Council are well. Thank you for also taking the time to outline the Council's concerns with me – it really is appreciated.

Firstly, supporting access to improved telecommunications and enhanced coverage is something which the Government considers to be of the utmost importance. While the analogue landline network, also known as the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) is privately owned, and the decision to upgrade it has been taken by the telecoms industry, I do appreciate your concerns.

Let me assure you that the retirement of PSTN does not mean that landlines will become obsolete nor that handsets will need to be replaced. Rather, landline operators in the UK will switch every home phone in the UK to an internet-based connection. This will help to reduce the costly maintenance of the current PSTN system and support improved call quality.

While the switchover is being led by broadband and phone companies, the Government and Ofcom, the UK's independent telecommunications regulator, are supporting efforts to improve the UK's telecommunications infrastructure and are working with industry to help ensure they deliver a smooth transition. This is helping to ensure consumers and sectors are protected and prepared for the switchover process.

Furthermore, the Government is working closely with industry to ensure nobody is adversely affected by the upgrade, including the small number of rural areas which have limited digital connectivity.

The replacement Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services require a minimum stable connection speed of just 0.5Mbps in order to function correctly. As a result, rural communities with limited digital connectivity can also be upgraded to digital telephony services. For current landline-only customers, it will be possible to order a VoIP landline without purchasing a general internet connection. Moreover, the migration from analogue landlines does not affect the universal service obligations set in the Electronic Communications (Universal Service) Order 2003 which require the designated providers, BT and KCOM, to offer telephony services throughout the UK.

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Ofcom's rules ensure that all phone users must receive equivalent protections, however their landline is delivered. The regulator has also made clear that those without broadband internet connection should be given the option to purchase a simple connection for making calls only, rather than having to pay for full internet services.

I do appreciate your concern about how the changes will affect the ability to use a phone during a power outage.

Ofcom places a regulatory obligation on communications providers to take all necessary measures to ensure uninterrupted access to emergency organisations for their customers. Ofcom has issued guidance explaining how providers can fulfil this regulatory obligation during power outages, stating that at least one solution must be available for a minimum of one hour that enables access to emergency organisations in the event of a power cut. Any solution must be made available free of charge to customers who providers determine are reliant on their landline to make emergency calls during a power cut.

Alongside this, the emergency services have access to a number of resilient communications systems to coordinate emergency response activity via mobile networks. This includes the current Airwave system, and they will make use of the Emergency Services Network once transition has completed. Furthermore, calls to 999/112 can be made via another network if the caller's mobile provider cannot provide a signal to make the call.

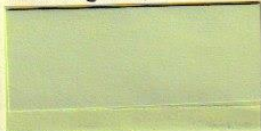
More details about the switch can be found here:

<https://business.bt.com/why-choose-bt/insights/digital-transformation/uk-pstn-switch-off/>

Finally, I have contacted network providers for an update on the changes being made to the analogue network. I have asked for a formal reply and will, of course, contact you once I have received them.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me. If there is anything I can do to help in the meantime, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards,



Rishi Sunak
Member of Parliament
Richmond (Yorks)