

## Telephone calls in the near future: the Digital Phone Switchover – January Update

Those of us who have already made the change to a fully digital telephone service got an early experience due to January's storm Eowyn, of the one of the main concerns about the change – what happens with a power cut?

Unlike the existing service, the digital service is not powered from the exchange, where backup is provided by the network, but by the user's own power. BT offer to supply a backup power supply but only expect it to last for a maximum of 4 hours. It highlighted the benefit of having a working mobile phone. I also have a small powerbank (cost less than £20) that will provide at least 4 full charges for my phone and therefore backup for several days not hours. Having said that even my mobile service was off for about 3 hours (mains power was off for 8 hours and longer for some others). Maybe a combination of both battery backup options would be the best solution.

BT provided an update in January (summarised below) and the presentation has been added to the *Digital Voice in Killearn* link on the home page of the Killearn Community Council website ([www.killearncc.org.uk/kgb-killearn.html](http://www.killearncc.org.uk/kgb-killearn.html)) where you can find all the information we currently have. Please look at the KCC website (see above) or contact us via KCC or KCFC.

My key advice remains – for any supplier, not just BT – talk to them and ask what they plan to do to maintain your services with them regarding this BT Openreach changeover.

BT update:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move to digital telephone service to be complete by Jan 2027</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing phone number retained and equipment re-used</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landline-only users and those not wanting to change can continue until 2030 by adopting the 'dedicated landline service'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DV adapter provided to allow phone to be located away from hub</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-vulnerable customers will start to be switched from January 2025, with vulnerable ones in Scotland from summer 2025</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EE will offer the same services as BT. New or regrading customers will be offered an EE contact rather than a BT contact. PlusNet will only be offering a broadband contract. If a landline phone is desired then a switch to a BT/EE contract or alternative supplier is necessary</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a customer is identified for a move, they will get at least 4 weeks' notice by letter or postcard. See below for full timeline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable users will be offered either hybrid phones (that automatically switch to the mobile network) or a back-up power supply in the event of a local power cut</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Digital service offers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improved reliability and call quality</li> <li>○ Will help prevent the vast majority of scam calls</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional support for vulnerable customers, and also for landline-only users, is being offered to ensure healthcare equipment especially continues to work</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BT is building more 4G masts in rural areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships formed with charities and local groups: ageUK, carersUK,, Independent Age, Hearing Partners, Neighbourhood Watch Scotland, KeyRing, NFU, mind, Rural Services Network, Scope, AbilityNet, Which?, RNI:D, RNIB, Alzheimer's Society</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BT plans to make more full-fibre connections to 25 million homes &amp; businesses by 2026 (50% of homes &amp; businesses already have access to a fibre connection)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BT are relying on local authorities, housing associations &amp; telecare providers, but also customers, to ensure that service providers are aware of their needs and safeguard the most vulnerable customers. Stirling is one of the local authorities that have already signed up</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BT apparently has 447K landline customers, 50% of which are still to switch. 28% of these are landline-only customers while the other 72% already have broadband</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More face-to-face awareness sessions will be held nationally &amp; items on social and paper media will appear</li> <li>• Help BT by raising awareness with family members &amp; carers of vulnerable customers that you know and telling BT of them</li> </ul>

Individual customer switchover timeline is:

Day 1: customer receives initial notification

Day 3: customer receives gets an equipment check notification

Day 28: switchover order placed (on Openreach) and activation email sent

Day 33: customer receives set-up information postcard & automated phone confirmation

Day 35: customer's service is switched to DV & is sent confirmation email

*Doug Ashworth*

*Killearn Broadband Group*