



THE RT. HON. JACOB REES-MOGG M.P.
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR NORTH EAST SOMERSET

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON
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Philip Edwards, Esq.,
Clerk to Hinton Blewett Parish Council,
4 Valley View,
Clutton,
Somerset, BS39 5SN.

14th April 2022

Philip Edwards

Please find enclosed a copy of an email that my assistant has received from Amanda Chee, from the Executive Complaints Resolution Team at British Telecom, in response to the representations I made on your behalf.

I hope that Ms Chee's email is helpful in addressing the concerns you raised, particularly in respect of the current situation where it comes to customers without broadband and the pausing of the rollout until key products are in place to ensure a more resilient connection when needed.

I have not yet received responses from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport or Ofcom but will write to you again as soon as I do so.

With every good wish,

JRM

Jacob Rees-Mogg

Enc.

From: amanda.chee

Sent: 06 April 2022 14:54

To: CATHCART, Melissa <melissa.cathcart@parliament.uk>

Subject: BT Ref: 12099 Jacob Rees-Mogg MP obo Hinton Blewett Parish Council

Dear Melissa,

Many thanks for your email on behalf of Hinton Blewett Parish Council, who've raised concerns about the Digital Voice switch over.

BT and Digital Voice

Let me update you regarding Digital Voice – our new home phone service that will mean calls are made over broadband, rather than the old analogue Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN). This is a change that all communications providers are making, including BT.

We've listened to the feedback from our customers and realise we underestimated the impact that this technology upgrade could have for some of them. We understand the concerns of people who live in power cut-prone areas or places with poor mobile reception. They worry that in the event of a power cut, they'll not be able to call anyone to get help. This is because the fibre cables used by Digital Voice can't conduct electricity, whilst the copper lines used by the PSTN are able to power traditional home phones.

Whilst we have alternatives for this in place, we appreciate that these are not yet as good as they could be for all circumstances. This was thrown into sharp relief during the recent storms when some households had to endure long periods without electricity.

So, first of all, we're saying sorry to those who've been affected and we're letting them know that we're adapting our approach. We've taken the decision to pause all further Digital Voice switch-overs for customers who don't want to move to the new technology straight away. We'll restart the programme once we have key products in place to provide our customers with more resilient connectivity when they need it.

This will include the roll-out of longer-lasting battery back-up units for use in the event of a power cut, home mobile landlines for people without broadband and hybrid home phones (for customers not comfortable using a mobile, but which can connect via the mobile network if the fixed connection becomes unavailable and with an in-built back-up battery). Customers who want the Digital Voice service can still request this upgrade during the pause period.

This pause in the programme will also enable us to drive a greater level of public awareness and understanding of the coming change.

This isn't and can't be a permanent halt to the programme.

The PSTN is nearing the end of its life. It's increasingly difficult to maintain and is becoming less and less reliable. Spare parts are no longer made and are increasingly hard to find. The long-term resilience of landline phones needs the retirement of the PSTN and a shift to digital services. It also means we can provide crystal clear call quality, better identify and prevent scam calls and significantly reduce electricity consumption, making it better for the environment. This change is happening in countries across the world.

But we know we need to do more to support our customers in the short term. We're working with organisations who support those most reliant on their landlines and those who live in rural

communities so that we help everyone make the change to Digital Voice successfully. We plan to be in Parliament later in the year to demonstrate some of these technologies and show how we're supporting your constituents to make the change.

We're telling people about this change today and you can read more in a blog by BT Consumer's CEO [here](#).

Customers with no broadband

At the moment, customers who don't currently have a broadband connection in their homes are not eligible to be moved over to Digital Voice and these customers will be able to continue to use their current landline phone. We'll be in touch with them when we're able to move them over to Digital Voice and will provide extra help and assistance for those who need it. We know changes like this can worry some people, but we want to reassure our customers that nobody will find themselves cut off and we'll be here to help every step of the way.

If you have any questions, please do let me know. Should you receive any more queries from your constituents about this decision or Digital Voice more generally, please encourage them to contact us on 0800 800 150.

I hope this information I've shared helps.

Thanks,

Amanda Chee
Executive Complaints Resolution, BT Consumer.
www.bt.com



We monitor our email systems and may record all our emails.
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