



Rhoda Grant

Scottish Labour MSP for the Highlands and Islands

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MSP calls for risk assessment before any phone boxes closed

On the final day of the initial consultation period (Friday), Rhoda Grant, Highlands and Islands MSP is calling for BT to carry out risk assessments before closing rural telephone boxes.

As part of the BT consultation on the closing down of 194 payphones across the Highland network she has highlighted the life or death role phone boxes can play particularly in areas with poor mobile reception.

"While I accept this move is an inevitable reflection on the level of use of mobile phones and BT is proposing to remove the pay phones least used, I have some concerns," she said.

"There are still some areas of the Highlands with no or poor mobile phone reception.

"If phone boxes are removed, the proximity of nearest telephone box becomes a factor; as are the geographical size of the area and the sparsity of population.

"Parts of the Highlands are remote but attract visitors in large numbers and the lack of a phone box in such areas could become critical in the event of a road, maritime or mountain accident, where there is no mobile signal.

"The time taken to alert the emergency services can literally become a matter of life or death," she said.

Mrs Grant has been contacted by Shieldaig Community Council in Wester Ross expressing its concern over plans to remove the phone boxes in Kenmore and Shieldaig.

"At the very least I would call on BT to carry out a risk assessment in remote, rural areas of the Highlands and where the mobile signal is not robust they should retain the phone boxes concerned," she said.

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Rhoda Grant's website : www.rhodagrants.org.uk

Highlands and Islands Labour : www.handilabour.org.uk