

Future of Emergency Phones	
Executive Summary	<p>Emergency phones are in place at 22 locations along the North Norfolk coast from Morston to Horsey. Providing emergency telephones on beaches is not a statutory requirement, however North Norfolk's have remained in place for over 30 years. Usage data shows not a single emergency telephone anywhere along the coast has been used for a documented emergency for many years.</p> <p>BT have announced their move to digital by 2025 raising uncertainty about the future viability of the emergency phones. Unfortunately BT have been unable to say one way or another whether an alternative option will be available following the change.</p> <p>The cost of keeping these phones operational is over £30k per year. The necessity of providing these phones has now vastly reduced and an opportunity to consider their future now exists.</p>
Options considered	<p>Option 1: Do nothing and keep the phones in operation. This option will be affected by the move to digital but we are not sure exactly how at this stage as BT are unable to confirm if there will be an alternative option following the change.</p> <p>Option 2: Remove all emergency phones from the districts coastline.</p> <p>Option 3: Remove only the emergency phones where mobile phone signal is known to be adequate, leaving those where signal is particularly poor. This option will be affected by the move to digital but we are not sure exactly how at this stage as BT are unable to confirm if there will be an alternative option following the change.</p>
Consultation(s)	<p>Discussions have been held internally within the Leisure Team and the IT department.</p> <p>Externally discussions have been held with the RNLI and Coastguard, who showed no concern about the proposal and indicated that they are reviewing their own processes as a result of BT's digital move.</p>
Recommendations	<p>The Council takes the decision to remove all Emergency Phones in the district.</p>
Reasons for recommendations	<p>1.1 It is proposed that the necessity for Emergency Phones is no longer as important as it once was. Their lack of use and the imminent move by BT to go digital mean that we believe the requirement for these phones no longer exists.</p>

	<p>1.2 BT are unable to provide assurances that an alternative to analogue lines will be available to keep the emergency phones operational post digitilisation. However they have given assurances that mobile phone signal is being targeted for improvement throughout the district.</p> <p>1.3 The Council could make a financial saving of over £30k per annum by removing this service.</p> <p>1.4 It is not deemed that removal would cause significant community safety issues. Partners such as the RNLI have been consulted and raised no concerns either.</p>
Background papers	NA

Wards affected	Coastal, Sheringham South, Beeston Regis and The Runtons, Cromer Town, Suffield Park, Poppyland, Mundesley, Bacton, Happisburgh, Hickling.
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr. Liz Withington Cllr. Harry Blathwayt
Contact Officer	Colin Brown, Leisure & Locality Services Manager, 01263516001

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	NA
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	This could generate a saving to the Council of £30k+
Council Policies & Strategies	NA

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	Yes
Has the public interest test been applied	Is the item exempt, if so, state why.
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	NA

2. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This paper seeks to provide an update on the current position with Emergency Phones in the district and outline the options for the authority going forward.

3. Introduction & Background

- 2.1 Emergency phones are in place at 22 locations along the North Norfolk coast from Morston to Horsey. Providing emergency telephones on beaches is not a statutory requirement, however North Norfolk's have remained in place for over 30 years. Usage data shows not a single emergency telephone anywhere along the coast has been used for a documented emergency for many years.
- 2.2 Maintenance and monitoring of these phones is managed by the Leisure Team, and IT deal with the line rental contracts in line with the wider corporate contracts.
- 2.3 In recent years parts for these aged phones have become very difficult to source meaning that phones have been out of action for a number of weeks, and are now having to be replaced with parts not suitable for their purpose.
- 2.4 In addition to this BT have announced their move to digital by 2025 raising uncertainty about the future viability of the emergency phones. Unfortunately BT have been unable to say one way or another whether an alternative option will be available following the change. All they have been able to say is that they have partnered with EE to significantly improve the mobile signal in the district.
- 2.5 With regards to the Blue Flag/Seaside Awards criteria an emergency phone only needs to be in place if the risk assessment specifically says so. The Isle of Wight removed their emergency phones in 2015 but continue to be awarded a Blue Flag and Seaside Awards

4. Proposals and Options

- 4.1 It is proposed that the future of these emergency phones is seriously considered. With the advances in technology since their installation, their lack of use, and the uncertainty around the future of analogue lines this seems like an ideal time to consider their removal.
- 4.2 By 2025, it is predicted that the UK population will reach 68.3 million and that 95% (roughly 65 million people) will be using a smartphone, and we are confident that people will use their personal phones without hesitation if the need arises to contact the emergency services. This is also preferable for emergency call centres who can pin point a GPS location and dispatch the necessary emergency service much more effectively. The location of emergency phones are also often a fair way away from the beach and therefore they are far more unlikely to be used when mobile phones are so readily available.
- 4.2 There is quite a significant financial and human resource required to keep these emergency phones operational, which is detailed in section 5.

The following options are provided for consideration:

Option 1: Do nothing and keep the phones in operation. This option will be affected by the move to digital but we are not sure exactly how at this stage as BT are unable to confirm if there will be an alternative option following the change.

Option 2: Remove all emergency phones from the districts coastline.

Option 3: Remove only the emergency phones where mobile phone signal is known to be adequate, leaving those where signal is particularly poor. This option will be affected by the move to digital but we are not sure exactly how at this stage as BT are unable to confirm if there will be an alternative option following the change.

5. Corporate Priorities

5.1 NA

6. Financial and Resource Implications

6.1 There are three separate costs incurred on each emergency phone – line rental, maintenance contract and a testing and monitoring regime which is carried out by Norse.

6.2 Line rental: 22 x £37.89 per month = £10,002.96 per year.

Maintenance Contract: 22 x £47.95 per month = £12,658.80 per year.

Testing and Monitoring: 22 x 39 visits @ £10 per visit = £8,580 per year

Total Cost to NNDC = **£31,241.76** per year

6.3 Additional miscellaneous costs arise throughout the year on top of these including associated signage and officer administration time.

Comments from the S151 Officer:

The S151 Officer (or member of the Finance team on their behalf) will complete this section.

No comments

7. Legal Implications

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer (or member of the Legal team on behalf of the MO) will complete this section. They will outline any legal advice provided.

On information provided in this report, there are no specific legal or governance concerns. If a decision is made to remove the phones, there would be contract(s) to terminate regarding line rental etc., and officers may wish to review these contracts at an early point to identify the optimum time to terminate.

8. Risks

8.1 It is unknown how the general public perceive the provision of the emergency phones so there is potential that it could cause some unrest and/or if the Council decided to remove them. This could be easily mitigated through strong messaging and clear communications.

9. Net ZeroTarget

- 9.1 Removal of the phones would take away the necessity for over 40 visits to each phone per year for monitoring. Each of these visits would see a car journey of around 60 miles be completed – therefore a reduction of around 2400 miles annually could be achieved.

10. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- 10.1 NA

11. Community Safety issues

- 11.1 Emergency phones have been in place for 30+ years so the community are used to having them available, therefore this could be viewed as a safety concern. However given the information we have provided about their lack of use, the improvements to technology during this time, and the proliferation of mobile phone availability and use we are confident that removal would not cause community safety issues to a level where concern should be raised.

12. Conclusion and Recommendations

- 12.1 It is proposed that the necessity for Emergency Phones is no longer as important as it once was. Their lack of use and the imminent move by BT to go digital mean that we believe the requirement for these phones no longer exists.
- 12.2 BT are unable to provide assurances that an alternative to analogue lines will be available to keep the emergency phones operational post digitilisation. However they have given assurances that mobile phone signal is being targeted for improvement throughout the district.
- 12.3 The Council could make a financial saving of over £30k per annum by removing this service.
- 12.4 It is not deemed that removal would cause significant community safety issues. Partners such as the RNLI have been consulted and raised no concerns either.

Recommendation:

1. The Council takes the decision to remove all Emergency Phones in the district from operation. This would include taking them out of service and removing handsets from current locations.

Emergency Phone Locations.

1. Adjacent to Yacht Club Building, Morston Quay
2. National Trust land at Beach access road, Cley
3. Salthouse Beach Parking Area
4. Beach Road Car Park Weybourne
5. O/side Lifeguard Hut, West Promenade, Sheringham
6. Behind Tank Shelter, East Promenade, Sheringham
7. Beach Access slope, Water Lane, West Runton
8. Beach Access Ramp, East Runton
9. Bottom of Melbourne Slope, West Prom, Cromer
10. Far end of West Promenade, Cromer
11. End of Pier by Lifeboat House, Cromer
12. Midway along Chalets, East Promenade, Cromer
13. Beach Access Road off Clifton Way, Overstrand
14. Zig-zag slope, Cliff Road, Overstrand
15. Vale Road, Trimingham
16. Beach Access slope, The Green, Mundesley
17. West End of Walcott Seafront
18. Car Park, Beach Road, Happisburgh
19. Beach access ramp, Cart Gap, Happisburgh
20. Beach access ramp, Sea Palling
21. Waxham Beach, on crest of sand dune
22. On crest of sand dune at Warren Farm Footpath, Horsey (closed in winter)

Emergency Phone Location Map

