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**Press release**

Supporting Hertfordshire residents and businesses through the digital switchover

Monday 29 April 2024

**For immediate release**

# As the telecommunications landscape evolves, the Hertfordshire Growth Board is committed to ensuring residents and businesses have the information they need for a smooth transition, as traditional landline systems make way for modern digital technologies.

**What’s happening?**

Telecoms companies in the UK are moving towards replacing outdated technology used in fixed telephone networks (landlines). By 2025, the majority of customers are expected to benefit from upgraded digital services.

**What are the details?**

In November 2017, the telecoms industry announced plans to retire analogue telephone networks such as the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) by the end of 2025. This shift involves upgrading landline services to new digital technology, including Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and Digital Voice.

The transition aims to enhance communication experiences for consumers and businesses, offering clearer calls and introducing new features like anonymous caller rejection and three-way calling.

**How can you get support?**

For most, the migration process will be straightforward, with telecoms companies contacting customers ahead of the transition. However, specific considerations may arise for vulnerable residents or those with connected devices such as alarm systems or telecare devices.

The Hertfordshire Growth Board encourages individuals to engage with their service providers for guidance tailored to their needs. Providers are expected to ensure uninterrupted access to emergency services, particularly during power cuts, through provisions such as battery backup units.

**Government collaboration**

While the migration is industry-led, the government collaborates closely with telecoms providers to safeguard all sectors of the economy. This includes tracking preparedness across affected sectors and working in partnership with regulatory bodies like Ofcom.

**Further information**

Residents with questions about the migration are advised to contact their telephone provider directly. Ofcom, the independent telecoms regulator, offers additional guidance on preparing for the transition.

For businesses and industry stakeholders, resources are available from Openreach to understand the implications of the shift to VoIP services.

Openreach has further information for businesses and wider industry who use phone lines to deliver services to help them understand how the move to VoIP services will affect them.

**Community forums hosted by BT**

**Hertfordshire residents will get the chance to learn more about the digital switchover at a series of community forums hosted by BT.**

The digital switchover is taking place in 2025, when telecoms companies will retire the analogue telephone network in place of a digital telephony network. For most, this will mean plugging your telephone into your broadband router.

**When and where are the forums?**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Town** | **Date** | **Time** | **Address** |
| **Hemel Hempstead** | Thurs 2 and  Friday 3 May | 10am to 4pm | Hemel Hempstead Garden Centre (Car Park), Piper’s Hill, Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 3BY |
| **Bishop’s Stortford** | Friday 17 May | 10am to 2pm | Bishop’s Stortford Library, The Causeway, Bishop’s Stortford, CM23 2EJ |
| **Stevenage** | Tues 28 and Weds 29 May | 10am to 4pm | Stevenage Garden Centre (Car Park), North Road, Graveley Road, Stevenage, SG1 4AH |

**How might you be affected?**

Residents and businesses could be affected in different ways:

* If you do not have a broadband connection.
* If you do not have a mobile phone or signal where you live.
* If you use your landline for telecare systems, home alarm or a fax machine.
* If you use a landline for burglar alarms, lift alarms or card payments.

Residents and business owners should attend a session or contact their telephone provider if they think they may be affected by the change.

# Ends

# About Hertfordshire Growth Board

# Hertfordshire Growth Board is the way the county is working together to deliver sustainable good growth for residents, communities and businesses. With Hertfordshire’s population expected to increase by 38,550 by 2043, this places increased demands for more housing, healthcare, schools and transport. This brings opportunities and challenges.

# Hertfordshire Growth Board is ready to respond. Hertfordshire Growth Board is made up of the County Council, the 10 district and borough councils, the NHS Hertfordshire & West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB), Homes England, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Police and Crime Commissioner. Working together is how we continue our ‘joint’ success, create opportunities for everyone, now and in the future, and make Hertfordshire a better place to live, work and thrive.