

Coming to a telephone near you.....

Some of you may have heard that changes are afoot to convert our home telephone network to the digital age. I was converted on the 4th October 2023 and, with the benefit of some investigation beforehand, the change was almost seamless, with no problems encountered. Below is a summary of the information that I have found useful.

The current analogue system called the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) is becoming unfit for purpose due to the demands of modern-day life and will be retired by the end of 2025. It is being replaced by a new digital network that goes under several names but 'Digital Voice' and Voice Over Internet Protocol (voIP) are the main names used. If you already have a Broadband connection for the WiFi* connections to your digital devices such as laptops, tablets and PCs/Macs, the Digital Voice connection will use this connection and the change will be almost seamless. On conversion day you will just unplug your landline telephone from the current PSTN socket and plug it into a slot that already exists on your router, possibly by means of an adaptor, and away you go.

If you decide that you no longer need a landline and prefer to just use your mobile, you will need to notify your provider before your line is converted to digital.

**WiFi is just a name for the process of transmitting information wirelessly.*

If you currently do not have access to the internet, then a bit of work will be involved to provide you with a router and the necessary wiring. If you do not wish to use the internet, then this can just be dedicated to your telephone connection.

Your new digital line will have several new free features:

- If you have more than one digital home phone, more than one person can use the line at the same time. That will be a blessing for large families!
- You will be able to chat to two other people at the same time.
- Caller Display will allow you to see who is calling and decide whether to answer.
- Call Diversion will allow you to re-route your incoming calls to another telephone, including a mobile phone.
- You will be able to withhold your number when making calls, although this may mean that the person that you are calling could refuse to accept your call.
- You can prevent unwanted calls and send them to your junk voicemail – a bit like junk emails.
- You will get an alert if someone is trying to call you while you are on another call.
- You can dial 1571 to see if you have any missed calls in your Voicemail.
- If you have a digital home phone, you will get crystal clear HD call quality.

Disadvantages:

- If you have wired extension phones in your property, these will not work after you have changed to a digital line. You will need to purchase new telephones that connect wirelessly, unless your provider can suggest another alternative. These Digitally Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications (DECT) phones include a base

station and as many extension handsets as you need. **Each handset will require a mains power connection.**

- Unlike the old PSTN network, which is powered from the switchboard, you will lose telephone contact in the event of a power cut, either to the mains power supply or in your house circuit. You may wish to have a mobile phone to cover this eventuality. Alternatively, a back up battery could supply an emergency power source for a limited time.
- If you wear a personal alarm in case of falls etc, or have other devices that currently rely on the PSTN network, you will need to contact your provider to find out how they plan to keep these working after conversion to a digital line.

Want to learn more?

Here are some sources of additional information on the transfer to digital:

BT: <https://www.bt.com/broadband/digital-voice>

Which: <https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/broadband/article/digital-voice-and-the-landline-phone-switch-off-what-it-means-for-you-aPSOH8k1i6Vv>

Virgin Media: <https://www.virginmedia.com/help/digital-voice-switchover>

Ofcom: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/news-centre/2021/upgrading-landlines-to-digital-technology>

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