

# ICONIC UK PHONE BOOTHS SAVED FROM EXTINCTION



The British government will protect the 21,000 iconic phone boxes that hardly anyone uses. There are already initiatives to turn them into libraries, mini art galleries or first aid centers.

The UK phone booths, with their bright red color, are one of the symbols of the country and always attract the attention of foreign tourists. Similarly, like the old double-decker buses, of which only a handful survive for sightseeing tours.

**The British government is speeding up measures to decree the protection of the 21,000 booths that are scattered throughout the British territory.**

BT Group, formerly known as British Telecom, said half of the public payphones in the country were removed because of low usage.

## Surviving Booths in the UK

Admittedly, the British ones have more charm than those in different parts of the world. There are 21,000 of them in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and while they may work, they are usually dirty, graffitied or covered with ads.

The regulator Ofcom's proposal is for around 5,000 of these booths to be maintained in areas with little or no mobile coverage. Those in areas with frequent accidents or high suicide rates, or that have been used at least 52 times during the last year (an average of once a week) can also be saved.

Ofcom notes that of the 150,000 calls made between May 2019 to May 2020, almost half were made to helplines or charities such as the Samaritans.

## Other Plans for the Booths

But these are not the only plans for the UK phone booths: about 6,600 of them have become book exchanges, such as the one in Warwickshire, or first aid centers, where in addition to first aid kits there are defibrillators to help in case of cardiac arrests, such as those placed by the Community Heartbeat Trust.

In the gallery town of Cheltenham, near Gloucester, a dozen of these booths were transformed into mini art galleries to promote the work of local artists.

## Adopt a Booth

Moreover, **the "Adopt a Booth" scheme allows NGOs or municipalities to buy a booth for the symbolic price of one pound and repurpose it.**

BT Group warns that the booths can't be removed from the site, so you'll have to be resourceful to

find alternatives.

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