

How much advertising do you need/want on your high street and local main roads?

London Forum is holding an event at 6.30pm on Wednesday 10 May at The Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EL (nearest underground: Farringdon)

Firstly, you had a proliferation of telephone companies with rights to put telephones on the footway, subject to a kiosk footprints of no more than 1.5sqm.

It was realised that we did not need as many phone boxes but none of the companies wanted to give up their "rights", especially if they could be converted to another source of income. BT came up with the ST6 in 2006 – an advertisement panel with a phone on the back and persuaded some local authorities to agree a network of these new telephone "kiosks" in exchange for removing some of their existing telephone cabinets. The most recent of these new types now has digital advertising. These panels are at right angles to the road facing the oncoming traffic, potentially causing driver distraction.

The market is dominated by BT/JCDecaux, although Clearchannel has bought Aviva with the intention of changing these kiosks into advertising panels. Most recently a new telecoms company has proposed new "kiosks" where the rear panel of this "slim" kiosk would be the same size as a JCDecaux advert panel, whilst still only having a 1.5sqm footprint.

The latest proposals by LinkUK/BT with Primesight are to introduce more advert/telephone kiosks coming to your High Street (see information below).

Then you had advertisement panels on bus shelters – static or scrolling advertisements on the back panel of the bus shelter. Many of the contracts, whether TfL or Borough-owned, have come up for renewal. Previously these may have been contracts with Clearchannel, but in the latest round of tenders JCDecaux has secured a long contract for new shelters, but this time there are large, double-sided, digital advertising panels tucked under the end of the shelter at right angles to the road.

There are also advertising panels fixed at an angle on to the walls above town centre shops.

The net result of these initiatives has been an increasing number of freestanding advertisements along our high street. The planning system does not provide adequate controls, as the kiosks are erected under powers in the Communications Act and permitted development rights relating to the footprint of the kiosk. The companies have exploited these "rights" to install a network of telephone kiosks, but now, through exploiting the permitted development rights relating to the footprint, we seem to be getting more "flat" kiosks where the primary function is as an advertisement panel.

Finally, in addition to bus shelters, Transport for London has changed from a promoter of de-cluttering on grounds of both amenity and safety to a promoter of advertising panels being erected on their land and that includes the London Road network under the Mayor's control.

So how do you manage the public realm? Who can you look to for help? Do we need to review the rights given under both the Communications and Planning Acts?

Join the debate.

Michael Bach
Chairman: Planning, Environment and Transport Committee
London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies

A "Fact Sheet" is on the next page about LinkUK from BT, which will bring together BT and Primesight to sell advertising on nearly 17,500 BT telephone kiosks across the UK

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

LinkUK

Founded October 25, 2016; 5 months ago

Headquarters London, England, United Kingdom

Area served Greater London (planned, debuting in Camden)

Brands LinkUK

Services Wireless communication

Owner Intersection, BT Group, Primesight

LinkUK is an infrastructure project that plans to cover major cities in the United Kingdom with free Wi-Fi service. LinkUK kiosks, called Links, will be initially rolled out in the London borough of Camden starting in 2017. Afterwards, Links will be installed in the rest of Greater London and eventually across major cities in the UK. LinkUK is an expansion of the LinkNYC project covering New York City with free Wi-Fi service.

In 2015, BT Group sought an advertising partner to maintain advertisements situated in its 17,500 telephone booths across the UK. BT ultimately partnered with Intersection, the owner of LinkNYC, and Primesight, a London-based advertising agency. BT will remove certain telephone booths for the Links and provide the network infrastructure. In return, Intersection and Primesight will display advertising on two dedicated screens on the kiosks.

The Links will provide free Wi-Fi access with speeds up to 1 gigabit per second, while displays on both sides of the Link will display digital advertisements. The Links feature a tablet, two USB charging ports, and a phone providing free calling to UK numbers. Devices can access the Links' network without time or access limits. Each Link's tablet will provide basic functionality, such as maps and access to emergency services. However, while LinkNYC was being rolled out, kiosks' web browsers were being used to access inappropriate content such as pornography. Amid this concern, LinkUK kiosks' tablets will lack a web browser.

ZDNet. Retrieved December 30, 2016.

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LinkNYC's free WiFi and phone kiosks hit London as LinkUK, in partnership with BT Posted Oct 25, 2016 by Ingrid Lunden (@ingridlunden)

London's iconic red phone boxes may be mostly gone from the streets of the city — and many of those that remain are no longer home to phones but the promise of offering communication services to people on the go remains.

Today, UK carrier BT announced that it has partnered with Sidewalk Labs' Intersection, the Google/Alphabet-backed startup behind New York's LinkNYC free WiFi kiosks, to roll out LinkUK, free internet and phone hubs for London and the rest of the country.

As with its Big Apple counterpart, the plan is to provide people near the kiosks with free WiFi (speeds of up to 1 Gigabit per second), along with free voice calls and a few other services — which users can get through their own WiFi-enabled devices or a tablet on the kiosk.

Perhaps taking a tip from the NYC service, which found that unsavory types were congregating around the LinkNYC kiosks to browse porn, LinkUK will not provide unrestricted internet access as part of the deal. The partnership will be a three-way affair in the UK between Intersection, BT and ad partner Primesight.

Intersection is providing the kiosk architecture and technology for the service, as part of its bigger ambition to take its business model to more markets and evolve it beyond being a pure moon shot.

"As a global hub for media and technology, London is the ideal city for Intersection to invest in the expansion of connectivity, digital innovation and our business," Dan Doctoroff, Chairman & CEO at Intersection and Sidewalk Labs, said. "LinkUK from BT will bring tremendous benefits to Londoners, visitors, local businesses, and international brands and we look forward to working with our partners, BT and Primesight, to transform this great city's streetscape."

But while Google itself has been making inroads into providing high-speed broadband services in the UK (note: some of that, it announced today, will now be paused) , a spokesperson confirmed that it will be BT providing all of the connectivity for LinkUK.

Lastly, the whole service will be underwritten by way of an advertising partnership with Primesight, an independent outdoor advertising network, which will run digital ads on the kiosks. As the kiosk rollout will start slow — 100 in the first phase, 750 in London longer-term — Primesight has also cut a deal with BT to provide ads on an additional 17,500 older kiosks across the country. These will be in the form of non-digital vinyl display ads, a spokesperson said.

BT declined to specify the financial terms of the deal except to say that BT, Intersection, and Primesight will all share in the ad revenues from LinkUK.

Link UK, which is projected to start its rollout in 2017, has yet to get full approval from local authorities, the spokesperson said. But the Mayor of London's office, as well as Camden, the first borough in London that will get the kiosks, have already enthusiastically endorsed the project. In part, that's because, with the rise of mobile phones, many existing phone boxes are hardly used for their original purposes anymore. Vandalised and worn out, they are more reminders of the seedier side of city life than communications hubs.

"I welcome this exciting new addition to London's streets. Expanding London's digital infrastructure is a priority for the Mayor, and LinkUK can play a big part in improving connectivity for Londoners and visitors to our city, while reducing street clutter by upgrading and reducing the number of phone boxes," said Rajesh Agrawal, London's Deputy Mayor for Business, in a statement. "I look forward to working with BT, Intersection and Primesight to see how we can roll LinkUK across the capital, and to explore its future potential."

For BT, it's also a useful way of trying to figure out how to shift some of these boxes — which isn't as straightforward as you might think to do, since they are considered a public service.

"We're evolving the phone box to make it relevant in the 21st century by offering people ultrafast Wi-Fi and a range of digital and information services entirely for free. London is one of the greatest cities in the world and it's entirely fitting that it becomes the first UK city to benefit from the Links," said Gerry McQuade, CEO, BT Wholesale and Ventures. But we will be rolling out many more Links to the other great cities across the UK over the coming months as we look to transform the look and functionality of our public payphones."

Today, there are a lot of existing free WiFi and hotspot services around the London and other urban areas, but bandwidth can be patchy and connections unreliable, and having the added bonus of free calling is a useful addition.

LinkNYC is an encouraging template for the impact that LinkUK might have. The company says that since it launched in January of this year, some 671,000 people have used WiFi from the kiosks, with some 34 million WiFi sessions and "tens of thousands of free phone calls" made every week.

Since LinkNYC launched in January, New Yorkers and visitors have embraced Link with more than 671,000 Wi-Fi users, 34 million Wi-Fi sessions, and tens of thousands of free phone calls made every week.

"Cities around the world look to New York for what's next. We're proud that LinkNYC has already helped nearly three quarters of a million people get online at super-fast speeds, and that excitement and adoption continues to spread," said LinkNYC General Manager Jen Hensley. "Link's expansion into London and the UK underscores how cities around the world are looking for ways to modernize their infrastructure to bring connectivity and digital services to their residents without burdening taxpayers. We're excited to bring our valuable learnings from New York to London and help more people get connected."