

Red Telephone Box Turns 100: No Stamp, No Coin, No Campaign, but £17,000 Auctions and 700 Defibrillators, Report Finds

Britain forgot its most famous kiosk's 100th birthday. New verified report: 3,000 red survivors, 7,200 adoptions at £1, £17,000 auctions, no commemoration.

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, ENGLAND, UNITED KINGDOM, August 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A Century in Red by BroadbandSwitch UK:

<https://broadbandswitch.uk/reports/a-century-in-red.html> |

The red telephone box turns one hundred this year, and nobody official is throwing the party. A Century in Red, the 31st research report from independent comparison and research publisher BroadbandSwitch.uk, finds no Royal Mail stamp, no Royal Mint coin and no BT campaign to mark it. The hundredth birthday of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's K2 is being marked by local councils, magazines and this free 34 page report.

At a glance:

- 1926 to 2026: one hundred years since the first red K2 stood on a London street
- 92,000 payphones at the peak; about 20,000 remain, some 3,000 of them red
- 99.5% collapse in call minutes since 2002, yet almost 150,000 emergency calls in a single year
- 7,200 kiosks adopted for £1; more than 700 now hold public defibrillators
- £17,000 for two kiosks at auction; £8,000 for one; £1 for Jane Austen's
- No stamp, no coin, no campaign for the centenary

The absence was re verified on 24 August 2026. Royal Mail's published 2026 programme contains no kiosk; the Royal Mint's 2026 annual sets honour Queen Elizabeth II's centenary, HMS Beagle, the Zoological Society and the Grand Prix in Britain, with no box among them; and BT's



most recent nod, in 2023, marked the 1924 drawing board date rather than the 1926 street debut.

The box has two birthdays. Scott's winning drawing turned one hundred in 2024, marked by BT and a LEGO set; the kiosk first stood on London's streets in 1926, and this report marks that street centenary.

The service record is immense. Scott wanted his winning design in silver; the Post Office painted it red to be spotted at a glance. About 1,700 K2s led to roughly 60,000 K6s from 1936, and the payphone network peaked at about

92,000 in the early 1990s. Ofcom's June 2022 statement counted around 20,000 boxes remaining, 19,433 of them BT's and about 290 belonging to Hull operator KCOM, and BT's most recent figures put some 3,000 working classic red kiosks among them. Call minutes collapsed by 99.5%, from around 800 million in 2002 to 4 million in 2021/22. For scale, United States payphones fell from over 2.1 million in 1999 to under 100,000 by 2016.

“

The red box is not a relic of a failed technology. It is chapter one of the most successful one. We checked twice: no stamp, no coin, no campaign. Britain owes this box a better birthday.”

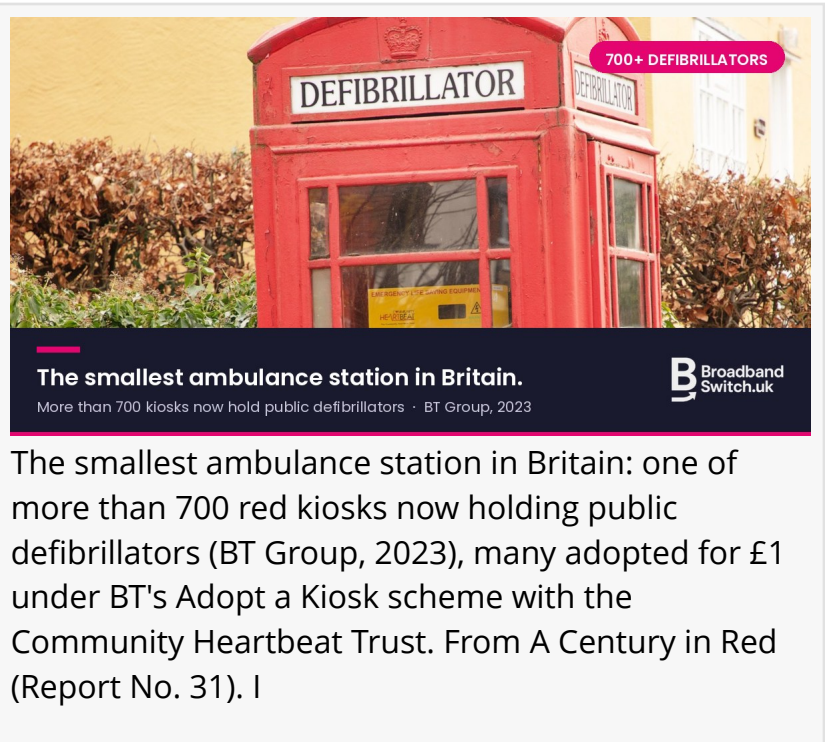
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to stay over the 52 call threshold, and North Yorkshire boxes at risk logged 68 police calls in one year.

The second lives are thriving too. More than 7,200 kiosks have been adopted by communities for £1 under BT's Adopt a Kiosk scheme, and over 700 now hold public defibrillators. Others serve as book exchanges, galleries and, in central London, a falafel stand. Where boxes are sold instead, bidding is fierce: a Grade II listed K6 in Guildford made £8,000 against a £7,500 guide in early 2025, two Canterbury kiosks made £17,000, and a kiosk on a Bath path made famous by Jane Austen went to a charity for £1.



The report also settles the details that get muddled. The K6 stands about 8 ft tall, 3 ft wide and weighs roughly 750 kg. The exact shade is currant red, British Standard BS381C 539. The famous dome is widely traced to Sir John Soane's tomb in Old St Pancras churchyard. Hull never went red: its municipally owned network painted kiosks cream without the crown, and nine of its rare K8s were listed at Grade II in 2023. The kiosk at Pennan starred in Local Hero, a K6 marks the Ziggy Stardust cover site on Heddon Street, Banksy's Vandalised Phone Box sold at Sotheby's for a reported 605,000 dollars in 2008, and the TARDIS is a blue police box, a different design altogether.



The smallest ambulance station in Britain: one of more than 700 red kiosks now holding public defibrillators (BT Group, 2023), many adopted for £1 under BT's Adopt a Kiosk scheme with the Community Heartbeat Trust. From A Century in Red (Report No. 31). I

Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith CMgr DBA, founder of BroadbandSwitch.uk and the report's author, said: "The red box is not a relic of a failed technology. It is chapter one of the most successful one. A century after the K2 gave whole streets their first shared line, the same engineering story has put full fibre outside four front doors in five."

He added: "Every figure carries a date and a named source, and our verification list is published for anyone to check. If somebody proves us out of date on the missing stamp, coin or campaign, we will celebrate and correct."

The story ends where BroadbandSwitch.uk begins. Full fibre is now available to 24.9 million UK homes, 82% of the country, and the copper network that fed every kiosk switches off on 31 January 2027. Households can [compare broadband deals free by postcode at BroadbandSwitch.uk](#).

A Century in Red follows [The Complaints Floor](#), the publisher's July study which found UK telecoms complaints at the lowest level Ofcom has ever published. BroadbandSwitch.uk is also behind Fibre Tycoon ([broadbandswitch.uk/fibre-tycoon.html](#)), the free browser game covered by ISPreview.co.uk and DataCenterDynamics in July, in which players build a full fibre network across a pixel art Britain.

Inside the 34 pages: a measured engineering drawing of the K6, a century timeline set against world events from Baird's 1926 television demonstration to the iPhone, ten original charts, a field guide to the survivors and 48 references graded by evidence strength, with every statistic

shipped in machine readable form.

Editors: same day interviews are available, the image pack is free with credit, and the data can localise the story to any UK council area, because every town has a box with a story.

A Century in Red: <https://broadbandswitch.uk/reports/a-century-in-red.html>

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