

news release



1 October 2014

BLAKENEY TEAMS UP WITH VODAFONE UK AND NORMAN LAMB MP FOR NORTH NORFOLK'S FIRST COMMUNITY-LED MOBILE PHONE NETWORK

- Community-led initiative with Vodafone brings much needed mobile coverage to North Norfolk
- Blakeney is the only Norfolk community to trial innovative Rural Open Sure Signal technology
- Still time to apply for next phase of programme to bring mobile coverage to a further 100 rural communities across the UK

Blakeney in North Norfolk is the latest rural area chosen by Vodafone UK to develop its own 'community-led network', which is now bringing much needed mobile coverage to the area. This means over 800 residents and local businesses can now benefit from Vodafone 3G signal.

Working with the community and local MP Norman Lamb, Vodafone UK has installed four Rural Open Sure Signal units, which use innovative 'femto cell' technology to provide a Vodafone 3G signal to areas which traditional mobile coverage has been unable to reach. About the size of a cereal box, the units use existing broadband services to deliver the mobile signal needed to provide 3G coverage. The units have been placed throughout the village, including on top of the Kings Arms and The White Horse pubs, the Village Hall and Manor Hotel.

Following the success of the 12 trials running so far, Vodafone recently announced the extension of the programme. The company is now giving up to 100 rural communities across the UK the opportunity to apply for mobile access. Applications for the Rural Open Sure Signal programme close on 14 October 2014 with the first communities to be connected by the end of the year. For more information on the programme and how to apply visit www.vodafone.co.uk/rural

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As well as using Rural Open Sure Signals to plug “not-spots”, Vodafone is also committed to increasing the scale of its existing network and is investing more than £1 billion on its network and services this year. That investment comes on top of the £802m that Vodafone spent acquiring the widest portfolio of mobile spectrum in last year’s auction of new capacity by Ofcom.

Norman Lamb, MP for North Norfolk commented: “I was really pleased to support the local people in Blakeney and help them work with Vodafone to establish a rural open sure signal pilot in the village. This project has been driven by the local community and is a great example of people coming together to deliver positive results. This technology has delivered a good quality mobile signal to many people in Blakeney for the first time and I know that other communities in Norfolk are now considering putting themselves forward to take part in the programme.”

County Councillor, Dr Marie Strong commented: “Having been involved in the project since the initial discussions took place in September 2012 with Vodafone and Blakeney Parish Council it is a pleasure to attend this event. A mark of the success of the Blakeney trial must surely be that the Parish Council is already applying to the new Vodafone programme to extend coverage in Blakeney. There have been several important factors in the success of the trial and I am sure appreciation will be expressed to the Parish Council, the Parish Champion and those who volunteered to house the sure signal equipment.”

Paul Morris, Head of Government Affairs at Vodafone UK added: “Blakeney has shown how real partnership between the local community and their MP is the answer to helping to bring mobile coverage to rural communities. Without the support of Norman, Marie and the whole community, this project wouldn’t have been possible and we’re delighted the community is now benefiting from their great coverage.”

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Notes to editors:

- Vodafone UK has pioneered the use of femto cell technology with its Vodafone Sure Signal product. Vodafone Sure Signal is used by hundreds of thousands of people across the UK every day to boost the in-building 3G coverage of phones they register to use the device. For more information visit vodafone.co.uk/suresignal