

31 December 2014

## Thirtieth anniversary of first UK mobile phone call

- Britain's first-ever mobile phone call was made on Vodafone's UK network 30 years ago
- Michael Harrison, the son of Vodafone's first Chairman, made the call on 1 January 1985
- Thirty years later, Vodafone is an industry leader with 438 million customers, mobile operations in 26 countries and fixed broadband operations in 17 countries

Britain's first-ever mobile phone call was made 30 years ago on the newly-launched Vodafone network. Michael Harrison, the son of former Vodafone Chairman Sir Ernest Harrison, was the first to test the system, calling his father at midnight on 1 January, 1985.

Michael Harrison secretly left his family's New Year's Eve party at their home in Surrey in the UK to surprise his father, calling him from London's Parliament Square. Harrison made the historic call from one of the first mobile devices – a Transportable Vodafone VT1, which weighed 11lb (5kg) and had around 30-minutes of talk time. Harrison recalls that the line was crystal clear, although the excited shouting of New Year's Eve revellers in London created considerable background noise.

As Sir Ernest Harrison answered the phone, Michael said: "Hi Dad. It's Mike. This is the first-ever call made on a UK commercial mobile network". At the other end of the line, champagne corks popped and photographers captured the moment - the culmination of three years of hard work since the bid was made to win the license in 1982.

Days later, a large crowd gathered at St Katherine's Dock in London to watch comedian Ernie Wise make the first public mobile phone call. Wise brought the same Transportable device to St Katherine's Dock in London in a 19th century mail coach, using one of the oldest forms of communications – sending a letter – to highlight the speed and convenience of these new mobile phones.

Ernie Wise's call was received at the original Vodafone headquarters, where a handful of employees were based in an office above an Indian restaurant in Newbury, Berkshire.

For the first nine days of 1985, Vodafone was the only company with a mobile network in the UK.

Heavy and cumbersome, the first generation of mobile phones were sold in the UK from 1984 – before the first products were even available and before the network was officially live. Such was the demand for a fully portable, cellular phone that more than 2,000 orders had been taken by the Vodafone sales team before Michael Harrison made his call from Parliament Square. By the end of 1985, over 12,000 devices had been sold.

All were far from portable and cost around £2,000 – equivalent to roughly £5,000 when taking the inflation rate in to account. However, the early mobile phones symbolised a revolution in communications and were instantly desired by the emerging 'yuppy' set, whose love for the brick-like devices was documented in films and TV shows, from *Wall Street* to *Only Fools and Horses*. Ferrari-driving executives in the first wave of adverts particularly appealed to this market. "You can be in when you're out" declared full-page ads, created by advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi to run in every major British newspaper.

## Vodafone Group Plc

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### Media Relations

[www.vodafone.com/media/contact](http://www.vodafone.com/media/contact)

Thirty years later, Vodafone's technology, once favoured by a select few, now plays a central role in the lives of more than 400 million people on every continent. Vodafone has become a global pioneer in bringing the benefits of the mobile and digital revolution to consumers and businesses across the world. An innovator, Vodafone leads the industry in the development of transformational technologies, from offering 4G services in 15 countries to providing services such as machine-to-machine (M2M) technology and M-Pesa, the mobile payment service that provides financial freedom to millions of people.

Vodafone's evolution is accelerating rapidly: in 2013, Vodafone embarked upon Project Spring - the largest capital investment programme in its history - committing around £19 billion over two years to expand its networks and services across its major markets in Europe, Asia and Africa.

Vodafone Group Chief Commercial and Operations Officer Paolo Bertoluzzo said: "At launch, the founders of Vodafone targeted British 'business executives, sales representatives, journalists, doctors and veterinary surgeons'. Thirty years later, Vodafone's customers range from young people in Europe, India and Africa through to the world's largest multinational businesses. While our business has changed beyond all recognition over the last three decades, our goal and purpose haven't: to continue to empower our customers, whoever and wherever they are, through connectivity, as mobile, broadband and digital transform society in ways unimaginable in the 1980s".

Vodafone is asking people to share their memories of getting their first mobile phone and making their first mobile call, using the hashtags #myfirstmobile and #30yearsVodafone

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## **For further information:**

### **Vodafone Group**

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### **About Vodafone**

Vodafone is one of the world's largest telecommunications companies and provides a range of services including voice, messaging, data and fixed communications. Vodafone has mobile operations in 26 countries, partners with mobile networks in 55 more, and fixed broadband operations in 17 markets. As of 30 September 2014, Vodafone had 438 million mobile customers and 11 million fixed broadband customers. For more information, please visit: [www.vodafone.com](http://www.vodafone.com).