

25th September, 2014

VODAFONE UK TEAMS UP WITH NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NALC) AND COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE TO ENCOURAGE RURAL OPEN SURE SIGNAL APPLICATIONS

- Vodafone UK has teamed up with the National Association of Local Councils and Countryside Alliance to encourage more communities to apply to its Rural Open Sure Signal programme
- The national programme gives 100 rural communities across the UK the opportunity to have mobile coverage for the first time
- Applications close on 14 October, 2014
- Vodafone UK is spending more than £1 billion on its network and services this year

Vodafone UK has received the support of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the national representative body for 9,000 parish and town councils in England and 80,000 councillors responding to the needs to local people, and Countryside Alliance, the major British campaigning organisation on rural issues, for its Rural Open Sure Signal Programme. The programme is a community led initiative, which is giving 100 rural communities, in poor mobile coverage locations across the UK, the opportunity to receive 3G mobile access.

Vodafone UK is encouraging small businesses and community councils to actively engage with their local villages to apply for the installation of Vodafone's innovative Open Sure Signal technology. The national programme closes for applications on 14th October 2014.

Using 'open femto' technology, Vodafone Open Sure Signal provides a Vodafone 3G signal in areas which traditional mobile coverage has been unable to reach. About the size of a domestic broadband box and in a range of colours, the units use existing broadband services to deliver the Vodafone 3G mobile signal. The units can be installed on any number of buildings including village halls, pubs, shops and homes across the community to ensure widespread mobile coverage.

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The benefits of mobile connectivity in rural communities are enormous – from all important calls to family and friends to local enterprises having mobile signal to help make their businesses work better. Vodafone’s initial Rural Open Sure Signal trial has seen the connection of 12 rural communities across the UK, from Walls in the Shetland Islands to Newton St Cyres in Devon. Communities connected so far have been enjoying social media using mobile internet whilst businesses, from GPs to a mussel farmer, now have mobile signal to help make their businesses work better.

Jeroen Hoencamp, Vodafone UK Chief Executive Officer, said: “The Vodafone Rural Open Sure Signal programme has received a tremendously positive response since its launch in July 2014. However, now that the summer holidays are behind us we are keen for more communities across the UK to get involved and I am very pleased that the NALC and the Countryside Alliance are supporting our major programme to improve rural mobile coverage. We are now three weeks away from the closing date and I encourage those who have not yet put in their applications to take up this opportunity to bring mobile access to communities in their local village.”

Cllr Ken Browse, Chairman of the National Association of Local Councils said: “We see fast broadband access as an essential need for the social and economic well-being of neighbourhoods in rural areas as well as urban areas. So we support Vodafone’s Rural Open Sure Signal programme and encourage local councils and communities to commit to citizen-led action by entering this scheme, which could help eventually to protect local assets and services, and deliver responsive services to meet the needs of communities.”

Sarah Lee, Head of Policy for the Countryside Alliance commented: “The importance of good mobile phone and broadband coverage to those who live and work in rural areas cannot be over emphasised. Mobile phones are an essential part of modern life, but many rural businesses and families cannot be sure that they will be able to access their network when they need it most. Vodafone Rural Open Sure Signal is a good example of the innovative systems that can fill in reception gaps in the more remote and difficult to reach areas.”

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As well as using Rural Open Sure Signal to plug 100 rural “not-spots”, Vodafone is spending more than £1 billion on its network and services across the country this year, including extending its 4G coverage to 319 cities and towns and thousands of smaller communities across the UK. Vodafone have pledged to provide coverage using 2G, 3G or 4G services to 98% of the UK population.

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 to see how Cranborne in Dorset has been transformed visit www.vodafone.co.uk/rural

For more information please contact

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Notes to editors:

- The programme involves the use of innovative ‘femtocell’ technology. Vodafone UK has pioneered the use of this technology with Vodafone Sure Signal. Launched in 2009, Vodafone Sure Signal is used by hundreds of thousands of people across the UK every day to boost their in-building 3G coverage. It plugs straight into a home broadband line. For more information visit www.vodafone.co.uk/suresignal
- Coverage predictions are based on a number of factors including that Vodafone can obtain planning permission to build sites, access to land or buildings to place equipment and backhaul to connect sites.
- The 12 communities who were involved in the initial trial were:
 - East Garston (West Berkshire)
 - Winterslow (Wiltshire)
 - Newcastleton (Scottish Borders)
 - Ewyas Harold (Herefordshire)
 - Pendine (South Wales)
 - Walls (Shetland)

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- Witherslack (Cumbria)
- Caldbeck (Cumbria)
- Newton St Cyres (Devon)
- Cranborne (Dorset)
- Kinlochard (Stirling)
- Blakeney (Norfolk)
- For more information on Vodafone's Rural Open Sure Signal programme, visit Vodafone's official blog <http://blog.vodafone.co.uk/>

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