



23 November 2015

CROXTON, REEPHAM AND BLAKENEY ARE THE LATEST COMMUNITIES TO RECEIVE MOBILE COVERAGE WITH VODAFONE RURAL SURE SIGNAL PROGRAMME #ROSS100

- Croxton and Reepham in Norfolk are the latest communities to be connected in Vodafone's Rural Open Sure Signal programme
- Blakeney, which was part of the ROSS trial, has had its coverage extended further with the addition of another ROSS unit
- The ROSS units in Croxton and Reepham are already supporting more than 2,500 data sessions a day
- Part of approximately £2 billion Vodafone is spending on its UK network and services across 2014 and 2015

Vodafone UK has announced the beautiful rural communities of Croxton and Reepham (Norfolk) as the latest communities in a rural mobile not-spot location to receive 3G coverage with Vodafone's Rural Open Sure Signal (ROSS) programme. They join four other communities across Norfolk, including High Kelling, Hillington and Upper Sheringham, which are already live with 3G mobile signal as part of the ROSS programme. Blakeney, which went live in autumn 2014 as part of the ROSS trial, has had another unit installed in the village to broaden the reach of the existing coverage. Vodafone has also brought 3G coverage to two Norfolk pubs as part of our Rural Community Pub pilot programme –The Mermaid Inn (Elsing) and The Cross Keys (Dilham).

Situated in the beautiful Norfolk countryside, Croxton and Reepham have until now suffered from unreliable mobile coverage and slow network speeds across all mobile networks. The ROSS programme uses Vodafone's innovative Sure Signal technology to bring high quality 3G voice services and much needed access to the internet via mobile devices to communities in some of the UK's most beautiful and remote areas. About the size of a cereal box, the Open Sure Signal units connect to existing broadband lines to create 3G coverage, and are installed high up on chimney breasts or the eaves of buildings.

The ROSS programme is a national initiative by Vodafone UK to provide reliable mobile access to up to 100 rural communities in mobile not-spot locations. Launched in July 2014, with support from local MPs, councils and rural

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action groups, the programme received an overwhelming response, with applications from communities across the country from the Shetland Islands to Cornwall to the mountains of Snowdonia.

Mobile connectivity plays a vital role in keeping communities in touch and helps support local economies. However, rural and remote locations often miss out on advantages provided by modern communication tools, due to the complexity of delivering network coverage. This can be because of the geography of the area or difficulties with planning permissions in places of outstanding natural beauty. The ROSS programme uses innovative 'femtocell' technology to provide an alternative solution to bring 3G mobile access in locations where it isn't possible for networks to provide coverage through traditional means.

As part of the ROSS programme, Vodafone teams have now surveyed each of the 100 communities which were added to the programme at the end of last year. The surveys included physical ground assessments by Vodafone engineers as well as detailed fixed broadband speed checks. The teams have also drawn up plans for viable communities to illustrate where the equipment will be sited. The process saw some of the initial communities having their implementation postponed until their community broadband speeds and availability have improved.

Jorge Fernandes, Vodafone UK Chief Technology Officer, said: "I am delighted that Croxton and Reepham have joined our Rural Open Sure Signal programme. Mobile connectivity is an essential service for communities and businesses to thrive in today's digital world and support local economies. As part of the Rural Open Sure Signal programme, we are committed to investing in our network to provide access even in remote locations where it is otherwise almost impossible to reach. The amount of data passing through the units already shows the significant benefit the technology is making to members of these communities. I am really excited to see the transformation for Croxton and Reepham, and the other Norfolk communities which have been successful for this pioneering programme."

Elizabeth Truss, MP for South West Norfolk said: "I am extremely pleased that the residents of Croxton are going to benefit from this investment in 3G coverage. Mobile not spurs is an issue across South West Norfolk and I am delighted that Vodafone has chosen Croxton to be one of the communities to benefit from the Rural Open Sure Signal programme. Good mobile connectivity is particularly vital in rural areas and I will continue to press for improved service across the whole of the county."

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Doug Stephen, Village Champion for Croxton commented: *"Croxton has always suffered with poor mobile coverage. Now that Rural Open Sure Signal (ROSS) has been installed, it is now possible for residents, business owners and visitors to make calls and use the internet on their mobile phones. We can now start enjoying the benefits of an improved mobile coverage for the first time."*

Keith Simpson, MP for Broadland, Norfolk said: *"I am delighted that Reepham residents are now benefitting from improved mobile coverage with the Vodafone Rural Sure Signal Programme. This is a wonderful example of local communities, councils and consumer organisations working together to deliver communications fit for the 21st Century and I am pleased to have been able to help in securing this very important milestone for Reepham."*

Brenda Gostling, Chairman of Reepham Chamber of Commerce, said *"In today's high tech world, a strong mobile phone signal is a key business requirement. Reepham is a small but vibrant market town with many small businesses: the Vodafone Rural Open Sure Signal project has given us an enormous boost and we were delighted to have been selected. This will help to ensure the town's economic sustainability in the longer term"*.

Referring to Chamber member, Jeremy Brockman, who took on the role of Village Champion for the project and acted as liaison between the community, the hosts of the units and Vodafone, Brenda added *"Jeremy's untiring determination has been absolutely key to making this project a success. The whole community should be hugely grateful to him and to those who have agreed to host the new signal boosting equipment."*

As well as using Rural Open Sure Signal to plug rural "not-spots", Vodafone is spending around £2 billion on its network and services across the country over 2014 and 2015. This includes the provision of HD (High Definition) Voice technology on its 3G network and the extension of its 4G coverage to 690 cities and towns and thousands of smaller communities across the UK.

Further communities will be announced over the next few months. For more information on the programme, visit www.vodafone.co.uk/rural.

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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
- Pictures from the launch event are available on request.

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