



7 December 2015

THERE'S NO BITTER RECEPTION IN RURAL CARMARTHENSHIRE AND FLINTSHIRE PUBS AS VODAFONE TECHNOLOGY PILOT GOES LIVE

Regulars and employees of two rural pubs in Wales now have reliable mobile coverage, thanks to a pilot by Vodafone, in partnership with rural pubs organisation, Pub is The Hub.

Both the regulars and the team at the Blue Bell in Halkyn, Flintshire, and the Royal Oak in Rhandirmwyn, Llandoverly in Carmarthenshire, are now enjoying the benefits of reliable indoor mobile coverage and internet access for the first time as part of Vodafone's Rural Community Pub programme.

The pilot involves the installation of Vodafone's Premium Sure Signal in the pubs. The discreet 'femtocell' unit – about the size of a small broadband router – links to the pubs' existing fixed broadband connection and provide reliable, deep indoor 3G voice coverage and high-speed mobile internet access.

Some rural communities and the pubs which support them can struggle to receive decent quality mobile coverage via traditional means. This can be due to a number of factors, including the extreme geographic nature of the area, difficulties with local planning permission or the absence of a fixed fibre connection required to link a mobile mast back to the core network infrastructure.

The Rural Community Pub pilot and Vodafone's innovative 'femtocell' schemes, such as its successful Rural Open Sure Signal (ROSS) programme, help bring reliable coverage to rural communities without the need for a traditional mast.

Pub is The Hub works closely with rural pubs to support rural services through diversification and helped identify the pubs for the pilot scheme. The Blue Bell and the Royal Oak join two Norfolk pubs - the Cross Keys in Dilham and The Mermaid Inn in Elsing - which went live earlier in the autumn.

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Steve Marquis, Landlord at the Blue Bell, Halkyn commented: *"The Blue Bell, Halkyn brings quite a bit of tourism to North East Wales. Vodafone's brilliant 3G coverage will only increase the quality of a visit to our venue. It is a great way for our customers to share their experiences with us instantly through channels like social media."*

Christopher Pollington, Landlord of the Royal Oak Inn, Rhandirmwyn added: *"It has been great to be able to offer this service to our customers. We are very rural and we have little or no mobile coverage from any networks, so to be able to offer 3G in such a remote location is quite remarkable."*

Jorge Fernandes, Vodafone UK Chief Technology Officer, said: *"It's great news that both the Royal Oak and the Blue Bell are beginning to see the benefits of mobile connectivity which is vital to rural communities in today's digital world. Like our Rural Open Sure Signal initiative, the Rural Community Pubs programme uses our innovative small cell solutions to bring mobile coverage to hard-to-reach locations in the UK for the very first time."*

John Longden, Chief Executive for Pub is The Hub said: *"With mobile phone reception in rural Wales being such an asset we were delighted to work with Vodafone on this pilot project – we can only see benefits to rural pubs and their surrounding communities and visitors."*

Vodafone Rural Open Sure Signal (ROSS) programme

Vodafone's Premium Sure Signal service uses 'femtocell' technology similar to that being deployed by Vodafone to connect 100 UK rural communities through its ROSS programme. The ROSS programme fits external 'femtocell' units to a number of buildings across a rural community, including village halls, pubs, shops and homes, to bring 3G coverage for the first time to local residents and visitors. Businesses already benefiting from mobile signal via the programme include pubs in Cumbria, Dorset and Wiltshire as well as a mussel farmer in the Shetland Islands. For more information on the ROSS programme visit vodafone.co.uk/rural

In addition to Vodafone's rural community connecting campaigns, Vodafone is spending more than £2 billion on its network and services across the UK over 2014 and 2015, to extend its 4G coverage to 715 cities and towns and thousands of smaller communities.

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news release



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Notes to editors

- The pilot pubs are:

The Blue Bell, Halkyn, Flintshire (bluebell.uk.eu.org)

The Royal Oak, Rhandirmwyn, Llandovery, Carmarthenshire (theroyaloakinn.co.uk)

The Cross Keys, Dilham, Norfolk (crosskeysdilham.co.uk)

The Mermaid Inn, Elsing, Norfolk (elsingmermaidinn.co.uk)

- Pub is The Hub is a not-for-profit organisation and inspired by HRH the Prince of Wales in 2001. Pub is The Hub offers independent specialist advice on rural services diversification or community ownership of pubs, so they can provide viable local services at the heart of the community. For more information visit pubisthehub.org.uk
- Vodafone UK has pioneered the use of 'femtocell' 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 vodafone.co.uk/suresignal

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