# news release

5 October 2015

## VODAFONE UK CALLS TIME ON NO MOBILE COVERAGE IN RURAL PUBS

- New pilot scheme designed to inject lifeblood into rural community pubs by providing reliable, indoor mobile coverage and internet access
- Four pubs in Norfolk and Wales taking part in pilot

Vodafone UK has launched a new pilot scheme in partnership with rural pubs organisation, Pub is The Hub, which will provide four rural community pubs with reliable indoor mobile coverage for the first time.

Called the Rural Community Pub programme, the pilot will involve the installation of Vodafone's Premium Sure Signal at four rural pubs – two in Norfolk and one each in Dyfed and Flintshire in Wales. The discreet 'femtocell' unit - about the size of a small broadband router - will connect to the pubs' existing fixed broadband connection and provide reliable, deep indoor 3G voice coverage and high-speed 3G mobile internet access for employees and their regulars.

The average pub is estimated to contribute £80,000 to the economy annually*. However, 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 so it was a natural partner when it came to identifying suitable pubs for the pilot scheme.

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The Cross Keys in Dilham, Norfolk and The Mermaid Inn in Elsing, Norfolk are already enjoying the technology, whilst the Blue Bell, Halkyn in Flintshire and The Royal Oak, Rhandirmwyn, Llandovery, Dyfed are expected to go live in the next few months.

Paul Grothier, Landlord at The Cross Keys in Dilham commented: *"I'm really proud that The Cross Keys is the first pub to go live on the trial. Dilham is an area with very little mobile coverage and being on the Norfolk Broads, we get a lot of holiday makers coming into the pub who have previously been disappointed by the lack of coverage. Since the technology has gone live, the pub now has fantastic 3G coverage and fast data speeds. My customers, staff and business are reaping the benefits."*

Steve Marquis, Landlord at the Blue Bell Inn, Halkyn added: *"The Blue Bell Inn, Halkyn brings quite a bit of tourism to North East Wales and the 3G coverage that the Vodafone Rural Community Pub programme will bring could hopefully be one of the key drivers to increase the quality of a visit to our venue. Customers will have an instant way to share experiences here in this increasingly connected world."*

Jorge Fernandes, Vodafone UK Chief Technology Officer, said: "*We are delighted to be able to help these rural pubs extend and broaden the vital range of services they provide to the communities they serve through the use of the latest mobile technology. Pubs up and down the UK are key to the economic and social well-being of rural communities and the country. By combining our innovative programmes, such as Rural Community Pubs and ROSS, with our current network improvement programme, we are calling time on no rural mobile coverage."*

John Longden, Chief Executive for Pub is The Hub said: "*When so much of modern life is about 'connectivity' 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."*

Norman Lamb, MP for North Norfolk commented: "*This is really good news. I'm delighted that the Cross Keys at Dilham is participating in this scheme. Village pubs are really important to the local community. Indoor mobile internet will be very attractive for customers.*"

George Freeman, MP for Mid Norfolk added: "*I am delighted to hear about Vodafone's new initiative to boost mobile signal and 3G coverage in Norfolk through the Rural Community Pub Programme. For too long commercial properties in rural communities have lost out as they lagged behind the rest of the UK in digital connectivity. This*

*programme is a great example of the innovative thinking we need and I'm delighted that the Mermaid Inn in Elsing is participating in this important scheme to both improve connectivity and support the local economy.*"

### 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 inhabitants 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 www.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 650 cities and towns and thousands of smaller communities.

### For more information please contact

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### Notes to editors

- *Department of Communities and Local Government (January 2015) www.gov.uk/government/speeches/community-pubs
- Pilot pubs are:
  - The Cross Keys, Dilham, Norfolk www.crosskeysdilham.co.uk
  - The Mermaid Inn, Elsing, Norfolk www.elsingmermaidinn.co.uk
  - The Blue Bell, Halkyn, Flintshire www.bluebell.uk.eu.org
  - The Royal Oak, Rhandirmwyn, Llandovery, Dyfed www.theroyaloakinn.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 www.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 www.vodafone.co.uk/suresignal