

# theConnection

newsletter of **thePhoneCo-op**

## Even better value phone and broadband

**We've launched a new home phone and broadband package which we think offers a great deal and covers all your essential services. For just £22.95 a month (inc VAT) we'll provide your line rental, free UK evening and weekend calls, 40GB broadband plus a wireless router.**

The package is available to anyone whose local exchange has been 'unbundled' (that's means it's been freed up for suppliers other than BT) and covers around 85% of the UK population. If you don't live in an eligible area, we can still make the same services available to you for a small increase in price.

You can also tailor the package to suit your individual needs. If you already have a router or are happy to sign up to a contract longer than 18 months, we'll take money off. If you'd like to build in daytime calls, international calls, extra broadband, a speed upgrade, or fixed rate mobile calls – we can do all these from as little as £3 per month per additional service.

You can find out more and switch to the new package online at [www.thephone.coop/residential/packages](http://www.thephone.coop/residential/packages). Alternatively, if you'd like to talk through the options in more detail, call Doug or Henry on **0845 458 9040**.

## Let's get Greener Together!

**The Phone Co-op has joined with other co-operatives in a six-month project to demonstrate how we can make a significant impact on climate change by making small changes in our lifestyles.**

Our members have completed a baseline survey and then made two pledges to change their habits in areas such as energy, personal transport and waste. The final survey in six months' time will measure the success of the project. If you would like to get involved in Greener Together, and you're a member of The Phone Co-op, join the programme by visiting [www.greenertogether.coop](http://www.greenertogether.coop) and signing up before the end of June. Thank you to all our members who are participating.



## Phone Co-op awarded Social Enterprise Mark

**The Phone Co-op has become the first telecoms provider to be awarded the Social Enterprise Mark.**

The Social Enterprise Mark identifies businesses which meet defined criteria for social enterprise, and aims

to help consumers recognise that businesses displaying the Mark are 'trading to benefit people and planet.'

Vivian Woodell, chief executive of The Phone Co-op, commented, "This is an exciting time for the social enterprise movement and the Mark is an important step in raising awareness of what social enterprises do in order to get more people to buy from, engage with, start up and work for social enterprises. We are optimistic about what the Mark can achieve and excited to be a part of it."

Social Enterprise Mark Champion, Lucy Findlay, added, "We're very pleased to have some great social enterprises, such as The Phone Co-op, in the first wave of new Mark holders. They have proved that they are businesses that deliver huge social benefits through their services."



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# Customer profile: whomadeyourpants?

**An innovative worker co-operative in Southampton is one of the latest businesses to choose The Phone Co-op.**

whomadeyourpants? is about two things. It's about pants (beautiful, ethical pants) and it's about women. Women who want to work but don't get many chances.

Founder Becky John explains: "Here at whomadeyourpants? we think that every day should be a good pants day. Underwear can make us feel beautiful and confident. We also think that it's not really on for anyone to be made to work in bad conditions just for a cheap pair of pants. How can that be right?"

whomadeyourpants? puts these two things together, working with women here in the UK, primarily from refugee communities, and helping them learn to make gorgeous pants which can be worn safe in the knowledge that they had a very happy start in life. The co-operative provides up-front training in English if required, and then in sewing. Every woman accepted onto their course goes through NVQ training and is encouraged to train to be a team leader too. All the profits go back into the business to provide further training, support and advice.

"whomadeyourpants? is so pleased to be working in partnership with The Phone Co-op" says Becky. "The Phone Co-op is not only a fellow co-operative entity, but they share our values of democratic ownership and decision making, ethical and socially responsible business behaviour, and commitment to environmental best practice."

Read more about the whomadeyourpants? story at [www.whomadeyourpants.co.uk](http://www.whomadeyourpants.co.uk)



Southern Daily Echo

## Celebrating co-operation

**Co-operatives across the UK are celebrating Co-operatives Fortnight this month.**

From 19 June to 3 July a series of events will encourage us all to celebrate and promote co-operation as communities, businesses, colleagues and individuals. Find out more about what's going on in your area and how you can get involved at [www.thereisanalternative.coop](http://www.thereisanalternative.coop)



## Would you like to recommend a business service with added values?

**For many of our business customers, especially those in the third sector with values similar to our own, The Phone Co-op is a natural candidate when looking for a telecoms supplier.**

It's not just our ethical and environmental policies that make us stand out from the crowd – we offer highly competitive rates, a broad range of services and excellent customer service through our

dedicated account management team. In the past few weeks, The Big Issue and Penrith Co-operative Society have both opted to move to The Phone Co-op.

If you're a home user of our services, please consider recommending us to your employer or to a voluntary organisation to which you belong, such as your church, a charity or campaigning group, using this link: [www.thephone.coop/helpusgrow](http://www.thephone.coop/helpusgrow)

# Green Challenge success: part 2

In the last issue of *The Connection* we reported on the Isle of Eigg's success in NESTA's Big Green Challenge which set out to stimulate and support community-led responses to climate change.

Of the three winners, in fact, two were Phone Co-op affinity partners. The other was the Ludlow-based Household Energy Service which has so far helped 1,450 households reduce their carbon emissions by an average of 29%.

Congratulating them on their success, Jonathan Kestenbaum, NESTA's chief executive, said, 'The Household Energy Service team has exceeded our expectations of what communities can achieve in reducing carbon emissions. The

success of the project proves that when communities are incentivised, empowered and supported they become a compelling force in solving some of society's biggest challenges.'

Find out more about the work of the Household Energy Service at [www.h-es.org](http://www.h-es.org)



## Don't get caught out by call-out charges

**Claire Wright from our Customer Services team explains how you can avoid unnecessary call-out charges.**

If you have line rental with The Phone Co-op and your line goes down, call our Customer Services team and we'll do our utmost to get it fixed as soon as possible. Getting a faulty line fixed is ultimately the responsibility of BT Openreach and their engineers; however, if we call them out and they discover that the line itself is fine, but your phone or other equipment is faulty, then you are charged for the call-out visit.

We always do our best to ascertain that it's the line itself that isn't working before we call out an engineer. So the first thing we do when a customer calls with a fault is to perform a line test. If this doesn't detect any faults, we ask the

customer to carry out some checks on their equipment:

- Try a different phone, preferably corded. If you only have a cordless phone, see if you can borrow a corded one from a friend or neighbour, just to test it out.
- Unplug other equipment, such as routers, microfilters, and other phones in extensions
- Test from the master socket. You do this by removing the front plate which will expose the test socket into which you plug a phone.

If the line is working when tested in the master socket, we suggest you re-connect your other equipment one piece at a time. If the fault returns it will be due to the last piece you re-connected.

## Volunteering for a fruitful future



**Colleagues Amanda Beard and Matt Lane recently spent half a day working as volunteers helping to clear and plant a new community orchard.**

The project is being jointly organised by Transition Chipping Norton and the Green Gym which in turn is part of conservation charity BTCV. The Phone Co-op offers all its employees the opportunity to spend a day each year working for a charity or other voluntary organisation.

## Introducing ...

**our new Secretary, Membership & Co-operative Affairs Manager**

Hello – I'm Amanda Beard and, if my name is familiar, it is because I have been here at The Phone Co-op for over ten years. For much of that time I was manager of the Customer Services team.

I've recently taken that wealth of experience to a new role – Secretary, Membership & Co-operative Affairs Manager. This exciting challenge sees me working with our Board of Directors ensuring the smooth running of their meetings throughout the year, as well as encouraging all our customers to join us as members and reap the rewards of ownership and a share in profits. I'm also exploring new ways of involving and engaging our members in initiatives like Greener Together

([www.greeneraltogether.coop](http://www.greeneraltogether.coop)). I welcome your ideas and suggestions for member participation and feedback on any of our initiatives, which you can direct to me at [amanda@thephone.coop](mailto:amanda@thephone.coop)

What would make me very happy? If every one of you joined as a member! If you would like to do so then go to <http://www.thephone.coop/about-us/membership> or contact me on 01608 647712 or by email and I will send you a form.



## thePhoneCo-op

5 Millhouse  
Elmsfield Business Centre  
Worcester Road  
Chipping Norton  
OX7 5XL

### Customer service

0845 458 9000  
Monday – Friday: 9am – 7pm  
Saturday: 9am – 3pm

### Residential sales

0845 458 9040

### Business sales

0845 458 9070

### Fax

0845 458 9001

### Email - General enquiries

enquiries@thephone.coop

### Internet & broadband

internetsupport@thephone.coop

### Billing

bills@thephone.coop

[www.thephone.coop](http://www.thephone.coop)

# Affinity partner profile: Transition Network

**A Transition Initiative (which could be a town, village, city, university or island) is a community-led response to the pressures of climate change, fossil fuel depletion and increasingly, economic contraction.**

Based in Totnes, Devon, Transition Network's mission is to inspire, encourage, connect, support and train communities as they self-organise around the transition model and create initiatives that rebuild resilience, reduce CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and re-establish the local economic and social strands that have withered during the age of cheap oil. They

are also one of our newest affinity partners and are now working with us to promote The Phone Co-op to their supporters.

Chipping Norton, the town in which our head office is based, is embracing the transition process, and a number of our employees are volunteering in that initiative to make a difference in our local community. They are addressing issues such as education and employment, traffic and transport and local food and drink in the area.

You can find out more at [www.transitionnetwork.org](http://www.transitionnetwork.org)

## Getting the best out of broadband

**Internet service providers (ISPs) typically advertise their products as working at speeds "up to" 8, 24 or even 50Mbps, but what does this actually mean for you in practice and what can you do to ensure you get the best possible speeds?**

### What speeds to expect

In order to avoid confusion, it's best to be aware of the following definitions:

- **Headline speed** - the speed advertised as the maximum available
- **Actual speed** - the top speed supported by your line, determined primarily by the distance between your home and the local exchange
- **Throughput speed** - the day-to-day speed you will experience online. It can be highly variable and is affected by your ISP's network and the number of people sharing the network or accessing a particular website.

### How this affects you

Our headline speeds are 8Mbps and 24Mbps. You can use our checker (<http://www.thephone.coop/support/speed-test-bt>) to get some idea of what to expect as your actual speed.

During the first ten days of service, your line's speed will fluctuate as it adapts to the maximum rate it can support. There are several steps you can take to ensure you always get the best possible speed.

### Hardware tips

- Use a router instead of a modem
- Connect your router with an Ethernet cable instead of wirelessly

- Attach microfilters to *all* your phone sockets

### Positioning tips

- Always connect your router to the master phone socket
- Keep the router away from electrical equipment that may cause interference, like cordless phones or Sky box
- Use a long Ethernet cable if you need to place your router away from the socket. If you have to use telephone wiring, use round copper cable rather than aluminium.
- If using a wireless router, try and keep it in your line of sight when at your computer
- Avoid reflective surfaces, as some wireless signals will bounce off windows, mirrors and metal countertops

### General tips

- Set up security on your wireless network to ensure that you're not sharing your connection with your neighbours
- Select a different wireless channel than your router's default to prevent interference from neighbours' routers
- Close background applications and unplug any USB devices.
- Make sure you're using the most recent version of your web browser

Follow this advice and you should get one of the best broadband experiences available.