

theConnection

newsletter of **thePhoneCo-op**

Welcome to our new website

In August www.thephone.coop was given a grand redesign. The website received a facelift, and a total rewrite, making it much more pleasing on the eye, more informative, and easier for you to find whatever you're looking for.

Our previous site had been more or less unchanged since 2002, and was not working as well as we would have liked, so we selected local design company mark-making to help bring our vision of a new site to life. It was a two-way process: mark-making were keen to learn about how we do business and wanted to

present ourselves. At the same time, they were able to challenge our assumptions and preconceptions of what visitors would want from our site. Together we created a website that we are all proud of, and hope you enjoy visiting.

Now you can easily view your calls online, check your e-mail and make a payment, all from the Home page. You can find anything you need using the search box on the left of the screen.

Try it out – we're sure you'll learn something about us you never knew before!



Awards success

We're delighted to report that since our last issue we are the first-ever winners of both the Federation of Communications Services Green Award and the Co-operativesUK Award for Excellence in Reporting Standards.

The FCS Green Award recognises the telecoms supplier "who is making real progress in reducing the adverse environmental impacts of their business processes, products and services," while the Reporting Standards award presented at this year's Co-operative Congress relates to "excellence in reporting commercial, co-operative and social performance to members."

Earlier in the summer we were also runner-up in the sustainability category of the Oxfordshire Business Awards.

And now, hot on the heels of these successes, comes news that we are a finalist in the National Business Awards – results to be announced in November.

Phone Co-op Chief Executive Vivian Woodell said, "We believe our customer-owned co-operative business model can make a unique contribution to our economy and our society, and is an essential ingredient in our success. Being recognised by a series of awards within the last year is a tribute to everyone involved in our business – employees and customer-members alike."



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thePhoneCo-op

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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

ACT! on climate change now

Spearheaded by Bob Burlton, one of our directors and President of Consumer Co-operatives Worldwide, ACT! is a new campaign to get all members of co-operatives around the world (that's potentially 800 million people) to act on climate change before the Copenhagen Climate Conference in December.

ACT!, which stands for Addressing the Climate Threat, aims to co-ordinate and promote the activities of co-operatives across Europe to ensure that their voice is heard in response to impending climate change.

What you can do now:

- Go to the ACT! website – www.actonclimate.coop – and sign the co-operatives petition

demanding a fair, ambitious and binding agreement at Copenhagen

- Sign up to 10:10, also at www.actonclimate.coop, to significantly reduce your carbon emissions.

"Over 11.3 million people in the UK are members of co-operatives– that's one in five of the population. If we all sign the petition and pledge to cut our carbon emissions we'll have a huge impact." Dame Pauline Green, Chief Executive of Co-operativesUK and Co-President of Cooperatives Europe.



Introducing our new business VoIP service – FeaturePlus

VoIP (voice over IP), the ability to make calls using the internet instead of the standard telephone network, comes into its own with our FeaturePlus service.

A great alternative to hosted phone systems like BT's FeatureLine, FeaturePlus allows you to run extra virtual lines off your exchange line, using your broadband connection.

With very low call rates to all destinations included, FeaturePlus is the perfect alternative to a low-cost phone system, and a great way of expanding your office telecoms, for

instance to link in remote workers or to connect with colleagues working overseas.

Starting at £7.50 a month, with an initial £25 connection charge, you can take control of all your calls. Choose FeaturePlus and select your own phone number, use the service wherever there's an internet connection, set up call diverts and hunt groups, and transfer calls between users.

Call **0845 458 9070** or visit www.thephone.coop/featureplus to learn more.

Expansion in the North East

Nearly 300 new business customers, mainly in the North East, transferred to The Phone Co-op this summer following our acquisition of Consett-based Avoco.

These customers, who include several local authorities and public sector agencies, will continue to receive support from former Avoco staff but will now have access to The Phone Co-op's wider range of services.

"The addition of Avoco's

customers to our business is an important step in our development," commented Vivian Woodell, chief executive of The Phone Co-op. "There was a good match between our two organisations, both of which have a strong track record of providing excellent service. At the same time, we're delighted to be able to offer Avoco customers the opportunity to become members of our co-operative and to share in our success as we grow."

Another day, another BT price rise

By the time you read this, BT will have increased their call set-up fee yet again. They last upped it in April, from 6.85p to 8p. From 1 October, it becomes 9p – an increase of over 30% from this time last year.

Users of their Weekend and Evening & Weekend packages will also find the cost of UK daytime calls has increased. Previously, this had gone up from 3.91p per minute to 4.5p in April. Now it's about to become 5.25p per minute.

But there's good news from The Phone Co-op.

BT do include calls to 0845 and 0870 calls in their bundles, and use this to justify the high set-up cost – but, if you're looking for a directly comparable package, you can now get 0845, 0870 and international calls in The Phone Co-op's new Global Connect packages, which have a low call set-up fee of 6.85p.

How's that for value?

Could you be a Director?

The terms of office of two of the eight Directors of The Phone Co-op will come to an end at the AGM in early February and all members will shortly be receiving details of the Board elections.

If you think you have skills and/or experience to offer The Phone Co-op as it grows and develops, please do consider standing for election. The Board is always keen to encourage well-contested elections, a sign of thriving democracy. A series of

briefings for potential candidates will be held later in the year.

If you're not already a member, do consider joining. Having a voice in the way our co-operative is run is just one of the benefits. All you need to do is invest a minimum of £1 in a Phone Co-op share account – to find out more visit www.thephone.coop/members, email enquiries@thephone.coop or call us on **0845 458 9000** and ask for a copy of our membership leaflet.

Divine reward ~ if you recommend a friend

We've joined forces with Fairtrade pioneers Divine Chocolate to offer our customers the chance to win a delicious hamper of chocolate worth £50. Every time you refer a friend to The Phone Co-op during October and November 2009 your name will be entered into the draw. The more friends you refer, the more chances you have to win!

Not only could you be in with a chance of winning a fantastic selection of Divine Chocolate, but we'll also offer your friends £20 off their first bill when they sign up to any of our phone, broadband or mobile packages.

Please visit www.thephone.coop for more details.



Moving house?

It's easy to move your phone number, broadband or any other Phone Co-op service to your new address.

Just call our Customer Services team on **0845 458 9000** and we'll

make sure you stay connected. We need at least two weeks' notice to be sure of moving all your services smoothly and on time, but we will always do our best to help whatever notice is given.

Meet the Director: Paul Hopewell

I first became a Phone Co-op customer and member in 2001 after learning of the organisation through an environmental charity. It took me several years to pluck up the courage to stand for election and, after one previous failed attempt, I was successful in the 2009 elections by the narrowest of margins.

Although most of our Board meetings are held by telephone and email some, including the AGM, are face-to-face. It was a snowy February weekend when I was on my way to the AGM and I was feeling anxious about meeting the rest of the Board for the first time. I needn't have worried because from the first moment I was made to feel welcome and very much involved – perhaps I'd forgotten how co-operative people can be!

A co-operative is run in a different way to other businesses and The Phone Co-op's democratic model means that any customer can offer themselves for service on the Board and thereby help shape what we do now and for the future. I freely admit that I came to the Board knowing nothing about the telecoms world, but that doesn't stop me from playing an active role and it should not deter anyone else from standing for election either. Will you join us?



Affinity partner profile: Isle of Eigg

Over the years we've built up relationships with a wide array of affinity partners and now we're adding an entire island to the list. And not just any island.

One of the Inner Hebrides, Eigg is notable not only for the beauty of its landscape and its abundant wildlife; it's also famous as the first Scottish island community to buy its land. Back in 1996 the islanders mounted a spirited campaign to secure their own future and with the help of the Highland Council, the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) and thousands of individual supporters they succeeded in buying the island from their previous landowner.

The Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust now manages the island on behalf of the 95 islanders, the Highland Council and the SWT. It aims to retain a viable and empowered community and to use the island's resources for the common good. Last year, for example, after decades of reliance on individual diesel generators, the islanders installed their own renewable 24-hour electricity supply using a combination of wind, hydro and solar energy and delivered via an island-wide grid now maintained by Eigg Electric, a subsidiary of the Trust.



The partnership with The Phone Co-op will be promoted not only to islanders but also to visitors and to Eigg's many friends around the country, and will generate additional income for the Trust to pursue its environmental and community goals. Indeed, the Trust itself has already transferred the hosting of its website and email domains to The Phone Co-op.

Vivian Woodell, who visited Eigg this summer with his family, said, "Eigg is an inspirational community. The islanders made history when they bought their land, but they haven't stopped there. Their work towards a sustainable future which accommodates both the challenges and advantages of their remote and beautiful location holds lessons for any community."

To find out more about Eigg and its Big Green Footsteps initiative, visit www.islandgoinggreen.org



Getting to know you ...

A few months ago, we sent out a questionnaire to 2,000 randomly selected customers. We'd like to thank everyone who responded - a response rate of over 25% meant that we've been able to analyse nearly 550 questionnaires and to draw some significant conclusions from the exercise.

Probably the most important thing we want to know is 'are you happy?' And, on the whole, it seems that you are. Over 90% of you think we offer good value for money and 84% rate our customer service as very good or excellent. Most pleasing of all, nearly 94% of you would recommend us to friends or other businesses.

But the point of the survey is not to lapse into self-congratulation. There's plenty of useful feedback

which will help us improve further, in particular in areas such as sorting out recurrent or tricky technical issues.

For the first time, we also sent out a separate survey to 500 former customers asking for honest feedback on why they had moved away from The Phone Co-op. Interestingly, 94% of respondents said that they had been either satisfied or very satisfied with our service and one of the most common reasons for switching supplier was moving house.

The moral of the story? Don't forget that when you move, we can move your telephone and broadband services with you to your new home or business location. Call our Customer Services team and we'll do everything for you.