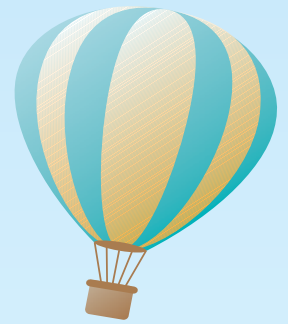


# theConnection

newsletter of thePhoneCo-op

Summer 2011



## Can you help us grow?

**Together with our members and customers, we've made The Phone Co-op a modern co-operative success story.**

We've brought a new approach to an industry where consumers have not always been well treated, where sharp selling practices have been commonplace, and where ethics have taken a low profile. We've also demonstrated that a customer-owned co-operative, based on different principles from our competitors, can thrive in a new area which is also a fast-moving, highly competitive marketplace. As our co-operative grows, so does our impact, as well as our ability to offer the best prices, alongside excellent levels of personal service, so we're asking you if you will help The Phone Co-op grow some more.

All home users should by now have received a leaflet with two tear-off coupons

for you to pass to friends or family members whom you think might benefit from our services. Much of our growth already comes from our happy customers recommending us to their friends but we thought it was time we started thanking you for doing so. For each friend you recommend who takes up our service, we'll give both of you a £10 credit on your bill. What's more, we'll enter both your names into a draw for a year's free phone and broadband.

All you have to do is fill out your name and account number on the coupons you pass to your friends. There's no limit to the number of people you recommend or the number of times you can enter the draw, so if you'd like more leaflets with coupons, just visit [www.thephone.coop/referafriend](http://www.thephone.coop/referafriend) or call us on **0845 458 9040** and let us know how many you'd like!



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## Midcounties chooses The Phone Co-op

**The Phone Co-op has been chosen by The Midcounties Co-operative, the UK's second largest independent co-operative, as its primary telecommunications supplier for the next three years.**

The Midcounties Co-operative has some 8,500 staff working at 450 food stores, travel agencies, childcare sites, pharmacies, funeral homes, post offices, newsagents and offices across Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Oxfordshire, the West Midlands and surrounding counties.

The Phone Co-op had previously supplied Oxford, Swindon and Gloucester Co-op, and when they merged with West Midlands Co-op in 2005 to form Midcounties, was confirmed as their supplier. This new 3-year contract was agreed following a detailed tendering process and assessment of the market including cost comparisons between several potential suppliers.

Guy Ohlenschlager of The Phone Co-op commented, "This long-term relationship is based on us always being able to offer competitive rates together with a very high level of individual account management and support. A dedicated account management team provides Midcounties staff with daily updates and has helped them manage the development and expansion of their network."



## New friends next door

**Introducing themselves with a basket of Easter eggs got things off to a great start when our new neighbours Plush Chocolates moved into the building next door to us.**

Founded a couple of years ago by Sarah Hobbs and Jenny Silverthorne-Wright, who had previously worked together at Oxfam, Plush is inspired by their shared love of chocolate and desire to improve the lives of people through fair and ethical trade.

Plush are dedicated to making sure their chocolates are not only fabulous but fair too. Their chocolates are made by skilled artisans in both the UK and Belgium, using Fairtrade cocoa beans from the Dominican Republic, Peru and Ghana, and Fairtrade sugar from Paraguay. One of their sources, Conacado, is a well established Fairtrade co-operative with 9,500 members; sales to the Fairtrade market have enabled Conacado to set up a nursery that supplies low cost plants to farmers so that they can grow most of their own food.

Plush packaging is ethical too, with trays made from biodegradable corn starch, and handmade gift boxes made by Fairtrade producer groups in the

mountains of Indian Kashmir. Some lines are also organic and gluten free and most are suitable for vegetarians.

You can find out more about Plush at [www.plushchocolates.co.uk](http://www.plushchocolates.co.uk) and if you quote CP0001, they'll give Phone Co-op customers a neighbourly 15% discount on any online order.



## Customer profile: Sir Thomas Boughy High School

**Based upon internationally agreed ethical values, co-operative schools are fast becoming the new force in education.**

Sir Thomas Boughy High School in Newcastle-under-Lyme is one of a national network of co-operatively owned schools which benefit from close working links with the co-operative movement, including sponsorship from the Co-operative Group and other consumer co-operatives such as The Midcounties Co-operative.

And the results speak for themselves. An impressive 82% of pupils achieve five top grades in GCSEs and in its latest Ofsted inspection the school was judged as 'outstanding' with the inspectors commenting on the positive impact of its co-operative status: "The school's specialism of business and the Co-operative movement's support chime with its ethos of equality, fairness and sustainability, and permeate all that it does. The development of the school as a business and enterprise college with the Co-operative movement has enriched your education and provided you with some world class experiences."

Choosing The Phone Co-op was a natural move. The school has a 30-extension phone system, supplied by The Phone Co-op, which makes communications easier for staff and parents alike. Incoming callers can route themselves directly

to the department they require and all staff benefit from voice mail.

The Phone Co-op's competitive pricing allowed the school to save money on both call and ISDN line rental services. According to Head Teacher David Boston, "The savings amount to the equivalent of a part-time salary and are used to improve opportunities for pupils."

He added, "The school is now a member owned co-operative in its own right with its staff, parents and members of the community as members. Working with another co-operative such as The Phone Co-op is a natural process for us as we know that their business is based upon the same sound values as our own school."

Find out more about the school at [www.stb.coop](http://www.stb.coop)



# Using Pay As You Go mobile? Switch to Pay As You Use and save!

**Pay As You Go rates can be unbelievably expensive – some networks charge 35p a minute for the privilege of paying in advance.**

If you are using a pre-paid mobile service, there are big savings to be made using our Pay As You Use service. You pay line rental of £2 a month and then just pay for your calls (only 7p/min) and texts

(also 7p) each month on your Phone Co-op bill. No need to top-up, no paying in advance – and you'll be amazed how much you save. You can keep your phone and number when you move to us.

To sign up, find out more or for advice on the best package for you, visit our website [www.thephone.coop/mobile](http://www.thephone.coop/mobile) or call our sales team on **0845 458 9040**.

## Meet the team: Customer Services

**Headed by Marianne O'Brien, our Customer Service team has welcomed several new members over the past couple of months.**

The team are based in our Chipping Norton head offices which occupy a former farm, their common goal is to provide you with a friendly, speedy and

efficient response to any enquiries or problems you may have as a customer. A change of address, a question about your bill or reporting a line fault – the Customer Services team deals with a wide range of queries each day. You can contact them by calling **0845 458 9000** or emailing [customerservices@thephone.coop](mailto:customerservices@thephone.coop)



## Pedal power

**According to our customer surveys, one of our members' most important considerations is how happy our employees are.**

Phone Co-op staff receive various benefits, including a non-contributory pension and staff discount, but one of the most popular is that everyone who works here is entitled to a bicycle. These are intended primarily for cycling to work and for business journeys, but of course The Phone Co-op encourages people to use them in their leisure time as well.

Chipping Norton, where our head office is based, doesn't boast a cycle repair shop so two of our team took a one day training course with Oxford Cycle Workshop, a community-owned co-operative, to learn some basic skills. Gemma and Amanda learned how to change a tyre without tyre leavers, how to grease bearings and adjust brakes and gears. It was an enjoyable and

instructive day with like-minded co-operators and since their return to the office they have encouraged their colleagues to participate in the Oxfordshire Cycle Challenge, recording daily rides to work as well as leisure trips, with the promise of prizes. Two bikes have been ordered for new cyclists and we hope that this will be the age of a super-fit workforce!



## Membership – what's stopping you?

The Phone Co-op has a vibrant and engaged membership. Members have a real sense of involvement with the business, and a feeling of pride in what we have achieved together. They also share in a dividend based on the services they use and receive interest on their investment.

**So what stops every customer from becoming a member if the benefits are so plain to see?**

The most frequently given reason is that customers believe they are already members because they have a Co-operative card from one of the retail societies. While we are all part of the co-operative movement, The Phone Co-op is a separate co-operative in its own right and you can be a member of it as well as a member of your local co-operative society, sharing the benefits of both.

Membership is open to every Phone Co-op customer. All you have to do is open a share account and invest a minimum of £1.

You can find more details on our website at [www.thephone.coop/membership](http://www.thephone.coop/membership) or call Amanda, your Membership Manager on **0845 458 9012** or [amanda@thephone.coop](mailto:amanda@thephone.coop)



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

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# Affinity Partner Profile: RSPCA

## Matt Lane reports on our latest affinity partnership.

We are delighted to be working with the RSPCA as they are one of the most well-known and respected charities in the UK. It is testament to our unique values and better way of doing business that they chose The Phone Co-op as their phone and broadband partner. We are very excited about the potential to promote our services to their supporters, whilst in the process helping the RSPCA continue their excellent work to prevent cruelty, promote kindness to and alleviate the suffering of animals.

Phone Co-op customers may like to know more about the RSPCA Good Business Awards which recognise the very best businesses in fashion and food that support higher animal welfare across their product range. For example, a retailer, pub or restaurant that uses all free range chicken and eggs, or outdoor reared pork products. The winners are showcased on the RSPCA's consumer

lifestyle site [www.goodthings.org.uk](http://www.goodthings.org.uk) where you will also find some higher welfare recipes for your barbecue this summer, scrummy sandwich recipes with Fairer Fillings and you can check out the latest trends from the catwalk with our high street retailers supporting ethical fashion. By supporting these businesses you are showing your support for animals to live a better life and be treated with respect in a humane way.



## Sign the petition, show your support

### Inequality in the UK is at its highest since records began. Surprised?

It's a shocking fact that today the poorest half of the population owns a meagre 1% of the nation's wealth. Just a generation ago it was 12%.

As co-operatives across the UK gear up for the second Co-operatives Fortnight (25 June - 9 July), a petition has been launched calling for government action to narrow the gap between rich and poor in the UK.

Co-operatives believe that enabling employees, consumers and residents to have a wider share of ownership and wealth is good for society and the economy. That's why we're calling on government to support action to share ownership and wealth by:

- encouraging business to share profits with staff, customers and communities more widely;
- promoting community ownership as one way to save lifeline services, such as village shops and pubs, and enable people to take action on housing, arts, sport, land, finance and green energy;
- cutting red tape so that it is as easy to start a co-operative as any other form of business

Co-operatives Fortnight is the annual campaign from the UK co-operative sector. Sponsored by key co-operative businesses and co-ordinated by Co-operatives UK, Co-operatives Fortnight ran for the first time in 2010. In its first year, over 160 events were held, 70,000 people got involved online, 2.3 million people were engaged overall and 43 million people heard about it from the media.

If you'd like to get involved, visit [www.uk.coop/yourstoshare](http://www.uk.coop/yourstoshare) You can also sign the petition online at this site.

