

## **Fibre Broadband Telephones now that B4RN is being installed.**

Now that the B4RN project has started to roll out and people are talking about **when** and not **if** they will be connected to Gigabit Internet speeds, we now need to concentrate and decide on what we will be doing about telephones.

Hopefully you are up to date with the options we have outlined in the last bulletin **The Phone Guys** posted on the B4KO Facebook page in October. So, in trying to choose what to do, the next step is for you to analyse how you use your telephones.

You now are probably using your tablets, Pc's, laptops and mobile phones in a very different way than you were before lockdown. The words WhatsApp and Zoom have crept in to our everyday language when we discovered that we could see friends and family as well as talk to them free over the internet. This was followed very quickly by the use of Rooms on Facebook and Teams on Microsoft, as well as a myriad of other Apps where you can both talk and see your friends and loved ones absolutely free. Of course, those people who had I-Phones were already using Facetime to keep in touch. Such is the change in Phone communication that, this in itself, may have altered your view about the future use of your "landline" phone.

### **But I have decided that I don't need a VOIP phone and I'm just going to use my mobile Phone?**

If you have made the decision that with the advent of high-speed **reliable** broadband you will just do away with your "Landline" and rely on your mobile through standard call reception or internet-based services like WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype, WIFI Calling etc, then you don't need to read on!

### **I don't seem to have "WIFI Calling" on my mobile?**

Some mobile companies automatically set up **Wifi Calling** which allows the phone to use the Wifi signal from your internet router to send and receive phone calls when you can't get a phone signal. If your phone doesn't show "Wifi Calling" at the top of your screen then ring up your customer service number for your provider and get it added. It is free but often needs setting up. **WhatsApp** receives as well as sends calls but the sender and receiver must both have WhatsApp installed on their phones. This is the same for most other apps, Zoom, Skype, Facebook messenger, etc, Facetime also only works between I-Phones.

### **But I have decided that I need a landline?**

If you have decided you do need a "Landline" then you also need to decide how you will use the phone in the future to get the most cost-effective phone package.

Do you use the "landline" a lot or very occasionally?

Can you get a good mobile signal outside your house or even inside?

Do I use it for business or just to ring friends and family?

The word package sounds like the jargon used by mobile phone providers when you sign up for a new contract which of course that's what we said in the last post. You will be signing up for a "package" which is designed around your needs. There are dizzying number of companies which can offer packages which will cater for all of your needs and of course you can choose any one of them to provide your landline. In the spreadsheet with this post, we have highlighted several companies which other B4RN projects have used and can verify that they provide a good service (i.e. recommended by fellow B4RN customers). Have a good look at the recommended companies and

their offerings. Prices were correct at the time the spreadsheet was compiled, please check with the provider!

### **What do these packages mean?**

So, like a mobile phone package, you now need to decide the package you need. Will it be zero monthly cost with a high pay per minute (Pay as you go package designed for low use.), will it be a higher monthly charge with unlimited minutes (Data package designed for high use.) or a mixture of the two (medium monthly cost with medium pay per minute)? Look through the spreadsheet and decide. Once you have decided what is good for you go on their website or ring the company and ask them for more information and options. If you have read **The Phone Guys** last post you will know that you can use your old "BT" type phone with a £5 adaptor (ATA – Analogue Telephone Adaptor which the provider may give it to you free of charge.) but you will be using old technology. If you decide you would like to upgrade and get a modern VOIP phone, which will take advantage of the superior internet speed and quality, then have a chat with them and they will advise accordingly. As we said in the last bulletin, they will sell you a new VOIP phone at about the same cost as E-Bay, Amazon etc, as they make their money from service not selling phones. Even if they don't sell you a phone, they will advise which make of phone sits well with their operating software.

### **How do I set up this package?**

Once you are happy with the new company and that you have a fully working B4RN internet service, enter into an agreement with them and they will "Port" (fancy way of saying transfer!) your old number and advise what day this will happen. You can then advise your current phone provider that you are leaving them and you want to finalise your current agreement and to transfer your old landline number over to the new supplier. Again, this is the same as getting your existing mobile number transferred to a new supplier. Your new provider will give you all details involved with the transfer, tell you what to do with your phone (if anything.) and when this will happen. **It is very important that you have a fully tested and functioning B4RN internet connection before you change anything regarding phones as, if you action things early, you could run the risk of losing your old landline number. Don't forget to ask your old supplier for a final Bill after you have ported over to your new supplier.**

At any time during this transition you get stuck or don't understand the process never forget that your new provider is your friend and that it's in their interest to help you get sorted out if something goes wrong. As is the case generally, the smaller companies do best at this.

### **I can't see BT on the list?**

We have left BT off the list as not one of our fellow B4RN project advisors could recommend them and indeed if you look at the TrustPilot ratings, just like Marmite, 50% of the reviews very badly slate BT and the other 50% say they are great with not much in the middle. So we couldn't make any reasoned decision on their ability to provide a good overall service. The guys over in B4AV (Allendale Valley) have almost entirely gone with Unified Business Communications which does seem to be good value and local-ish. But there are plenty of options elsewhere, it's up to you to decide.

### **What happens if or when the electricity goes off?**

If the electricity does fail then the internet and phone will both go off. However, you probably have a mobile phone to use either for calls or for the internet. If this still worries you and you're worried about the mobile phone battery being dead during an electricity cut, then you can buy what's called a **UPS** (Uninterruptable Power Supply). This would be either for your mobile phone (circa £20 +) or for your router (circa £90 +) which can be sized to provide power to keep the internet and phone running for several hours. As an alternative you can also get a power pack for your mobile phone which recharges it back to 100%.

Alternatively put another log on the fire and settle down with a cuppa and a good book and ponder over the delights of a tech free couple of hours.

### **Where do I site my phone(s)?**

In the October posting by **The Phone Guys**, we said that you should position your phone next to or as close to your new router or your router close to the phone. If you can't do that you will need to do the same as you have to with a "landline" and get some extension cables and run them from the router to the new base phone these are known as Ethernet cables (make sure they are **Category 6** cables to use with Gigabit internet speeds.) and are available from computer shops, B&Q, etc. If you opt for what's known as DECT phones, which are cordless VOIP phones, then your new internet phone provider will guide you through their installation which is easy. If you are using your old handset or cordless "landline" phones then they will work like they do now, as long as the base phone has an **Analogue Telephone Adapter** plugged into the router.

### **It's alright for you youngsters but we oldies don't understand all this new stuff! We'll just stick with BT thanks.**

Not many people like change however change is coming and in 2025 all "landline" phone calls will be using the internet and if you stick with BT you **will be paying a premium to get an inferior service**. This is an opportunity to get a superior quality phone service for a cheaper price and everyone loves to save money, especially nowadays. If you don't know what to do or are worried about how to change then ask a friend, neighbour or children to organise it for you. All you do is give the supplier your permission to deal with that person and they can set it up for you. Better still ask the grandchildren they'll do it in 5 minutes.

### **I'm just going to stick with Voneus phones, they are very cheap!**

Well, that's true - at the moment! They currently offer a free phone number under the legacy package free of charge with a fee of £5 for any extra lines all for £29.99 per month including internet connection at around 20-25Mbps (occasionally!). There is a big "but" coming – there are a lot of people who are and have suffered from awful dropouts, long periods of nothing, many "adjustments" to masts, unusable phones, poor service and poor communication. The list goes on and on, just ask around in Renwick! There have been several upheld complaints to OFCOM due to poor service issues. If you think this is value for money, well we'll just have to disagree. We think

that most of Renwick would also agree with us and if the majority move over to 1000Mbps B4RN then how long will it be before Voneus decides their service is uneconomic and withdraws its service? You also won't be able to have a Voneus telephone without a Voneus internet connection.

**We hope we have answered all of your questions but if there are any further queries please feed them back through the usual channels.**

**Happy Phoning.**

**The Phone Guys**