

BroadbandChoices.co.uk comments on the launch of Virgin Media's new 50mb broadband service

Submitted by: Decision Technologies

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Michael Phillips, Product Director, BroadbandChoices.co.uk said:

"We are encouraged to see Virgin Media pushing the boundaries of internet technology to introduce this super-high speed broadband (<http://www.broadbandchoices.co.uk>) service.

"As one of the UK's leading ISPs, Virgin has been at the forefront of broadband developments and the launch of their 50Mbps package is an important first step towards bringing the UK up to speed with the rest of Europe, where it currently lags behind – for example, Finland already enjoys an average download speed of 21.7Mbps(1).

"The initial offering from Virgin Media will only be made available to about 10% of Virgin Media's customers and an even smaller percentage of the UK broadband population but they are claiming a rapid rollout in 2009.

"There's no doubt that this new product will appeal to early adopters - for example, Virgin identifies online gamers as core target subscribers.

"At this stage, the applications are limited, until high definition content is readily available on services like iplayer.

"We hope that this service delivers on the 50Mbps price promise, as the broadband industry has suffered from over-promising and under-delivering on internet speeds.

"We would encourage the government to support BT in investing in a next generation network that the whole country could enjoy.

"We note that Virgin says it will be trialling a variety of traffic management approaches with the service but at £51 per month as a standalone subscription, or £35 per month when bundled with phone (an additional £11) we would urge Virgin to stick to its 'unlimited service with no traffic management' initial launch offering. It would be a real shame if a package that promises so much in terms of speed ultimately constrains users during peak hours.(2)"

Sources:

(1) – Information Technology and Innovation Foundation; 2008 ITIF Broadband Rankings

(2) - Virgin Media's existing 20Mbps XL product limits users to 3GB of downloads during peak hours of 4pm to 9pm. If users exceed this limit they will have speed restrictions imposed for 5 hours - <http://allyours.virginmedia.com/html/internet/traffic.html>

Notes to editors:

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