

# YOUR MOBILE PHONE CAN NOW FORECAST THE WEATHER

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British mobile phone users are to get the world's most personal weather forecasts delivered direct to their handsets.

The new "Time&Place" service, from weather experts at the Met Office, can forecast with postcode accuracy within a five-kilometre radius and is network independent. It is also the first time SMS messaging has been used to send individual forecasts, and is being hailed as one of the first useful applications of mobile technology.

The service is available from the Met Office website <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk>

where customers register their details and set up their personal profile of information they want to receive. The customer can request forecasts for specific locations, either by typing in a postcode or by accessing an interactive map. It allows users to save locations, using specific names if required, to the phone's memory.

There are two types of service available: marine shipping forecasts - which also offers an automatic alert for significant changes in weather - as well as a more general service for anyone who has a mobile phone. This service includes:

- \* postcode specific forecasting - which is updated hourly
- \* forecasts for up to five days in advance, updated daily
- \* forecasts for 400 world cities, updated daily.

Customers on SMS can receive messages as and when requested as per their pre-set personal profile. And it's ideal for WAP users who can use drop down menus on the site to access information whenever required by visiting <http://www.mymetoffice.com/main.wml>

The forecasts are produced using the advanced Nimrod system, the most advanced forecasting technology in the world, which uses radar and satellite observations to create current images, and then forecasts using windspeed fields to move images into the future. This allows true forecast resolution to 5km square grids, which allows mapping to full postcode level.

This is turned into a data-stream that is updated every hour and sent via FTP transfer to the servers of WIN, who run the service. Relevant information is then extracted from the database according to the customers requirements, formatted as an SMS message and sent to the customers' phone via whichever network they're on.

Jim Ephraums from the Met Office said: "Postcode specific forecasting has been available for a few years now but in the past we didn't have the capabilities to communicate this to individuals. The development of mobile phone technology now allows us to be person specific - and it's a world first in terms of its technology, accuracy and ability to send updates when you want them. And with the introduction of GPS in the next generation of WAP phones, it won't be too long before the service will automatically know where you are and so tailor its information accordingly."

The service is payable on subscription with the ability to pre-pay for an agreed amount. Each message costs around 20p. For more information visit <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk>

If you have any queries about the website please call the customer centre on 0845 300 0300.

Media Contact: Chris Lawrence or Liz Fay on 020 7379 0304

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Editor's note: the new Met Office service is in association with WIN, a highly respected pioneer in the areas of wireless data transmission and specialises in the provision of applications and content to wireless devices including handsets, pagers, mobile phones and PDAs.

It is at the forefront of providing services to wireless users via SMS, WAP and it is working closely with network operators on GPRS and UMTS. As part of its services, WIN also develops bespoke wireless applications such as personalised news alerts to mobile phones, and wireless voice & e-mail applications, so users can keep in touch while on the move.

The Met Office's new look web site has been developed with NetSite Productions, a specialist Internet services agency providing e-business and Internet consultancy, production and technical services to a wide range of commercial clients. NetSite is part of the Integra Europe Group of companies.

Nimrod is a fully automated system for weather analysis and nowcasting based around a network of C-band rainfall radars that provides fine-resolution analyses and six-hour forecasts. Nimrod delivers routine predictions of:

- \* Rainfall rate
- \* Rain accumulation
- \* Precipitation type
- \* Snow probability
- \* Cloud

\* Visibility

\* Wind gust speeds

