

Appendix A – email received from Tom Hamilton.

Nigel,

Sorry for the delay in responding, this has been due to the work being carried out to test the effects of the newly developed "i-plate" on broadband performance over the last few months, BT Wholesale have now established that in many cases the use of this device can make a significant difference to the service, the press release appended gives some more details.

In response to the information you received in the summer and the details you provided, BT has done extensive tests on the exchanges and the line plant of customers who responded by e-mail to South Derbyshire District Council and the results indicate that there are no service affecting issues either in the exchanges or in the line plant.

Currently BT's exchanges are enabled to provide up to 8Mbit/s rate adaptive broadband service and we are rolling out technology that will support an up to 24 Mbit/s service. A common factor for almost all of the people who have responded is distance from the exchange. The laws of physics can't be changed and the further end users are away from the exchange the weaker the broadband signal.

However, every broadband line is different and can be affected by a variety of additional factors including internal wiring, interference from electrical appliances...all of which can affect an end user's actual broadband speed. Some of these factors can be proactively mitigated - for example, home wiring- whereas some issues are more difficult to address as they are dictated by the laws of physics.

Variances in both line speed (the maximum bit/s an end user's line can deliver) and throughput (the actual bits delivered per second when undertaking an activity) that make it difficult to quantify performance in a standardised format. Consequently many service providers, commentators and end users – in the UK and internationally - use the theoretical maximum speed the exchange technology can support as shorthand to describe a broadband service for marketing purposes.

As a company, BT believes the most important thing is transparency. When an end user orders a broadband service, we believe they should be informed of their expected line speed at the point of sale, based upon the unique characteristics of their line - and BT Retail does this as a matter of course. Additionally existing or future broadband customers can access BT's line checker to obtain an estimate of the speed of service likely to be available on their line at: <http://www.adslchecker.bt.com/pls/adsl/adslchecker.welcome>

Where customers are experiencing service problems they should report them to their service provider who will carry out a range of diagnostic checks and take the appropriate action.

BT is vastly experienced in running broadband services and employs tools and techniques to enable end users' lines to deliver the highest possible stable speeds they can support. Future BT investments in 21CN-based broadband, fibre based services and wireless are likely to deliver significant speed improvements but these will take time and, in the case of fibre access, is subject to the right regulatory environment and customer demand.

Recent work has been done to identify the considerable affect home telephone wiring can have on an end user's line speed and BT Wholesale has developed a device which can in many, but not all, cases deliver impressive results. The following press release has more details.

Currently BT Wholesale is making the I-Plate available to its UK communications provider customers - including BT Retail. It is up to individual ISPs to decide how they use the I-Plate with their customer base. For example, we believe some ISPs may decide to give it away; some to provide it as part of their broadband installation package; others to sell it direct to end users...ISPs are showing considerable interest in BT Wholesale's I-Plate and we expect they will be made available on mass to end users over the next few months or so. However, some resellers are already making the units available on the internet and you may like to visit, for example: www.adsl24.co.uk/hardware; www.broadbandbuyer.co.uk; www.buyaniplate.co.uk and www.tamarshop.co.uk

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UK homes to get more out of broadband with BT's I-Plate innovation

Millions of UK households could potentially benefit from improved broadband performance, thanks to a simple, self-install filter developed by BT Wholesale.

The patent pending innovation, called the I-Plate, filters out the electrical interference in the home caused by televisions, lighting and home wiring, which can often slow down an individual's broadband speed and affect the stability of their connection. By fitting an I-Plate to the master socket found in the majority of UK homes, in most cases, customers should experience some broadband performance benefits.

BT's trials of the I-Plate have shown that filtered lines can deliver a range of broadband improvements, including faster speeds, a more stable broadband connection and slight improvements in broadband performance over "long lines".

To be eligible for an I-Plate, customers need to have a BT NTE 5 master socket and extension wiring in their home. BT estimates that seven out of ten UK homes have this type of master socket and home wiring, bringing the potential benefits of the I-Plate to around 9 million households.

BT Wholesale will be making the I-Plate available to its UK communications provider customers from today. Consumers with the suitable socket and home wiring will be able to obtain the product from their communications provider. As this is a new broadband product from BT Wholesale, communications providers are expected to take time to start offering the I-Plate to their consumer and business customers.

In a benchmark survey of 36,000 lines, BT found that filtered broadband lines typically showed a speed increase of up to 1.5Mbps, with some lines showing speed improvements of as much as 4Mbps. Higher speeds cannot be guaranteed in every case as the level of electrical interference varies greatly from line to line.

However, the survey also found that the I-Plate can improve the stability of the broadband connection, so some customers can experience broadband performance benefits even when line speed is not noticeably increased.

Because I-Plates help with both broadband line speed and stability, they are particularly useful for supporting high bandwidth applications such as TV and video, allowing for faster downloads and better quality streaming.

The I-Plate can also extend the geographical reach of a broadband service by around 10dB. This means that homes which are some distance from their telephone exchange may receive an improved service, while others that were previously just beyond the reach of a broadband service, may now be able to do so.

Cameron Rejali, managing director, products and services, BT Wholesale, said: "The launch of the I-Plate is another example of BT's drive to deliver enhanced broadband services to UK homes. Most consumers are unaware of the impact that faulty TVs, fluorescent lighting and home wiring can have on their broadband performance. The I-Plate can help solve this, depending on the level of electrical interference within the home, delivering faster speeds, greater stability and bringing high quality IPTV to more consumers."

The I-Plate can be easily installed by consumers, avoiding the need for an engineer visit. The BT NTE 5 master socket can be easily identified by the horizontal split in the face plate and BT logo. All consumers need do is simply unscrew the face plate, clip the I-Plate in place in the socket and replace the face plate over the I-Plate.