

# Setting up Vonage/VoIP on B4RN

## and notes on integrating it with a home phone circuit

### Introduction

So, you've got your shiny new B4RN (Fibre To The Home) connection and you want to start using it for cheaper phone calls without any traditional line rental costs! Well, read on and you'll find it's all pretty straightforward.

VoIP stands for Voice over Internet Protocol which is just a fancy way of saying 'phone calls over broadband'. The quality and ease of use is much the same as a normal phone line though do be aware it won't work during a power cut because both B4RN and VoIP require mains power, so keep your mobile charged for emergencies during power cuts (or if your phone line is absolutely critical then you could buy a UPS battery backup, see the guide at [www.b4rn.org.uk/resources](http://www.b4rn.org.uk/resources) for details).

Vonage is one of the most established companies in the world for VoIP services and they have a good reputation. Although there are other VoIP service providers, Vonage is the most popular option. Parts of this document will be more widely relevant but it has been written specifically with Vonage in mind. Other VoIP services providers can be found by searching online. Of particular interest might be pay-as-you-go VoIP services which can work out much cheaper if you only make occasional calls.

***This is a self-help guide and B4RN are not responsible for your phone service but if you need help their tech-desk will try their best to advise:  
01524 238499 / [techdesk@b4rn.org.uk](mailto:techdesk@b4rn.org.uk)***

## 1. Vonage - Easy step by step

*I suggest you read through all these steps before you place your order.*

**Choose a Call Plan:** First have a look at the current packages available on <https://www.vonageforhome.co.uk/home/call-plans/> - the standard is £10.25 per month (at the time of this update) and includes unlimited free UK **landline** calls, but for a small extra premium (£4.50 pm) you can get free calls to 60+ countries. For a further £2.75 you can have free calls to mobiles. In most cases you can keep your existing number or you could choose to get a completely new phone number with a dialing code of your choice. Your old ones will work too. The cheapest (£10.25 pm) also charges a £10 activation fee, but higher tariffs are free from the activation charge.

The only additional cost is £5 delivery for your Vonage box.

If you want to keep your existing landline phone number and have it transferred to Vonage please follow instructions below.

## **VERY IMPORTANT: DON'T TERMINATE YOUR LANDLINE YET**

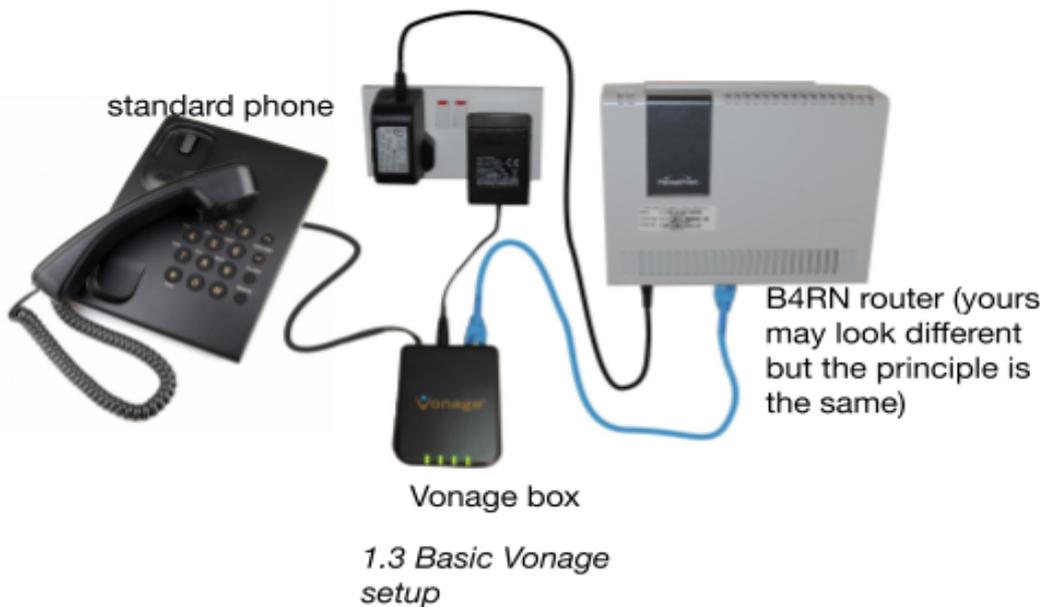
Terminating your landline too early will mean your cherished existing phone number will be lost in the ether! This is easy to avoid if you read on and follow this guide.

Please also be aware that if you have a bundled 'phone and broadband' package from a company such as PlusNet, then cancelling your broadband could also terminate your landline and your number could be lost. You must ensure your landline remains in operation until the transfer of your phone number to Vonage is complete.

If your existing broadband/phone line company put their prices up it releases you from your contract within the 30-day period, just enough time to change to VoIP.

If you make a mistake and terminate your landline too soon there are companies such as RSR Communications, Salford, who can help rescue your number for around £100.

**Plug It In:** A courier will deliver your Vonage Box within a couple of days. It's very



straightforward with colour coded connections (see *Useful hardware notes* on p6). Follow the included instructions in order, making sure you connect the blue cable to one of the four ports on the bottom of your B4RN router. Once the Vonage Box has

completed its setup simply plug in one of your existing phones and make one call out and one call in (from your mobile or a friend) to test and activate the number. Now you can try different setup options around the house (see p3-4).

**Try It Out:** You now have a 30-day money back guarantee period. Try your Vonage phone and tell them if you're unhappy with anything. I found everything worked really well and there are many special features like free 'call waiting', 'caller display', 'answerphone' etc. that can be setup via your account on the Vonage website.

I had one problem that was resolved; I found voices were too loud so I emailed Vonage and they adjusted the volume remotely to a better level. If you or your caller speaks too loudly you may get an echo!

My only criticism now is that I have to dial the area code first when dialing out to local numbers. Unfortunately, this will always be the case (except when using speed-dial for numbers in the phone's memory). Incoming calls from your local friends and neighbours etc. are not affected by this; they don't need to start dialing the area code to call you unless they have also started using Vonage.



**Transfer Your Old Phone Number:** When you sign up with Vonage, they will give you a new non-geographic phone number (beginning '03...'), on the higher tariffs you can choose a local number, but in most cases, you can keep your old landline number if you wish. Once you have got a Vonage account, simply go to [www.vonage.co.uk](http://www.vonage.co.uk) and log into your account's control panel. In the main 'summary' panel click on the blue 'add-ons' icon (as shown on the left) and then select 'move my number to Vonage'. There you can request the transfer of your existing landline phone number to your new Vonage line. Mine only took days until the day of the transfer. You should receive an email confirming the day that the transfer will take place. **You must leave your Vonage line plugged in during this period** and you must have made at least one phone call on it.

***Keep paying for your normal landline until the transfer is complete!***

On the day of the transfer there may be a few hours disruption on incoming calls while your old number is in 'no man's land' mid switchover from your old company to Vonage.

You'll know when the number transfer is complete because your landline will go dead, and your Vonage connected phone will now ring when people call your old number! Your existing company (e.g. BT) should now send you your final bill, but if you don't get confirmation from them ask them to send you your 'FINAL BILL'. Do not ask for your line to be 'disconnected' as this is unnecessary and will usually incur a charge of around £31. If you ever decide to leave Vonage, they will transfer your number to your new telco/VoIP provider on request.

If Vonage seems to be having problems or delays transferring your phone number from your old company, ask to speak to a supervisor and pressure them.

**Cancelled Your Broadband yet?** If you haven't already cancelled it, then getting your final bill for your landline will obviously disconnect your old ADSL broadband (presuming it's on the same old landline). You **may** be asked to pay a £30 fee to have your broadband service switched off - this is normal and unavoidable.

***You're all done! Read on only if you want to play around with how you set up your phones around the house...***

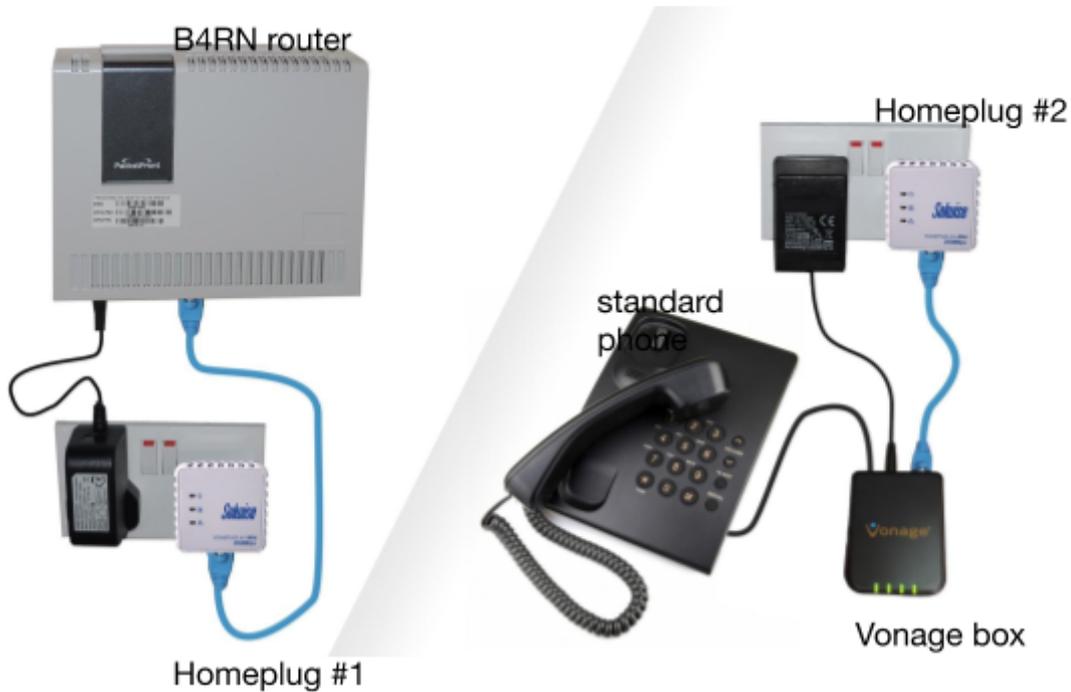
## **2. Optional setup with DECT phones or Homeplugs**

It's a no-brainer to connect a wired phone to your Vonage Box, beside your B4RN router, but what do you do if you don't want to sit next to your B4RN router when you're on the phone? You could of course use a long ethernet cable, or a long

telephone extension cable; but if you want to avoid long leads you have two easy options:

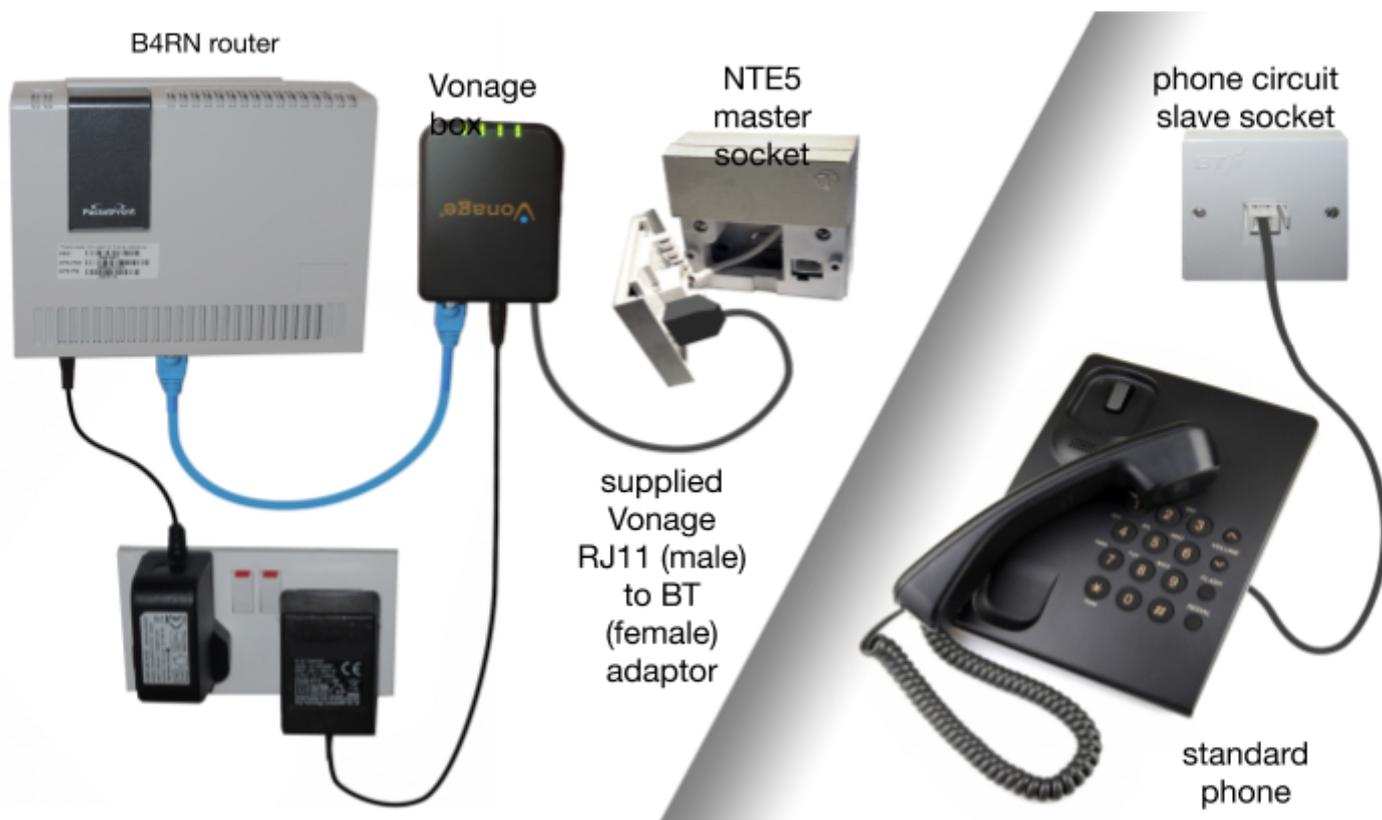
**Vonage with DECT phones:** These are digital cordless phones and so can have their base next to your B4RN and Vonage box but then the handsets taken anywhere you like around the house. Multi handset packs are available and extra handset bases can be put in other rooms.

**Vonage with Homeplugs:** Homeplugs share B4RN's local area network (including



*2.2 Vonage setup with Homeplugs*

Internet) through your mains electric wiring. If you have a pair of Homeplugs you can plug one into your B4RN box and then plug in the other at your preferred location for a wired phone. The Vonage Box then plugs into the second Homeplug and gets the Internet connection it needs from there (see photo below). For this type of use I'd recommend a basic pair of Homeplugs costing about £40. The Vonage unit will also plug into the ethernet ports of the new mesh systems that some people use to extend Wi-Fi round the home.



3.1 Connecting Vonage to the master socket

### 3. Optional home phone circuit integration

It's possible to enable your old home phone circuit with up to 5 phones on your Vonage line. **The following two setups are my experiments and are quite simple and effective. Many B4RN users have now tried these successfully, but I'm not a professional phone engineer and it is at your own risk - I can't offer support or warranty (so if you're unsure - hire a professional!).** These setups are based on having the NTE5 line box as your master socket - this was introduced by BT in 1991 and is still current (see *Useful hardware notes* on p6).

*Note: I found that older phones' bells didn't ring unless I plugged them in through an ADSL microfilter (these used to be necessary for each phone on a broadband line).*

#### Adding Vonage at the master/primary socket

First to disconnect from the BT line! I removed the two screws on the front of the master line box, and carefully pulled the faceplate out without dislodging any wires. This disconnects my home's wiring from BT's 'test socket' (the fundamental connection to BT's line). This action is allowed by BT, as long as I don't go any further!! On the inside of the faceplate is a standard BT style phone plug (male) that sticks out of the back of the faceplate. I simply insert this phone plug into the supplied Vonage RJ11 (male) to BT (female) adaptor and voila! Now all my phones on the house circuit are functioning on my Vonage account. Simple.



## Using your smartphone with Vonage ‘Extensions’

I’ve been asked to include some additional information on a unique Vonage service called ‘Extensions’. Anyone with a Vonage account can set this up on their smartphone. It makes calls over WiFi so doesn’t require a sim card, and your calls will be free/charged as per your Vonage call-plan.

Simply download the free ‘Vonage Extensions’ app and you can start making and receiving calls. You don’t even need to be at home to use it - all you need is a Wi-Fi connection! So, you can use it anywhere from your local cafe to your office in town, or even when overseas on business or holiday!

You can find more information here:

<https://www.vonageforhome.co.uk/home/extensions/>

I’m told this is really handy for people who have all their contact numbers in their mobile phones and not in their landline ones. Also, for people with poor mobile reception at home.

- You'll need a UK mobile number
- an iPhone® running iOS 4.3 or above or an Android™ device (v2.2 or above)
- Download the Extensions® app to your smartphone from Google Play or iTunes®
- Follow the instructions in the app to link your smartphone to your Vonage account
- Start making unlimited calls on your smartphone

If all this sounds complicated to you, just come to the computer club online (Fridays 2-4) and we’ll help you do it all. Email [pr@b4rn.org.uk](mailto:pr@b4rn.org.uk) for an appointment.

Have your bank or credit card details if you want to buy it straight away, and your current phone line bill with you if you want us to help move your number off, we need the details on it for the authorisation form.

Once you have had twelve months with Vonage if you ring them and ask to speak to ‘Retentions’, they will reduce your monthly charge.