

# Why old phones mean new opportunities

What happens to the million-plus handsets handed in for recycling?

**W**e've all been challenged to recycle more handsets – so where exactly do they go once we've handed them in? The answer is one of two routes.

## New use for old phones

In many countries we use Fonebak to refurbish and recycle phones. Dominic Wing, its UK Business Development Director, says: 'Typically the phones we receive are only 12 to 18 months old but have a working life of up to seven years.'

Phones in good working order can make a big difference to the lives of people in developing nations where the costs of phones is still very high. In fact, the high cost of handsets is the single largest barrier to mobile phone use in these countries. In parts of Africa less than 10 per cent of people have mobile phones – a phenomenon that's known as the 'digital divide'.

Handsets that are suitable for reuse go to Fonebak's refurbishment centre in Bucharest, Romania. There they're tested, cleaned of all data and have any 'cosmetic' damage, like scratches, repaired.

Back in the UK they receive a final quality assurance test before being sold by Fonebak through stores, distributors and wholesalers in Africa, Eastern Europe and the Far East. Often the cost to their new owner is as little as €12, a fraction of their original cost.

## There's gold in your handset

What links power tools, jewellery and your TV set to a mobile phone? The answer is Vodafone's recycling programme.

Phones that can't be reused are taken apart and the batteries, handsets and covers recycled separately. The batteries, which are typically nickel metal hydride or lithium ion, are sent to a specialist recycling facility in France.

There they go through a process called pyrolysis, which recovers materials through extreme heat and uses them to make items like power tools and saucepans.

The handsets are smelted in Sweden and materials extracted.

Each handset contains:

- Copper (15 per cent)
- Steel (4 per cent)
- Silver (0.25g)
- Gold (0.04g)
- Palladium, which is a platinum (0.02g).

These materials are sold on the metals market and reused. Gold, for example, finds its way into new handsets or jewellery, while the copper can be used to make pipes or TV sets.

A UK company called Smile Plastics turns mobile phone covers into drinks coasters, which are proving extremely popular and being used as an incentive for customers in Greece to recycle their phones.

“Typically the phones we receive are only 12 to 18 months old but have a working life of up to seven years”

Dominic Wing, Fonebak

## Fastfacts

- We've promised to increase the number of phones we collect by 50 per cent by March 2007
- In 2004/05 we collected 1.7 million phones, which was actually fewer than the previous year
- Consumers in developed countries replace their phones once every 18 months on average
- Links: [www.vodafone.com/responsibility/sim](http://www.vodafone.com/responsibility/sim)  
[www.vodafone.com/responsibility/recyclingphones](http://www.vodafone.com/responsibility/recyclingphones)  
[www.fonebak.com](http://www.fonebak.com)

## Recycling: your stories

A number of local operating companies make donations to charities in exchange for returned phones.

Take people at Vodafone UK for example. They support the National Autistic Society (NAS) and between May 2004 and September 2005, more than 87,300 old mobiles, handed in by customers at their local Vodafone stores, helped to raise money for the charity.

Vodafone Italy works with Fonebak on recycling. Our customers, and those of other operators, leave their old phones and batteries in the recycling bins in 800 Vodafone One stores, 94 retail outlets, 130 service

points and Vodafone's main offices.

Last October, we started a trial in Padova, Genoa, Bari and Sardinia which gives customers who recycle their phones free minutes or points on the Vodafone One loyalty programme. The result? The number of phones handed in increased from the average five a month to 40!

In Ireland, the number of active mobile phones is higher than the total population figure. If they're disposed of in household waste, these phones could have a negative effect on the environment.

We work with Conservation Volunteers Ireland to promote the safe disposal of phones, batteries, chargers

and accessories. As well as our own outlets, schools and stores belonging to grocery retailer Superquinn are equipped with collection points.

To date, 18.8 tonnes of electrical waste – about 114,000 handsets – have been reused or recycled and €100,000 donated to help community conservation projects.

In Portugal, our handset recycling programme was the first to be launched in the country, back in 2001. Since then about 40 tonnes of material has been recycled or reused.

There are now 400 places where people can hand in their old mobiles, batteries and accessories to be reused or recycled.

Below: Students from one of Ireland's top handset recycling schools show their commitment to being environmentally friendly by encouraging family and friends to recycle their unwanted handsets



A recycling point in Portugal

It takes Kwabena Asare in Ghana 2 hours to walk to the next village to talk to his brother. A mobile phone would make his life so much simpler.

It only takes **2 minutes** to return your mobile for recycling.

**Recycle your old mobile. Go on, make a difference.**

**10+80+30=2**  
seconds to read this poster    seconds to find your old mobile    seconds to hand it in    minutes to make a difference

In the **2 minutes** it will take you to collect your mobile for recycling, you could make a difference.

**Recycle your old mobile. Go on, make a difference.**

Handset Recycling Drive  
Hand in your old phones and accessories and make a difference. Go to <http://intranet.vodafone.com/recycle>

Two of the posters from our internal recycling campaign