|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| timfg@timfg.com |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 07803 261329 | 1 Bridge Road Wallington Surrey SM6 8TG |

**This is not junk mail – please take a moment to read it!**

18th April 2011

Dear Neighbour

With a few exceptions, we won’t have met – although we might have a nodding acquaintance – so apologies for approaching you in this way. But I need your help with a problem and it may be a problem you’re suffering from as well. It’s not impossible that, unwittingly, you’re the cause of it...

I have a broadband internet connection in my house – ADSL in my case, although many of you may have Virgin cable. And, like many of you, I have a wireless router so I can use the connection with different devices around the home. I’ve lived here for around 8 years and this has always worked impeccably for me – until about a week or two ago, when I found that something was interfering with the wireless connection. Over the last week, the interference has got worse, to the extent that every device I try can lose the connection completely when its present – and it’s present most of the time when I’m around.

I’m pretty technical (I vaguely touch this stuff for a living), so I’ve spent a fair bit of time looking at this over the weekend. I’m reasonably sure the source of the interference is somewhere along Clifton Road from me – from Bridge Road towards Croydon – or South of Clifton road, in the general direction of the fire-station. I’m conscious that not everyone has a bent for this sort of thing, so I’ll leave the technical detail for the ‘appendix’ if you want to read it.

There are any number of devices that can interfere with the type of wireless network I (and you may) have – but whatever is causing this is having a significant impact (my internet is non-existent unless the machine is attached via a cable). Frankly, I’m desperate to find the cause and try to eliminate it.

I have talked to a couple of close neighbours and am forming a view that I’m not the only one affected – but I can get a better idea of the source if you can answer a couple of questions for me:

* Are you aware of a problem with wireless internet in your own home?
* Have you installed or purchased anything in the last week or so that might be transmitting wirelessly?

In the latter case, there are many devices that can cause a problem – but not so many that will interfere for long periods. Common culprits are microwaves, cordless headphones, cordless phones, video-senders, radio amplifiers etc – but a faulty piece of electronic equipment can also be culpable (BT once had to buy a chap a new TV – he could see nothing wrong with it, but it was taking out all his neighbour’s internet connections...).

I’d really appreciate it if you could drop me an email to the address at the top to let me know if you recognise what I’m talking about – or not, as the case may be. Please let me know your address too, so I can try and build a picture of who’s affected, which might help pinpoint where the source is. I’m distributing this to people who I think could be – but please do pass on my details if you know your neighbours are, but I haven’t got that far from my house. I will keep anyone who responds in the loop – if there are more than a few of us affected, the weight of numbers might help us get a resolution. If you think you know what the source might be, then please, please get in touch – in many cases there are simple resolutions. The more people I have to contact with ‘OK, it started at 5.40 tonight – did you turn anything on then?’ questions, the quicker I might be able to identify it.

Many thanks for your help,

Tim Featherstone-Griffin

**Vaguely Geeky Appendix**

I have ADSL, provisioned from Sky. We’re lucky to be close to the telephone exchange – it typically synchs for me at between 15-20Mbps, which is way better than the majority of the population enjoy.

I have a Billion Wireless-N router (new – first thing I replaced over the weekend) running in the 2.4GHz band, as will all the other 802.11.b and g wireless networks locally. It’s very unlikely that anyone is running a wireless network in the 5GHz band, although not impossible – so anyone within range of the interference will probably be affected.

The wireless connection was an impeccable 300Mbps pretty much everywhere in my house until the interference started – at best I’ll get 100-200**K**bps at the back of the house, often the connection drops completely. The front of the house is generally better, but, when it ramps up, can also be swamped.

I have tried every available channel – you may be aware that there are only actually three discrete ones because they overlap – but it makes little difference. I have also tried restricting transmission to just n, g or b. That doesn’t help either. There are a fair few wireless networks in the immediate locality, but they won’t be the problem – multiple networks may give a small performance hit, but the 802.11 standards are designed to allow them to co-exist gracefully. This is something else. It seems to be constant throughout the last couple of evenings, but the power increases in peaks for minutes at a time.

In an attempt to eliminate my own house, I have turned pretty much everything off apart from the router, at the mains. I have wandered around locally – and found that I am generally OK going away from the front of the house, but the connection disappears in the directions detailed above. And I’m beginning to form a view that the problem is some piece of domestic equipment – I had no interference when I got home at 5.45 this evening – at 6pm-ish it suddenly kicked in and hasn’t stopped since. Did you come in and turn something on around then? On Sunday night it was constant until well past midnight. It’s been OK for the last hour – but has suddenly kicked in around 9pm – no signal anywhere in the house.

Much as they look like inviting candidates, I can’t see that the phone masts on top of the fire-tower could be the issue - mobile transmission are at completely different frequencies (any telcom engineers want to tell me otherwise?)

A reasonable test of whether you’re being impacted can be found at [www.speedtest.net](http://www.speedtest.net): Before the interference started, I’d see download of around 15Mbps, upload around ½ Mbps (it’s capped on ADSL) and a ping time of 30—40ms. When the interference is present, ping will extend to whole seconds and down/upload to less than 50Kbps, if it works at all. I’d suggest that , regardless of whether you have ADSL or Cable broadband, if your ping is more than 80ms or your download is less than 1Mbps, you’re probably being impacted. (remember, this is over the wireless connection – if you plug directly into your router you should have no issues. Nor should 3g USB sticks be affected).

You might not be aware of a problem if you only do mail/web browsing – but anything more demanding, you’ll probably have noticed (video, BBC iPlayer etc). Your kids – the YouTube generation - will almost certainly have been complaining about it…