

67 FREE SOFTWARE DOWNLOADS!

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26 March 2009

ISSUE 210 www.webuser.co.uk

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ON TEST

Solwise
3.5G
router



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SOLWISE 3.5G MOBILE ROUTER | £59.91

Share mobile broadband

Andy Shaw checks out a device that creates a home network for your mobile broadband



FOR

+ Use your mobile broadband service to provide Wi-Fi internet access to more than one computer

AGAINST

- Setting it up isn't for the faint-hearted
- Mobile broadband isn't up to the speed or connection quality of regular broadband

KEY SPECS

- Supports HSDPA/UMTS/W-CDMA (3.5G up to 3.6Mbps, backward compatible to 3G/2.75G/2.5G)
- 802.11g/b Wi-Fi
- 2 x USB 2.0 ports
- 91 x 78 x 30mm
- WEP, WPA security

CONTACTS

Solwise, 0845 458 4558,
www.solwise.co.uk

If you've opted for mobile broadband (see our review of services in Issue 208) and are no longer relying on a fixed line, it doesn't mean that you have to compromise on the other broadband trappings, such as the ability to share your network around your home with a Wi-Fi router. With this router from Solwise, you can now share the service coming in via your mobile broadband dongle.

Features ★★★★★

The unit plugs directly into a power socket and has two Ethernet and two USB ports on

the underside. You'll need to plug your USB dongle into one of the USB ports on the device, so make sure you've got access to a wall socket with a couple of inches of clearance below.

This device's main purpose is to work as a mobile broadband router, but it has a range of other functions. Because it has Ethernet sockets, you can use it either wired or wireless, and it will also work as an access point (providing a wireless way to access an existing wired network). The USB ports can also be used to plug sharable resources like hard disks and printers.

Performance ★★★★★

Although you could use this mobile router as a complete alternative to a landline-based internet connection, you're likely to find that your broadband service suffers as a result.

While it's true that mobile broadband has improved considerably in recent years, it still lags behind landline in coverage, speed and reliability. And this unit presents further problems because it's small, it doesn't have external aerials and, when choosing a position for the device, you're tied to the location or extension lead.

Ease of use ★★☆☆☆

Wireless networking seems to have got easier over the years – perhaps we're just getting used to it and have more of an understanding of how it works.

However, setting up this device took us back to the dark ages, partly because the provided instructions are incomplete. We only managed to finish the installation by visiting Solwise's forums (www.solwiseforum.co.uk), where we managed to find the missing information on setting up the device.

The instructions also fail to explain how to set up the device so it can recognise individual USB dongles, though after much searching we found a handy PDF on Solwise's support forum explaining the procedure.

To save you this hassle, download it before you start (from <http://tinyurl.com/sol3ginst>). If you happen to get stuck, Solwise technical support is always on hand to help (0845 458 4558), but this process ought to be easier and it's frustrating to have to resort to these extra resources.

Value for money ★★★★★

It's true that many people opting for mobile broadband, whether on a contract or on a pay-as-you-go basis, are doing so to save money, so having to shell out for extra equipment isn't going to go down well. This mobile router, however, comes in just short of £60, which is pretty good value, especially when you consider its versatility.

VERDICT

If you already use a mobile phone more than a landline, it makes little sense to incur line rental fees just to get broadband. This is also true if you already have mobile broadband for when you're out and about, but while mobile broadband doesn't match the performance of landline, this nifty little device helps to retain some of the functionality of standard broadband with a mobile service. However, be prepared for a headache with set-up.