

Data. Not the chap from Star Trek the Next Generation. No, I am talking about that invisible stream of information that we all rely on day to day. It lets us browse the web, check our emails, watch films and much, much more.

However, are we coming to the point where our need for data is going to overtake the available infrastructures' ability to deliver?

Just recently two things happened that have made me question the UK's readiness for all of this new demand for data. One to gamers the other to tech heads everywhere. The first was [OnLive](#). This brave venture into cloud gaming has met with mixed reviews. The thing is, most of the things that have been criticised actually seem to have been caused more by internet speeds than any fault with OnLive itself.

The second is, of course, iPhone 4s and iOS5. One of the most interesting features of iOS5 is something called iCloud. This is a service that will back up your iPhones data and settings to the web. From here you are able to fully restore your iPhone should you need too. This is a superb feature and one that I would have found very helpful after my daughter somehow erased all my data the other week. All you need is a WiFi connection and it will do the rest for you.

These are just two examples of modern usage of data, but two good ones to look at an issue we face in the UK.

A few places have now begun to unravel how much data [OnLive streams per hour](#). It averages between 2 and 3 GB of data an hour. That seems a lot, but when you think it is constantly streaming a high definition video it does make sense. Most people don't really think about that. They just plug their shiny new MicroConsole into their TV and off they go. For the first hour they get great high def gaming over their 10 mbs great value unlimited ADSL broadband. Then suddenly it all gets stuttery, the image quality starts to drop and possible it all just stops. But why? They have unlimited broadband. See, this is the kicker. They have a fair usage policy that they have never read. It says that some suit has decided that it is only fair for you to use say, 3 GB of data in a day or a week or even a month. Your lovely OnLive console has just trashed that in an hour.

iPhone users could face a similar issue. My iCloud back up is about 4GB. I have about 4GB of apps installed. If I restore my phone over WiFi, I will download around 8GB of data. Not a problem. I have VirginMedia Super Hub 30mbs Fibre, with unlimited usage. However, knowing what I know I decided to just check what they meant by unlimited. Now, to be fair they are not as bad as some. They are a little convoluted though.

<http://www.virginmedia.com/images/tm-table-su-large.jpg> .

At certain times of the day, I am only allowed to download 5GB of data. More than that and my connection speed is reduced by 75% for 5 hours.

So I can only restore my phone before 4pm or after 9pm. For that matter I can only really play OnLive at those times and then only for a couple of hours at a time. God forbid if I wanted to restore my iPhone whilst playing OnLive.

The thing is this is going to start being an issue. Just today Microsoft announced that they will be adding all sorts of television streaming services to their [Xbox](#). Services like Netflix and Boxee have all been around for a while now and more will come.

Don't even get me started on the UK's pathetic excuse for mobile internet. I will leave that to a chap named Ewan MacLeod over at [Mobile Industry Review](#)!

So can the UK keep up with the demand for cloud services? Not unless there is a major improvement in the availability of consistent, fast and truly unlimited broadband.

And on that thought...

As a consumer I just want to pay for a service. If I am sold a service that says it is unlimited, that's what I want. I don't want a microdot after an asterisk that then explains that it is only unlimited when the moon is full in the sky and Jupiter is in-line with my arse.

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