

We [announced](#) the launch of [a BIS consultation](#) in August. It is now ending.

Responses are needed to ensure that prohibition of "non-basic rate" telephone numbers for "post contract" enquiries is fully comprehensive. **They must be submitted by 1 November.**

This proposed ban should be seen alongside [forthcoming Ofcom regulations](#) which will simplify understanding of **the current position**. All **084** and **087** numbers will be placed in the essentially the same category as **09** numbers. **03** numbers will be confirmed as the only non-geographic range charged at the **basic rate**, i.e. that for calls to **geographic numbers**.

The **Ofcom** regulations will also ensure transparency for use of 084/087/09 numbers. The **Service Charge**, selected by the person called, will be declared. Each telephone company's **Access Charge** for callers will be published separately. The charges are currently 'bundled'.

The essence of the BIS proposal is that Service Charges be prohibited in many cases.

BIS requests evidence that the provisions should cover certain sectors which are otherwise subject to special regulation, e.g. financial services and passenger transport.

Given that use of 084, 087 and even 09 numbers is rife in these sectors we will argue that obviously they must be covered. There are innumerable examples of **banks** and **insurance companies**, **airlines** and **bus/train/tube** enquiry lines (including for ticket holders), as well as those in other "optional" sectors using expensive numbers inappropriately.

We urge those who agree that these should all be banned to make this clear to BIS.

We also see this as an excellent opportunity to challenge those not covered by this regulation to justify their continuing use of 084/087 numbers. For example ...

- ? If **energy companies** will be prohibited from using a 0845 number for enquiries, how can it be acceptable for a pensioner to have to call a 0845 number to enquire about their **winter fuel allowance**.
- ? If disabled ticket holders for sports event will no longer have to call a 0844 number to arrange **disabled parking** (as they did for the **paralympics**), how can it be acceptable for them to call a 0844 number to enquire about their **blue badge**.
- ? If the **Countryfile magazine** subscriber enquiries line will no longer be able to use a 0844 number, how can it be acceptable for those wishing to donate £4 to **Children in Need** to pay a premium to call a 0844 number to order the **Countryfile calendar**.
- ? If the **NUS** will no longer be able to use a 0871 number for contact from its members, how can it be acceptable for **UCAS** to use a 0871 number for those anxious to find a place at university.

We applaud the government's intention to go ahead with this fair regulation, however its simple purpose must be understood and applied generally **by all**. We do not want to wait for legal battles over the details of who is covered and how enforcement is carried out.

Sometimes, a Service Charge for a telephone call may be acceptable. If so, then the fee must be declared and justified. If not, a "basic rate" (01/02/ 03) number must be used.