



**Extract from on-line response to consultation on:
Modernising consumer markets: consumer green paper**

Response from: **David Hickson - fair telecoms campaign**

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5 Is there a need to change the current consumer advocacy arrangements in the telecommunications sector? If so, what arrangements would be most effective in delivering consumer benefits, including for those who are most vulnerable?

Yes!

Sadly, despite strong representations from myself, the telecommunications sector ended up with an absence of INDEPENDENT consumer advocacy.

The role of the **Communications Consumer Panel** is valuable as a resource to **Ofcom**, especially in respect of the most vulnerable, but the nature of its constitution denies it true independence.

Citizens Advice may offer a greater degree of independence, but its role as a contractor to the government in delivering the former **Consumer Direct**, now **Citizens Advice Consumer Service**, compromises any claim of independence.

Those with a commercial interest to pursue, e.g. **Which?** and **uSwitch**, are obviously debarred from fulfilling an independent role.

The **fair telecoms campaign**, as an entirely independent organisation, has played a useful role, both directly with **Ofcom** and through the media, in advancing the consumer interest by exerting effective and positive pressure on regulatory policy decisions. We are however in no position to conduct research and are in no way bound by statute to represent any particular defined interest.

I stand ready to commit the resources accumulated and the skills demonstrated by the **fair telecoms campaign** to a truly independent consumer advocate.

I note the interest shown by **Citizens Advice** in extending its existing role of Consumer Advocacy to the telecommunications sector. If my concerns about its potential lack of independence could be satisfactorily addressed, then my general admiration for the core principles of the CAB concept would allow me to recommend that it takes on this role.

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Lacking the opportunity to make general comments about this response, I do so below.

Please forgive the absence of a response to most of the questions.

There are many issues that could have been raised; time has however beaten me in preparing an appropriate response. I hope that my response on an issue of great relevance will be appreciated and recognised.

I also hope that the department will examine the claims I have made about the role of the **fair telecoms campaign** both amongst its own personnel and with relevant personnel in other organisations.