



**HMRC stops using CLI as a means of identification -  
a good move, but not enough**

We note the announcement by HMRC that it has stopped using its recognisable numbers when making calls. It has gained support from telephone companies in stopping others doing the same.

The formal announcement is published at [Controls prevent phone fraudsters spoofing HMRC](#).

We celebrate this recognition of a point we have been making for many years –

**The CLI (number displayed when receiving a call) DOES NOT tell you who is calling.**

When called by a business, the number you see is the number that the caller chooses to present, for you to make a return call, it has nothing to do with where the call was made from.

It is therefore **of no value whatsoever** in determining that a caller is who they claim to be.

## Verifying who is calling

Obviously, CLI can be very useful insofar as one recognises the voice of a caller after accepting a call, but it should never be used as a means of verifying the identity of the caller.

Technical measures to provide a means of verifying the CLI provided with a call are being developed and could start to appear, in phases, on telephone networks over the coming years.

The **fair telecoms campaign** is not yet convinced that any totally reliable system will ever arrive. It will certainly be many years before anything of true value is in place.

## What HMRC and others should be doing

HMRC intends to continue making unexpected business calls, but without using familiar numbers to assist with identification – as all calls giving its familiar numbers are now being blocked.

We trust that the numbers which are now being given will enable return calls – as this is a regulatory requirement. In time this could lead to a game of Whac-A-Mole, as each regularly used number has to be blocked.

As people are now naturally suspicious of all calls claiming to be from HMRC, these numbers will likely end up on the widely circulated blocklists anyway – including those operated by telephone companies!

We have long been proposing that organisations, HMRC, the banks and providers of broadband services in particular, simply cease the practice of making “outbound” calls to customers and citizens to conduct business without prior notice and consent. There is no obvious way in which recipients of such calls can be expected to verify the identity of the caller.

We repeat this point in our release – [Don't open the door to scammers and nuisance callers](#).

This is the second of the demands in [The Campaign to End Nuisance Calls - our three demands](#). We urge compliance with this, as well as the other two, which are equally relevant.

We welcome all steps that may help with reducing the extent of the nuisance and damage caused by attempted scam calls. In particular, we celebrate HMRC recognising that CLI has no part to play in verifying the identity of a caller. More action is however required.

