

**Labour's 9 point plan for telecoms
- our response and comments**

The **fair telecoms campaign** welcomes the discussion of important current telecoms issues raised by publication of a 9 point plan by Helen Goodman - Shadow Minister for Communications.

A. The plan stresses the importance of complete and timely application of principles on which we are pleased to have already won the battle:

2. Mid-contract price rises

6. 0800 numbers

7. Premium rate numbers for government services

B. Other issues and points raised worthy of detailed discussion

3. Lost and stolen phones

4. BT line rental charges

8. Switching

C - We have comments to add on the following:**1. Bill shock**

Omitted from the list of significant issues is the lack of shock for those who make weekday daytime calls to "ordinary" (01/02/03) numbers using landlines and pay penalty charges because they fail to subscribe to the "Anytime" call plan.

All those who make anything but a very few such calls should be subscribed to these plans. Recent evidence obtained by the Department for Work and Pensions indicates that there are very many vulnerable subscribers who are paying far too much for their telephone service.

5. Nuisance calls

Minor weaknesses in the present regime for addressing nuisance calls have been highlighted by some. We believe it is mistaken to think that a few modest tweaks to the existing regulations and procedures can mend a process that is fundamentally flawed.

The BT6500 phone may offer some protection from unwanted calls, but can also have the effect of isolating people from many welcome and even important calls. The fact that BT also now charges for the CLI facility on which the phone depends indicates that this is little more than an attempt to exploit widespread public concern, to little good purpose.

The fair telecoms campaign believes that new radical measures are now required to address the problem of nuisance calls, by switching the focus to methods of regulation that can be effective.

9. Paper Bills

Whilst many people enjoy the benefits of accessing their bills online, it is disgraceful that those who cannot, or prefer not to, are penalised. In many cases this reduces perfectly capable people into dependency on others who have internet access to handle their affairs for them.

