

**New Year 2015 Wishes  
from the fair telecoms campaign****2014 has been a great year for the fair telecoms campaign.**

- ft** The **BIS** regulations prohibiting use of expensive numbers for post contract customer contact have been introduced and achieved extensive, *although not complete*, compliance.
- ft** Compliance with the **Cabinet Office** Guidance on Customer Contact lines provided by Central Government departments is *almost* complete.
- ft** **BT** has introduced a handset with effective call filtering technology. **BT** has introduced a low cost tariff for phone-only customers, *but fails to promote it properly*.
- ft** The failure of the existing **ICO / Ofcom** regime to deal with the problem of nuisance calls has been recognised, but sadly *nothing has been done, or even proposed, to seriously address this*.
- ft** The failure of competition to deliver an adequate and effective mobile coverage network has been recognised by **DCMS**, but again *this failure has not been addressed*.

**We therefore publish six wishes for greater fairness in 2015.**

These cover the range of day-to-day use of telecoms services which affects the lives of all of us who connect to the great national asset of the voice telephone network.

Much progress towards fairness has been, and continues to be, made. This is however blighted by those who press sectional interests and fail to grasp the important common issues. We will continue to campaign on these points, and others.

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**1. Fair Call Rates**

"Clear Call Rates for Everyone" will finally come into effect in June 2015.

The Service Charge, which is part of the cost of calling 084 and 087 numbers will, at last, have to be declared by those who use these numbers to subsidise the cost of their telephone service.

**We wish for:**

- a) Those who can justify a charge for people calling them to set it at a fair level and declare it!**
- b) Those who cannot justify such a charge to switch to 01/02/03 numbers.**

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**2. Fair access to call filtering technology**

Nuisance calls, from all manner of sources, will continue to blight and disturb our use of the telephone to receive calls for all time. This is of special and critical importance to those who need telephone access but may be limited in their capabilities to deal with any type of incoming call.

Simple call blockers do not provide the answer, because they will invariably risk blocking wanted, possibly very important, calls. All telephone users need access to effective technology that cuts off as many unwanted calls as is practicable, but without limiting use of a highly valuable resource.

We are delighted that this is available through a branded device and now through the BT8500 handset. The provision of this, to those in social need, by local authorities is greatly welcomed.

**We wish for:**

**Effective call filtering technology (such as that provided by trueCall) to be made available at a fair price to all. We believe that this has to be done by deploying it on telephone networks.**





### **3. Fair charges for mobile users**

Most monthly mobile subscription charges are made up of three components:

- £ A "lease" payment for the handset
- £ An inclusive bundle of calls, texts and data (otherwise charged as used)
- £ Network access (where available) to make and receive calls etc.

There are many situations in which it is necessary to address each aspect of service separately.

***We wish for:***

***Unbundling of mobile phone charges, so that many issues can be properly addressed.***

### **4. Fair arrangements for charities and helplines**

Under an arrangement made by the Helplines Partnership, the additional cost of calls to members' 0800 and 0808 numbers from mobiles has been met by the mobile companies. This will end in June 2015, when the full cost of all calls to 080 numbers will be always met by the person called. Most people pay nothing to call 03xx numbers, because they are included in call plans. Using a 03xx number is very much cheaper than a 080x number.

***We wish for:***

***A new arrangement - based on a special range of 03xx numbers for charities and helplines. All telephone companies would waive any charge on calls to these numbers - if they are not included in a call plan - to ensure free access to charitable services delivered by telephone.***

### **5. Fair deals for BT and other landline only customers**

Research by the Department for Work and Pensions has shown that many pensioners subscribe to the wrong BT call plan. They are now paying £1.12 for each 10-minute weekday daytime call to businesses or friends on an ordinary (01/02/03) number. BT prides itself on offering the "Home Phone Saver" plan which would give them all of their calls at no charge for only £3 per month, plus other useful services which many of them will be paying for as extras.

***We wish for:***

***All of those who require only simple landline telephone access to be using the cheap call inclusive bundles, which those of us who shop around and search the internet can find. Where such deals are available they should be widely and prominently advertised.***

### **6. Fair use of outbound calling**

The present arrangements for controlling unsolicited direct marketing calls and "regulating" persistent misuse of the telephone network, by the ICO and Ofcom, have been shown to have failed over the last ten years. Tweaking around with the terms of the regulations and the associated powers has made no difference over this period - and is unlikely to do so now.

***We wish for:***

***The regulators who are known to be powerful and influential over the various sectors from which nuisance calls originate (e.g. the FCA, the Claims Management Regulator and OfGEM) to impose and enforce clear and simple regulations covering use of the telephone for outbound calling. In many cases this will amount to a ban on use of telemarketing for some sectors.***

**David Hickson**

Monday, 29 December 2014