

**RBS / NatWest sets an example for other Banks -
all other traders will be compelled to follow**

Yesterday **RBS / NatWest** switched its main customer contact telephone numbers for enquiries and complaints from **084/087** to the equivalent **034/037** numbers.

In some cases it offers **080** numbers so landline users are assured of a free call. (**03** numbers are mostly called under the terms of an inclusive call package or plan, and so incur no call charge.)

This change to “*Basic Rate*” numbers reflects the requirements to be imposed on **all traders** (outside the financial services sector). **BIS** will be announcing new regulations to implement the provisions of the **Consumer Rights Directive**, no later than 13 December 2013.

The fair telecoms campaign is delighted at this news.

On **BBC Radio 4 Money Box** on 12 October, when discussing exclusion of this sector from the **Consumer Rights Directive** provisions, **David Hickson** said,

"We hope that the principle of not charging customers to make enquiries by telephone will be accepted by the well mannered people in the financial services sector".

- Those who are not planning similar moves in the near future need to explain themselves.
- **HMRC** has already set an example to the **public sector** by switching to **03** numbers. A statement of general government policy is expected from the **Cabinet Office** shortly.
- The same change was demanded of **NHS bodies and GPs** in England and Wales by Directions and contract revisions in 2009 / 10. Complete compliance has not been achieved - **NHS England** has announced the potential for enforcement action against non-compliant GPs.

Links



[The RBS news release is published \(copy here\)](#)



[Section 39 of the draft BIS regulations will be subject to revision in the final version](#)



[The NHS England letter to non-compliant practices is published](#)



[An extract from the Money Box broadcast is available to listen](#)

David Hickson, of the fair telecoms campaign said,

“At last, the fact that calls to 084 and 087 numbers include a ‘Service Charge’ to the benefit of the person called is being recognised - despite perverse pricing by some telephone companies and misrepresentation referring to the distinct ‘local rate’, which was abolished ten years ago.

“03 numbers are ‘GOOD’ numbers. They are charged to callers on exactly the same basis as calls to ‘ordinary’ ‘geographic’ (01/02) numbers. In most cases these calls are inclusive.

“Telephone companies need to be paid for conveying calls. Only in very particular situations should companies be paid for receiving them.”

David Hickson



Friday, 29 November 2013