



The 'Telephone Tax'

When calling any 084 telephone number, callers pay a **Service Charge** to subsidise the cost of the service they are accessing. For a taxation-funded service, we call this the **Telephone Tax**.

Ofcom has announced that users of 084 (and 087 and 09) numbers will shortly have to declare their **Service Charge**, suggesting that this be done using images such as those shown below.



Government to prohibit Service Charges (by some)

The forthcoming **Consumer Rights Bill** will prohibit businesses from imposing a **Service Charge** on calls from customers. The prohibition will not however apply to government departments or public services not paid for by users (in other ways) - the **Telephone Tax** will remain legal.

The Big Question

The fair telecoms campaign poses "The Big Question" to all those who are free to decide whether to retain their **Service Charge** / **Telephone Tax** when they are compelled to declare it openly, and whether they will wait to be required by law to tell the truth, or will do so voluntarily now.

Decisions already made

HM Revenue and Customs has already announced that all of its 0845 numbers will be migrated to the 03 range, so as to remove the Telephone Tax. This operation has already begun and is scheduled to be completed by the end of September 2013.

The Department for Work and Pensions has confirmed that it will be retaining its 0845 numbers in the light of the Ofcom announcements. It makes the point that it will not be covered by the provisions of the Consumer Rights Bill, and will therefore be free to treat its "customers" less favourably than would a business.

Citizens Advice confirms that it has no plans to remove the Telephone Tax from its **Consumer Advice line**, even though this is what would be used to register a complaint against a company imposing an illegal Service Charge. **Citizens Advice Bureaux** are free to impose telephone Service Charges on those they help, and will only declare this charge when required to do so by law.

The NHS has had a ban in place on use of telephone numbers that levy the Telephone Tax since 2010. This has not yet been fully enforced, however **NHS England** is currently investigating the matter and will act shortly.

Report by John Healey MP

John Healey MP has long been campaigning alongside us on these issues and has now prepared an extensive detailed report on the subject, entitled "Telephone Tax". John's comments can be read and a copy of the report downloaded from "[John calls for probe into 'Telephone Tax'](#)".

