

**The lesson from Sir Greg (penny a minute) Knight and his premium rate phone number mistake**

We issued [Greg Knight MP uses a premium rate telephone number for his constituency office](#) as a news release on Sunday evening.

The Mirror - [Tory MP's constituents charged up to 56p a minute when they phone him for help](#) - has now confirmed that this number is still working, but references to it have been removed from the relevant web pages. (See parliament.uk: [before](#) / [after](#), gregknight.com: [before](#) / [after](#).)

Any organisation which uses a 084 number benefits from a **Service Charge** of up to 7p per minute from calls (minus the VAT component), unless, like Sir Greg, they have allowed themselves to be ripped-off by their telephone company failing to pass on this benefit.

In addition to the Service Charge, callers also pay an **Access Charge** of between 10.5p and 55p per minute, set by their own telephone company.

This makes calls to 0845 090 0203 - the, still working, number for Sir Greg's constituency office - cost between 11.5p per minute and 56p per minute, as his Service Charge is 1p per minute.

(BT is the one exception, for those who wisely subscribe to inclusive calling plans to cover all of their calls. BT alone fails to include calls to Mobile numbers in its calling plans, although it does include calls to premium rate 0845 and 0870 numbers.)

BT is the leading provider of 0845 and 0870 numbers, but not of 0843/0844/0871/0872/0873, which are subject to the same Service Charges but are not included in its plans.)

Whilst the rip-off suffered by mobile users, with an Access Charge of up to 55p per minute, is the greatest, even those calling from a landline, with an Access Charge of 10.5p per minute (13p per minute for non-inclusive BT calls) are paying far more to their telephone company than is benefitting the person they are calling (even if that benefit is being delivered).

Our point is that any use of any 084 number is **"greedy and foolish"** – unless this perverse situation can somehow be justified.

Premium rate numbers (including those beginning 084 and 087) are for those who make a living out of providing Phone-paid services. Some of these are rip-offs, which need to be addressed, but the **fair telecoms campaign** recognises that some premium rate services are valued by those who use them.

Phone companies are entitled to apply their flat-rate Access Charge on all calls to premium rate numbers. We agree that this should be at a single rate for the sake of transparency.

The benefit of a "local rate" charge, which was not always relevant anyway, totally disappeared in 2004 when all telephone companies merged their "local" and "national" rates into a single rate.

This leaves 084 numbers as nothing more than a rip-off, providing a minimal benefit to the user at a disproportionately high cost to the caller.

Sir Greg must replace his 0845 number with a free-to-caller message advising of the new number.

We call on all other users of 084 (and 087) numbers to do the same, unless they can find a way of justifying their greedy and foolish behaviour.

BT needs to sort out the self-serving misleading nonsense of its call inclusion policy.

