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AS WE SEE IT

Living in a skull-de-sac

A SERBIAN man last week told how he''d converted a 101-year-old grave into a home.

Bratislav Stojanovic, 43, moved into the flat — which still contains its original "residents" — after losing his house.

It's now his very own "tomb" with a view.

Magnet munch

SURGEONS removed more than 40 fridge magnets from inside a 12-month-old toddler in Russia last week.

The naughty tot scoffed them after being left alone for just a few minutes.

We can't help wonder what the big attraction was.

Fast get-a-way

THREE thieves trying to burgle a shop shedded their fur coats — when their getaway donkey made too much noise.

The bungling Colombian burglars legged it after the braying animal alerted cops.

Talk about making an ass of yourself...

Llama drama

STUNNED resident woke to find a pair of llamas rampaging through their front garden in Hope.

The animals escaped from a field and were only caught after being tempted by a cut loaf.

It's the strangest early morning "wakeup" call.

Trolley collie

BARNEY the collie dog faced being put down after a slipped disk meant he could no longer use his back legs.

But the 12-year-old pooch is enjoying a new lease of life after owners Richard and Marie Thompson, from Keith, Moray, had him fitted with a specially made trolley.

Apparently vets say he's doing "wheely" good.

'I scuba do'

TOURISTS in Thailand have started a craze of getting married underwater.

The couples say their nuptials is giving weddings 40ft below the waves with signatures scrawled in their bulbs.

Now that's what you call taking the plunge.

Bugs funny

A BURGLAR in Plymouth was scared away from his victim's home by an enormous RABBIT!

The third took fright after Toby — a 2 ft long British Giant — began stomping loudly in his hutch.

It was his way of telling the crook to hop it.

Government promises action and three firms

20,000 calls for help on phone pests answered

Our reporter Gordon Blackstock with exhibits of your signatures on our petition.

THE Sunday Post's fight to end the blight of nuisance cold calls has taken a massive step.

Nearly 20,000 signed our petition demanding action on the plagues of calls that blights lives.

Finally, the corridors of power have heard your call.

Today we can reveal how the UK Government are backing our campaign with a pledge of tough action.

And the regulators are set to issue the first ever fines to three companies for making unsolicited sales and marketing calls.

Government Minister Ed Vaizey said: "I applaud The Sunday Post's campaign, and their readers' wish to see something done about it."

Nearly 20,000 signed up to the petition.

Over the past six months, we have investigated the industry.

We have told how a system set up to protect consumers, the Telephone Preference Service, is fundamentally flawed.

We have shown how your phone details are being sold on in a lucrative global market for genuine to foreign companies hoping to make a fast buck.

We have also reported on the human face of the sometimes unscrupulous business, where vulnerable members of the public have lost thousands of pounds through telemarketing scams.

Liberal Democrat Edinburgh West MP Mike Crockart, who is part of our campaign, said: "Pressuring the petition to No. 10 was a real step forward for the campaign, highlighting it to the very highest levels of Government once again.

"The Minister is aware from my meeting with him of my feelings on the matter and those of the thousands of people who have signed the petition.

"Regulators may be beginning to use the powers they have more effectively, but it's still unacceptable if people feel under siege in their homes.

"I want to see the Information Commissioner's powers strengthened to tackle in all forms of unsolicited contact.

"We need a single, simple point of contact for any individual wishing to protect their privacy from unwanted calls, texts, faxes and emails. "Putting the responsibility on customers is unacceptable when the regulations are such a maze."

Mr Vaizey, who is Minister for Culture, Communications and the Creative Industries, said: "I am very aware of the distress that can be caused by silent calls, unsolicited marketing calls and spam text messages.

"Whilst direct marketing is a legitimate industry, we need better enforcement of the regulations to stop unwanted calls and texts.

"We have given enforcement bodies the tools they need to do their work through powers to issue fines of up to £1m for silent calls and £300k for unsolicited marketing and it is good to see Ofcom and the ICO are using these powers, issuing over a million pounds in fines in 2012.

"But more needs to be done.

"The regulators need to bite, as there is effective enforcement.

"And we need to give consumers greater clarity so they know who to turn to."

Investigation that led to record £250,000 fines

UK REGULATORS are to hit three cold calling companies with huge fines following our campaign.

It will be the first time the Information Commissioner's Office has hammered any company for making unsolicited sales calls.

Sources say the fines, running to £250,001, will be delivered within the month.

The three UK firms facing the eye-watering fines will not be named for legal reasons.

We have previously passed the findings from our undercover investigations on to the body.

An ICO spokesperson said: "The public have told us they are distressed and annoyed by the constant bombardment of illegal texts and calls and we are cracking down on the companies responsible, using the full force of the law.

"In March we set up a survey on the ICO website so people could tell us about unwanted texts and calls they have been receiving. So far we have received more than 95,000 responses.

"We know the majority of these messages and calls have been made by companies who try to remain anonymous in the hope they can profit by selling personal information to claims management companies and other marketing organisations.

"We expect to issue notices to three companies shortly, informing them of our intention to issue penalties for cold calling.

"We believe the three companies have been behind the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations.

"Unless they can prove otherwise, we will issue them with monetary penalties totalling more than a quarter of a million pounds."

The body previously fined the two owners of Manchester-based Telinco Telecoms £440,000 for sending outmillions of spam texts about PPI.

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hammered with fines up to £250k after our campaign

MP Mike Crockart, left, and Gordon Blackstock hand the petition into 10 Downing Street.

IN MY VIEW

DAVID HICKSON

The Fair Telecoms Campaign

NUISANCE calls are a complicated problem.

But so is the existing solution.

We believe the powers to tackle them are already out there.

But efforts are hampered by too many bodies having responsibility for dealing with them.

We would like to see a separate single agency set up to address this problem.

The publicly-funded body would consolidate existing resources from a number of organisations.

A single point of contact could be called by all consumers concerned they had received nuisance calls and texts.

The agency would then decide if laws had been broken and pass it onto the relevant regulators for action.

As well as being publicly accountable, the agency would also put pressure on those who fund the regulatory powers to use them swiftly and effectively.

Most nuisance calls are already in breach of regulations and the public hold a right to be protected.

PEOPLE POWER

A MAN who has forced two cold calling firms to pay for wasting his time is considering launching a new court claim.

Richard Brennan is seeming whether he can hit the firms with claims for damages on top of the compensation he has already won.

The Surrey businessman said: "I've toiled at the law closely and I think I might be able to claim damages too.

"These firms will only respond if you hit them where it hurts — in the pocket.

"It has worked in other countries.

"In Israel, people actually looked forward to getting cold calls because it meant they could launch a compensation claim.

WESTMINSTER ACTION

THE Government are to be grilled on how they are tackling nuisance calls in Westminster.

Welsh MP Alan Cairns has secured a debate on the issue at Westminster Hall on February 28.

The Tory MP — and Mrs from other parties — will discuss answers from the Department of Culture, Communications and the Creative Industries.

Mr Cairns said: "It's an issue that affects everyone and needs to have the attention of cross-party members."

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See articles in detail:

- 20,000 calls for help on phone pests answered
- Investigation that led to record £250,000 fine
- WESTMINSTER ACTION
- IN MY VIEW - David Hickson - the fair telecoms campaign
- PEOPLE POWER

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We have shown how your phone details are being sold on in a lucrative global market for pennies to foreign companies hoping to make a fast buck.

We have also reported on the human face of the sometimes unscrupulous business, where vulnerable members of the public have lost thousands of pounds through telemarketing scams.

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By Gordon Blackstock
gblackstock@sundaypost.com

fair telecoms campaign

press cutting

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The SUNDAY POST BRITAIN'S FAVOURITE FAMILY NEWSPAPER

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