

## NTS: Options for the Future

### Ofcom Board response to Advice Note from the Ofcom Consumer Panel, 9 August 2005

1. The Board thanks the Consumer Panel for its Advice Note, which was considered at the Board meeting on 26 July, along with papers setting out the project team's proposals for the future regulation of NTS.

#### General Comment

2. The Board notes the Panel's general comment, welcoming the additional research and analysis on which the latest proposals are based. The additional effort in these areas has provided a much firmer empirical foundation for the policy proposals, and has also informed their development since the publication of the previous Consultation in October 2004.

#### Legitimacy of NTS as a payment mechanism

3. The Board shares the Panel's concern about the use of revenue sharing numbers where the caller has no choice over the number to call, particularly in relation to calls made to public services. Ofcom has played an active role in advising Government Departments and public authorities on the appropriate use of numbers, and the Board would expect this to continue. In the Board's view, the Panel also has an important role to play in this regard, given its statutory remit to advise bodies other than Ofcom, as it sees fit.

#### Revised Proposals

4. The Board agrees that the proposals are reasonably complex but feels that this is inevitable, given the subject matter. To address this point, it will be essential for the proposals to be communicated as effectively as possible, when the Consultation Document is published.
5. In relation to the Panel's points about price transparency, the Board's comments are as follows:
  - **Role of ICSTIS:** ICSTIS has been asked to provide an assessment of the resource implications of extending its role to include 0871 numbers, and Ofcom will review that assessment before a final decision is reached. Ofcom and ICSTIS are also in the process of finalising an MoU, which will provide a greater level of accountability for ICSTIS's management and organisational effectiveness, and encourage it to build on the progress made over the past year.
  - **Amendment to General Condition 14:** Ofcom already has an active programme of enforcement for General Condition 14. A recent review has identified a number of Communications Providers who are not currently in compliance with this General Condition, and enforcement action is now being initiated against them. An active enforcement programme will be maintained in future.
  - **Restricted use of chargeable numbers:** As noted above, the Board would encourage the Panel to take an active role in this area.
6. With regard to call pre-announcements, the Board is satisfied that the conclusion reached is soundly based on an analysis of both the costs and the benefits involved. The Board notes the Panel's comment that the cost of pre-announcements could fall considerably as part of 21CN development, and

agrees that this factor should be taken into account in future policy development. In the shorter term, the Board does not consider that it would be proportionate to require pre-announcements for 084/087 calls, in the light of the costs associated with such an intervention.

**Board decision**

7. The Board approved a consultation on the basis of the package of measures proposed.