

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 February 2005 17:10
To: Colette Bowe
Cc: [REDACTED]; Graham Howell; [REDACTED]; Kip Meek
Subject: NTS Policy Options

Dear Colette,

Many thanks for the Consumer Panel's response to Ofcom's *NTS: options for the future* consultation document.

Here is an update on the next steps in relation to NTS, in particular the outcome of the Board discussion, the timetable going forward, and the points in the process at which we'd like to propose that we engage further with the Panel.

The Board discussed the responses to the consultation and the next steps at its meeting on 1st February. The Board decided that, particularly in light of the Consumer Panel's response and the lack of consensus amongst respondents, further work should be done to investigate and build the evidence base and to examine other policy options. This will include (amongst other things) further research. We intend to use consumer Focus Groups to gauge consumer views on call holding times, choice of services, reactions to the various policy options Ofcom has been working on, including views on migration of services including ISP services between number ranges. We also intend to carry out Focus Groups with participants representing organisations using NTS numbers for inbound contacts (including those with 1-10 employees), looking at incentives to extend call holding times, how disruptive number changes are and reactions to Ofcom's policy options. We also intend to explore how we can collect data on the use of 087 numbers for adult services, how we might be able to quantify consumer detriment and whether we can do any sort of mystery shopping or survey exercise to determine correlations between revenue sharing and call holding times.

The NTS project team expects to begin to have the results of this research by April 2005, with some data becoming available in May. By the end of June, we're planning to publish our next NTS document, which we hope will set out Ofcom's decision about the future of NTS. At this point, Ofcom will probably (depending on its decision in relation to NTS policy) also publish a short statutory consultation to make the necessary changes to various legal instruments required to implement Ofcom's decision.

By September 2005, we would like to have the new NTS legal framework in place, and work can begin with the Industry to make the necessary technical changes, and to communicate what the changes mean to UK consumers. The length of time required to launch the new arrangements for NTS could take 6-12 months from this date, depending on the extent of the changes required.

We'd like to propose the following points in the process up to the June 2005 publication for further dialogue between the NTS project team and the Panel:

- Discussion of the Invitation to Tender for the further research described above before it is sent out (late Feb/early March)
- Paper to be submitted to Consumer Panel early May describing results of further work and direction of policy thinking
- Presentation at Consumer Panel meeting on 17/5/05
- Feedback from Consumer Panel in time for Policy Exec and Board meetings beginning/mid June, at which we expect the Board to make a decision about the NTS policy option to be implemented.

Although we've proposed the above milestones, we are very open to other suggestions about better ways to engage – please let us know how we can do this most helpfully and effectively.

Kind regards,

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