

Dear Nathan Marshall,

It has come to my attention that a consultation period for 0871 phone numbers is coming to an end. It would have been nice to know it had started!

I and many other people I know consider the overuse of 087x numbers a premium rate scam. In 98% of calls to these numbers you have "Press 1 for 2 for.... we are very busy... you are in a queue..... your call is important to us.... however NEVER in these messages does it say "we are milking you for every penny we can keep you on hold..." sorry I mean this call is 10p per minute.

Most, if not all usage of these systems is to enable the "provider" to scale down the operators answering calls thus creating the queue by design. British Gas, Orange, Manweb are but a few who seem to use this queuing system to great effect. The result being that not only do we pay our bills to these companies but we pay over the odds to contact them in cases of problems occurring. As I see it, there is nothing in place to discourage abuse of the system you are advocating.

There is however a very good system that I have come across with some more reasonable "providers", that at the beginning of the period on hold a message is provided stating how many people are in front of you in the queue and an estimate of how long you may be waiting as Wirral Metropolitan Council use in their phone network, *hang on though they also use a geographical phone number, so not much money to be made there then!*

So why, if these numbers have to be used, *and I do not support the use* can not the system that WBC use, be mandatory with all 079x numbers, also with a complaints procedure in place for reporting abuse and the "providers" set up a ring fenced fund to payout in cases of abuse.

Moreover, It should be stated as in all 09xx numbers that these numbers are premium rate i.e. not local or national rate that have peak and off peak calling rates, and as such are included in inclusive calling packages from telecom providers.

I personally always use geographic numbers where available, in fact I have in the past week declined to call an 0871 number to book seats for a show I have attended for the last 5 years simply due to my feeling of the scam being played on us all in the UK.

Edward Millership