

'Raising confidence in telephone numbers' – Response from Christopher Woods

Question 1: Do you have any comments on the proposed amendment to General Condition 17 as set out in Annex 5 of this document?:

The implementation of the 03 prefix is broadly acceptable - however, existing companies and individuals using 0845 and 0870 numbers should not just be allowed to migrate using the provided means, they should indeed be obliged to move their numbers to 03-prefixed numbers, as otherwise what is the point in introducing an 03 numbering scheme? The companies who currently profit or have unnecessary 084/087 numbers won't feel any need or compulsion to switch, so the whole situation becomes even more farcical... You end up with a two-tier NGN system where the people who are (unfairly) making money from running support lines on 0870 numbers won't switch, and that negates the whole point of 03 numbers.

0845 and 0870 numbers should be withdrawn, as the 03 migration path is perfectly primed to accept those who currently have 084x/087x numbers, giving them an 034x/087x number instead and allowing both the people who run lines via these numbers to retain the geographical localisation features (such as the Police force and regional customer support lines implement) whilst allowing people to call these numbers inside their inclusive minutes on tariffs or phone packages - an all-round better solution.

As it stands in my view, GC17 is unfinished and has big loopholes in it. It's a good start, though.