

MPs call for more honesty from internet service providers

Submitted by: AxiCom

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- MPs and the Plain English Campaign add their support to Computeractive's campaign for clarity in broadband contracts

- Downing Street e-petition receives more than 3,500 signatures in first week

Launched one week ago Computeractive's Crystal Clear Broadband campaign (<http://www.computeractive.co.uk/campaign/>) is gaining significant momentum. The campaign is lobbying Government to instruct Ofcom to force ISPs to advertise a typical rate for broadband subscriptions, not just a theoretical "maximum" rate. After its first week Crystal Clear Broadband has received over 3,500 signatures on its online petition, attracted the attention of MPs and has gained an influential partner, the Plain English Campaign.

There is growing support for the Crystal Clear Broadband campaign within the House of Commons. Derek Wyatt, chairman of the All Party Internet Group, said: "I hope your campaign comes to the attention of Ofcom and that it conducts a review."

Support has also come from Conservative MP Sir George Young: "There's insufficient consumer understanding of what's realistic to expect in terms of day-to-day performance, as opposed to the maximum speed of a broadband line; and that suppliers have a key role to play in setting realistic expectations rather than hyping the maximum as if it were the norm. And yes, I do believe Ofcom has a role to play."

Plain English Campaign spokesperson Ben Beer said "We urge our supporters to sign the petition on the Downing Street website. Many people find modern technology complicated enough without having to plough through small print and jargon. Broadband companies have a responsibility to be honest with their customers and not rip them off."

The Crystal Clear partners are urging the public to sign the campaign's petition which is available online at:

www.computeractive.co.uk/campaign

Ofcom has welcomed the campaign's goal to raise consumer awareness of the issues of speed and the technical limitations of broadband. The communications regulator added that data from the online speed test application submitted by Computeractive readers had given it greater insight into the state of the UK consumer broadband market.

An Ofcom spokesperson said "We are aware of the issues of speed and have been asking to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) to step in when there was unfair advertising." The watchdog has not ruled out a formal investigation and is currently undergoing a consultation looking at the potential for a high speed nationwide fibre network, which will address regulation.

Computeractive's editor Paul Allen said: "It's clear that the question of misrepresentation in

advertising by the ISPs has struck a chord with UK broadband users. Since the campaign has already gained such widespread support, we are optimistic that with sustained pressure Ofcom and the ISPs will recognise that this is an issue that needs to be addressed.”

Notes to editors:

– Additional information about the Crystal Clear Broadband campaign can be found at www.computeractive.co.uk/campaign, this includes a link to the online petition.

– A panel of Computeractive readers from around the country are available for telephone interviews to discuss their broadband experiences

– Further resources for media, including campaign logos, this release and photos of spokespeople can be found at www.computeractive.co.uk/campaign/press

– Broadbandchoices.co.uk provided the Speed Test tool and analysed the results.

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About Computeractive

· Computeractive is a fortnightly title, with a circulation of 216,031. The cover price is £1.49 and the magazine is available throughout the UK or by subscription.

· Computeractive is published by Incisive Media. More information is available at www.computeractive.co.uk

About Incisive Media

Incisive Media is a fast growing specialist business information provider operating in four markets: financial services, risk management, professional services and marketing services. The Company delivers key information to defined target audiences across a variety of platforms in print, through magazines; in person via conferences, exhibitions and training programmes; and online through its various websites. Incisive Media's market leading brands include Investment Week, Professional Pensions, Your Mortgage, Post Magazine, Risk, Unquote, Search Engine Strategies and Legal Week.

About Plain English Campaign

Plain English Campaign officially began in 1979, after founder Chrissie Maher OBE publicly shredded hundreds of official documents in Parliament Square, London. Entirely independent, the campaign funds itself through its commercial services, which include editing and training. It works with thousands of organisations ranging from UK Government departments to World Bowls, helping them make sure their public information is as clear as possible. The campaign's Crystal Mark for clarity appears on more than 15,000 documents.

About Broadbandchoices.co.uk

Broadbandchoices.co.uk is a broadband comparison service in the UK. Unlike other comparison sites, Broadbandchoices.co.uk doesn't just focus on price but total package value. Consumers can now refer to this impartial Website to access the latest broadband advice and deals, to help them make the right choice. For more information <http://www.broadbandchoices.co.uk>

About thinkbroadband.com

Thinkbroadband.com is a website dedicated to providing information and news on broadband related matters. Our goal is to provide a fair and impartial atmosphere for broadband service providers, users and other stakeholders to discuss relevant topics. We are independent of any broadband service providers and provide our listing services free of charge. <http://www.thinkbroadband.com>

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