



PRESS RELEASE
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Industry welcomes new safeguards for mobile consumers

New safeguards launch this week for UK consumers who regularly buy ringtones and news via their mobile phones. These safeguards were warmly welcomed by the industry's trade association, Mobile Entertainment Forum (MEF), which played a pivotal role in creating the new rules.

The new rules deal with services paid for by regular fixed weekly subscription. Content sold this way includes ringtones, pictures, sports alerts and entertainment news. The sector has grown explosively over the last 12 months, and was estimated to be worth nearly £200m in the UK in 2004.

Consumers have responded well to the great value delivered by subscription services and also enjoy the predictable timing of such services. With success came a growing concern about unclear pricing and difficulties with un-subscribing from such services. As soon as the industry became aware of this issue, the content providers and mobile operators acted. They collaborated in one of the first true cross-industry initiatives ever seen in the mobile sector.

Mobile Entertainment Forum led the content industry's response to the crisis. It drew on the collective pan-European experience of its members, and proposed a scheme that would protect consumers yet help the industry to grow. The UK mobile operators pro-actively consulted the industry, rather than acting unilaterally, and welcomed the MEF initiative. The entire process took less than 6 weeks, a strikingly rapid response for a complex industry.

The new rules ensure that consumers will be clearly informed, by text message, about what they have subscribed to, with whom, and how much it will cost. They will be reminded about the industry's universal STOP command, which enables consumers to unsubscribe immediately from any service.

"Consumers have shown that they really like subscription services but sustaining their trust is vital for continued success," said Andrew Bud, Regulatory Head of the Mobile Entertainment Forum and Chairman of mobile aggregator mBlox. "As an industry, we had to ensure the highest standards of behaviour. We particularly appreciate the positive way the operators worked with us on this issue, consulting and collaborating to find the right balance, fast."

"Our first priority is our subscribers' continued trust and confidence," said Jeremy Flynn, Head of 3rd Party Content for Vodafone UK, who led the operators' initiative. "We are confident that the new rules will fully protect them, whilst encouraging further growth in the mobile content industry. The UK mobile operators are all fully committed to these rules, and we appreciated the support of the Mobile Entertainment Forum in getting this work done well and fast."