



CICRA media release

7 August 2013

Channel Islands mobile customers to have increased control over roaming charges

Roaming mobile phone users should be able to put a spending cap on their accounts while travelling abroad from later this year.

CICRA (the Channel Islands Competition and Regulatory Authorities) called on local telecommunications companies to volunteer to introduce caps in October 2012. Since then the regulator has been working closely with operators across Guernsey and Jersey to ensure customers using data roaming are protected from large bills, or “bill shock”, when they arrive home.

CICRA chief executive, Andrew Riseley, said: “Local operators have made, or are committed to making, significant investments to upgrade their billing systems in order to enable them to monitor customers’ usage when roaming on another operator’s network. Although Sure, Airtel and JT are all at different stages, we are pleased to report that they are each committed to introducing a system that allows customers to place a spending cap on their mobile phone account when travelling abroad.”

Sure expects to have a cap on the amount its Channel Islands customers can incur while roaming abroad in place later this month. Both JT and Airtel are currently upgrading the functionality of their billing systems, which, when complete, will allow them to place a cap on customer roaming charges. The completion date of these upgrades is still uncertain, although CICRA understands that both operators should be in a position to impose caps in 2014.

“Overall, we believe these are positive developments for consumers in the Channel Islands who will benefit from data roaming while being protected from the consequences of “bill shock” when travelling overseas. This system already operates successfully throughout the European Union (EU) and has assisted in reducing cases of “bill shock” for travellers there.

“Until the caps are formally introduced we would strongly recommend that customers in the Channel Islands seek advice from their mobile phone provider on how to manage or disable data roaming on their device before going abroad. In addition, some operators offer separate ‘Travel SIM cards’ for use overseas or data ‘bolt-ons’ as ways to minimise the cost of using mobile phone services when travelling overseas,” said Mr Riseley.

The UK communications regulator, Ofcom, has prepared tips to help customers get the most from their smartphone or tablet without returning home to unexpectedly high bills, and Channel Islands customers who would like further information on data roaming can refer to the Ofcom webpage:

<http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/files/2013/07/files/2013/07/Smartphonerooting.pdf>

CICRA is also closely monitoring developments in the EU after the European Commission recently introduced methods to encourage competition in the EU roaming market. The Commission has made it a requirement that all telecoms operators allow their customers to purchase roaming as a separate service by 1 July 2014. This requirement will increase consumers’ choice and awareness of roaming charges while travelling.

“Although the latest EU requirements do not apply to the local telecoms market we are watching how the situation in the EU develops. CICRA’s aim is to promote value, choice and quality in the goods and services available for consumers in the Channel Islands and, in order to fulfil this aim, CICRA intends to launch a review of the roaming market, its structure and how it functions for consumers in Guernsey and Jersey, in the context of the EU developments, in 2014,” said Mr Riseley.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

All enquiries should be directed in writing to CICRA Chief Executive, Andrew Riseley, in Guernsey at the Guernsey Competition and Regulatory Authority, Suites B1 & B2, Hirzel Court, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 2NH or in Jersey at the Jersey Competition Regulatory Authority, 2nd Floor, Salisbury House, 1 - 9 Union Street, St Helier, Jersey JE2 3RF. Alternatively email info@bicra.gg.

About CICRA:

The Channel Islands Competition and Regulatory Authorities or 'CICRA' is the name given to the Jersey Competition Regulatory Authority (JCRA) and the Guernsey Competition and Regulatory Authority (GCRA) (formerly the Office of Utility Regulation). The JCRA was established under the

Competition Regulatory Authority (Jersey) Law, 2001, and the GCRA was established under The Guernsey Competition and Regulatory Authority Ordinance, 2012. In Jersey, the telecoms and postal sectors are regulated by the JCRA, which is also responsible for administering and enforcing the Competition (Jersey) Law 2005. In Guernsey the telecoms, postal and electricity sectors are regulated by the GCRA, which is also responsible for the administration and enforcement of the Guernsey competition law since it came into force on 1 August 2012.

By working together and sharing resources and expertise between the islands, CICRA strives to ensure that consumers in all the Channel Islands receive best value, choice and access to high quality services.