

Defra's annual status report on Customer Service Lines

November 2014

A Summary of department's numbering policy

Comments re how Defra complies with the guidance, including whether Defra feels they have already implemented the guidance for its lines.

Defra's customer service lines numbering policy version 1.0 was issued in July 2014. It aims to ensure the Core department, and all bodies within the organisational hierarchy, continue to comply with the HMG Customer Service Lines guidance. The policy states that when either creating a new customer service line or making changes to the number of an existing customer service line, consideration must be made to ensure that Defra fully complies with the HMG and Ofcom guidance. Standard geographic numbers (01, 02) are the preferred solution, or else the 03 non-geographic option. If a new Defra customer service line is being set up, where the primary number offered will not have a prefix of 01, 02 or 03, this will be considered an exception. In such cases, approval will need to be obtained from the Minister for Civil Society, via Defra's internal exceptions route.

Defra has fully implemented the guidance for its customer service lines, with the exception of the Ofcom Revised Regime, to be implemented by June 2015, which requires actual service charges to be specified, wherever Defra's 0844/0845/0870 numbers are advertised or presented.

Comments re prefixes that do not comply with the guidance, including a statement as to when Defra aims to complete implementation of the guidance

Defra has 24 x 0844/0845/0870 lines which are currently operated under a dual numbering system, whereby an 03 option is also provided. Best endeavours attempts have been made to ensure that where dual numbering systems exist, the 03 number is always advertised as the primary contact number. Current online content has been updated (e.g. gov.uk, internet/intranet sites, document templates, IT applications, etc) and all new publications will reflect the new numbering system. Some existing material has also been updated and the remainder will be amended as reprints are ordered.

5 of these lines (1 x 0844, 3 x 0845 and 1 x 0870) are scheduled for closure during December 2014. The future of the remaining 19 lines is

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currently being considered, but there is a drive to attempt to remove all remaining 0844/0845/0870 lines from service by Spring 2015.

Comments re call volume data and value add services:

Within the reporting period, Defra has operated 102 customer service line numbers across its organisational hierarchy, via a number of telephony suppliers. Defra has call volume data which provide a comparison of the 08/03 distribution of calls for 44 of the 102 lines. This data shows a substantial change has taken place. For example, in November 2013, 57% of these calls received on customer service lines were via the 084/087 option, whereas 43% were via the 03 option. By October 2014, 7% of these calls received on customer service lines were to the 084/087 number, whereas 93% of calls utilised the 03 option.

The Environment Agency runs 4 x 09 “value-add” customer service lines which were created in response to customer demand from anglers and boat users to inform them of river conditions. These lines comply with the principles set out on revenue generation in the HMG Guidance for Customer Service Lines document. The use of these numbers has declined in recent years because the information is clearly publicised as being available free online, via gov.uk. Consequently, the closure of all four lines is in the early planning stage and anticipated to be completed by October 2016.

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B Departmental customer service lines: Telephone number prefixes

Lines	0843/0844/0845	Dual Numbering with 0843/4/5	03	Other Geographic	0800	0870	09	Other	Lines closed
GRAND TOTALS for Core Department + all listed bodies within organisational hierarchy									
Total at November 2013	0843 x 0 0844 x 8 0845 x 34	Nil	5	2	4	5	4	Nil	N/A
Total at October 2014	0843 x 0 0844 x 0 0845 x 0	4 x 03*/0844 16 x 03*/0845	21	2	4	4 x dual numbering 03*/0870	4	Nil	4 x 0844, 18 x 0845 & 1 x 0870 closed to date. Plus 1 x 0844, 3 x 0845 and 1 x 0870 closure scheduled Dec 2014.
Core Department									
Total at November 2013	0843 x 0 0844 x 0 0845 x 5	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	N/A
Total at October 2014	0843 x 0 0844 x 0 0845 x 0	3 x 0345/0845 dual numbering	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	2 x 0845 closed Summer 2014. Remaining 3 x 0845 scheduled for closure during 12/2014.
Environment Agency (EA)									
Total at November 2013	0843 x 0 0844 x 1 0845 x 3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	3	4	Nil	N/A
Total at	0843 x 0	1 x 0344/0844	Nil	Nil	Nil	3 x dual	4	Nil	1 x 0845 closed

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October 2014	0844 x 0 0845 x 0	2 x 0345/0845 dual numbering				numbering 0370/0870			Summer 2014.
Lines	0843/0844/0845	Dual Numbering with 0843/4/5	03	Other Geographic	0800	0870	09	Other	Lines closed
Rural Payments Agency (RPA)									
Total at November 2013	0843 x 0 0844 x 0 0845 x 8	Nil	Nil	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	N/A
Total at October 2014	0843 x 0 0844 x 0 0845 x 0	Nil	8	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	8 x 0845 numbers closed Autumn 2014.
Natural England (NE)									
Total at November 2013	0843 x 0 0844 x 0 0845 x 11	Nil	Nil	Nil	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	N/A
Total at October 2014	0843 x 0 0844 x 0 0845 x 0	11 x 0300/0845 dual numbering	Nil	Nil	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	N/A
Marine Management Organisation (MMO)									
Total at November 2013	0843 x 0 0844 x 0 0845 x 1	Nil	1	1	Nil	1	Nil	Nil	N/A
Total at October 2014	0843 x 0 0844 x 0 0845 x 0	Nil	1	1	Nil	1 x dual numbering 0300/0870	Nil	Nil	1 x 0845 closed Autumn 2014. 1 x 0870 is scheduled for closure 12/2014.
Forestry Commission, England (FC)									
Total at November 2013	0843 x 0 0844 x 0 0845 x 1	Nil	0	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	N/A
Total at October 2014	0843 x 0 0844 x 0	Nil	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1 x 0845 no longer used by FC England.

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2014	0845 x 0								Number remains in use by FC Scotland.
Lines	0843/0844/0845	Dual Numbering with 0843/4/5	03	Other Geographic	0800	0870	09	Other	Lines closed
Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)									
Total at November 2013	0843 x 0 0844 x 4 0845 x 5	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	Nil	Nil	N/A
Total at October 2014	0843 x 0 0844 x 0 0845 x 0	1 x 0344/0844	4	Nil	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	3 x 0844, 5 x 0845 and 1 x 0870 closed 2014. 1 x 0844 scheduled for closure by Dec 2014.
Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA)									
Total at November 2013	0843 x 0 0844 x 3 0845 x 0	Nil	4	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	N/A
Total at October 2014	0843 x 0 0844 x 0 0845 x 0	2 x 0300/0844 dual numbering	5	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1 x 0844 closed during 2014.

Note: This template refers to 'Lines closed'. For dual numbering systems, where the 03 and 08 numbers are identical (apart from the second digit), 08 number ownership must be continued, in order to maintain the linked 03 number. As a result, the 08 line cannot be relinquished and fully 'closed'. Instead, a non-chargeable message instructing users to redial using an 03 prefix has been put in place.

C Revenue generation

Does Defra comply with the principles set out on revenue generation in the HMG Guidance on Customer Service Lines?

Yes.