



## **CICRA media release**

**Embargoed until 07:00, Friday 18 October 2013**

**17 October 2013**

### **CICRA urges Sure to change its billing practices in open letter to managing director**

CICRA (the Channel Islands Competition and Regulatory Authorities) has criticised Sure for some of its recent new billing practices and is urging the telecoms company to change its billing and payment processes.

In an open letter to Sure managing director, Eddie Saints, CICRA chief executive, Andrew Riseley, said the letter was as a consequence of an unprecedented number of complaints from fixed line telecoms customers in Guernsey dissatisfied with Sure's processes for billing and collecting payments for their telecoms services.

CICRA initiated a review of this aspect of the telecoms market following changes made by Sure to payment terms in 2012. Subsequent changes introduced by Sure earlier this year - in particular the imposition of a £1 charge for receiving paper bills - have only heightened customers' concerns, according to the regulator.

To assess these concerns, CICRA commissioned Island Analysis to conduct a benchmarking exercise identifying the extent to which practices in the area of billing adopted by Sure in Guernsey (and JT in Jersey) are consistent with those adopted by other utility companies, both in the Channel Islands and elsewhere. This analysis has informed the regulator's views on general good practice.

Further areas of concern include:

- Sure's charge on customers for a second exchange line when it is no longer required after customers moved away from internet dial-up to ADSL.
- Sure's decision to charge £1 for paper bills citing environmental concerns following a previous decision by Sure to increase the billing frequency from quarterly to monthly.
- Sure's decision to charge £1 every month to customers not paying by direct debit.
- Sure's refusal so far to make BACS/internet banking available for customers.

Mr Riseley said: "Sure did not appear to have regard to environmental costs when it chose to triple the number of paper bills issued. It is apparent that Sure did not fully consider alternatives to this £1 levy such as including discounts to promote online billing or a reassessment of the actual billing format."

Mr Riseley also noted: "If Sure wishes to draw on technology to provide more online billing options to customers, it is not unreasonable for its customers to expect Sure to lead by example and provide a payment option through BACS. I am therefore writing also to urge Sure to implement this change at the earliest opportunity and inform customers of its availability."

CICRA also queried Sure's method of communicating tariff changes with its customers, suggesting that publishing changes in the Gazette Officielle was not sufficient in an age of electronic technology.

The regulator has asked Sure to undertake a thorough review of existing practices with stakeholder engagement and then set out a plan of action for CICRA to assess.

CICRA received a large number of written responses to its consultation which are available on its website, as is the open letter and the study undertaken by Island Analysis: [http://www.cicra.gg/telecoms/consumer\\_information.aspx](http://www.cicra.gg/telecoms/consumer_information.aspx).

## **ENDS**

For media interviews today (17 October) please contact Emma Anderson or John McCarthy at Orchard PR on 240600.

### **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@cicra.gg](mailto:info@cicra.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. By working together and sharing resources and expertise between the islands, CICRA strives to ensure that consumers in the Channel Islands receive best value, choice and access to high quality services.