



## **CICRA media release**

**16 October 2012**

### **Channel Islands 'bill shock' at roaming charges**

The Channel Islands Competition and Regulatory Authorities (CICRA) is calling for telecommunications companies in the islands to volunteer to introduce caps on data roaming charges to stop customers receiving surprise bills.

CICRA Chief Executive, Andrew Riseley, said that CICRA had received a concerning number of complaints from customers who had arrived home from overseas holidays to "bill shock", where they were faced with mobile bills of hundreds or even thousands of pounds due to data roaming charges.

He said that many people are unaware that smartphone apps regularly download data from the internet without informing the user and that the charges incurred when downloading data abroad could be hundreds of times higher than the charges levied by the operators locally.

"CICRA was contacted recently by a customer who thought they had taken reasonable steps to limit data downloading on their smartphone but had run up a mobile bill of £7000 through data roaming charges.

"We are calling for all Channel Islands mobile operators to introduce a £40 monthly bill cap for all customers in respect of their data roaming charges incurred within the European Union. Customers would then be able to contact their operator and 'opt out' of the cap if they wish to exceed that limit.

“We think this is a pragmatic and proportionate measure which would allow users to continue to benefit from data roaming while protecting them from the devastating consequences of ‘bill shock’.

“This system operates successfully throughout the EU and evidence suggests that it has assisted greatly in reducing the prevalence of ‘bill shock’ there,” Mr Riseley said.

CICRA is also asking operators to ensure that customers are informed while they are away of the charges they are incurring and when they near the cap.

Mr Riseley recommended that customers get in touch with their mobile providers to understand fully their data roaming options and what they can do to prevent incurring significant charges when using their phone abroad.

“CICRA recognises that Channel Islands mobile operators have taken some steps to educate customers about data roaming. However, the continuing incidence of ‘bill shock’, and the likelihood that mobile data usage will increase due to the increased popularity of smartphones, means that the ‘opt out’ bill caps are necessary.

“It should be noted that while data roaming is the most common source of ‘bill shock’, customers can also experience unexpected bills when their phones are stolen, for example.”

If voluntary introduction of a bill cap is not adopted CICRA will look to issue a direction to the operators to ensure that mobile customers are better protected.

## **ENDS**

### 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 (formerly the Office of Utility Regulation), 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 Regulation of Utilities (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law, 2001, as amended by 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.