

The mission statement of the Campaign for Unmetered Telecommunications is as follows:

"We campaign for the availability of unmetered narrowband and broadband telecommunications at reasonable cost to everyone in the United Kingdom.

Why?

- The full potential of the Internet can only be realised through it;
- It will enrich local community life;
- Traditional and electronic commerce will be enhanced by its availability;
- It is done elsewhere, profitably;
- The majority of costs of telecommunications provision are fixed.

How?

- Educating ourselves;
- Putting pressure on telecommunications operators, regulatory bodies and Government;
- Countering misinformation;
- Encouraging others. "

Our definition of 'unmetered' is given in the Appendix.

The Campaign believes that the fulfillment of those aims will enable more people to access the Internet in the United Kingdom, particularly those on lower incomes currently unable to exploit it to its full extent because of high charges, and thus make the Internet's social, educational, commercial and other benefits as widely available as possible.

The Campaign is run by nine people in their spare time; its sole source of income is yearly membership payments. At the time of writing it has over three hundred members.

We ask individuals and companies to sign up to our aims if they agree with what we are trying to do. We have several thousand individual "pledge signers" and over one hundred and eighty explicit corporate supporters including AOL UK and Legal & General. Many other companies support us but have requested no publicity.

Principal milestones in the Campaign's development are:

- The campaign launch party, "Festival of 'Free' Calls", on 31 March 1998 in front of Cable and Wireless Communications' (then) headquarters in London.
- The launch of the Campaign's Web site [1] in its embryonic form on the same day. The site has expanded in size and scope to a point at which it is widely recognised as being the best Web site promoting the adoption of unmetered telecommunications.
- Tim Berners-Lee, 'Father of the Web', contributed a piece in November 1998 [2], which he drafted specially for CUT, endorsing unmetered telecommunications.
- The Campaign organised UK participation in the European Telecommunications Boycott of 6 June 1999, which brought together campaigners for unmetered telecommunications in eighteen countries [3]. This attracted widespread support and received media coverage from all over the world; it led to AOL pledging public support for us [4].

- OFTEL outlined a shift in regulatory policy in a speech by the Director-General, David Edmonds, on 24 June 1999 [not now online] which was confirmed by its discussion document on the pricing of Internet calls issued in November 1999 [5].
- OFTEL staff members have repeatedly stated that the Campaign has had an impact on its policies. This has been confirmed by, among other events, OFTEL's proposals for action [6] and directions [7] on local loop unbundling. These repeatedly refer to 'unmetered' Internet access rather than 'free' Internet access and take on board much of the Campaign's case.
- Steve Webb, the Liberal Democrat MP for Northavon, mentioned the Berners-Lee quote in a House of Commons debate on 9 July 1999 [8] and praised the Campaign's Web site for promoting unmetered telecommunications. He saw United Kingdom telecommunications operators as stifling the development of the Internet for business, education and home users by charging for local calls by the minute; this opinion is now taken as read by the media.
- The Second Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Trade and Industry Inquiry into Electronic Commerce [9] quoted the Campaign's submission to it [10] at length and, in effect, called for unmetered telecommunications to be made available.
- *The Times* newspaper began a 'Free the Net' campaign in October 1999 as a complement to our actions, having watched what we were doing for some time.
- Two of the Committee members met Patricia Hewitt, the Minister for Small Business and e-Commerce at the Department of Trade and Industry, on 23 October 1999 [11]: she has made it clear on many occasions since then that she wants affordable unmetered Internet access by telephone modem, broadband and wireless to be made available.
- We made a presentation to the OFTEL Third Internet Forum on Internet tariffs on 16 November 1999 [12]; we are the only body outside the telecommunications and Internet Service Provision industry which is a member of the Forum.
- On 7 December 1999 BT proposed a group of five telephony packages [13] offering universal unmetered Internet access. After much negotiation and debate the packages offered were reduced from five to three and wholesale prices cut by over 50 per cent but, at the time of writing, what BT proposes has still not been approved by OFTEL [14].
- On 14 February 2000 Telewest began offering unmetered Internet access by telephone modem through its Cable Internet service [15] for, at maximum, £20 per calendar month all in. Towards the end of March it began its cable modem rollout in the South East of England, offering access 10 times faster than telephone modem for £50 per calendar month all in [16].
- On 10 April 2000 ntl: began offering unmetered Internet access at zero cost (no subscription fee, no per-minute charges) to its own cable subscribers and £10 per calendar month at maximum to anyone else [17]. It also revived its cable modem rollout, dormant for several months, offering a similar service to Telewest for £40 per calendar month all in.

- A large number of other organisations followed the cable operators' lead on telephone modem access to Internet Service Providers, including BT Internet, LineOne, Freeserve, Tiny Online, virgin.net and ic24 [18].
- On 18 April 2000 MCI Worldcom announced a wholesale product [19], for sale to Internet Service Providers, in direct competition to the BT offer.

## References

[1] *The Campaign for Unmetered Telecommunications*  
<http://www.unmetered.org.uk/>

[2] *Tim Berners-Lee*  
<http://www.unmetered.org.uk/news/news291198.htm>

[3] *telecom.eu.org*  
<http://www.telecom.eu.org/>

[4] *AOL Europe lends support to unmetered telecoms campaign*  
<http://www.aol.co.uk/press/releases/1999/pr990604.html>

[5] *Pricing of calls to the Internet: possible initiatives to bring about more appropriate and flexible tariffs*  
<http://www.oftel.gov.uk/superhwy/oifp1199.htm>

[6] *Access to Bandwidth: Proposals for Action*  
<http://www.oftel.gov.uk/competition/llu0799.htm>

[7] *Access to Bandwidth: Delivering Competition for the Information Age*  
<http://www.oftel.gov.uk/competition/a2b1199.htm>

[8] Hansard (9 June 1999)  
<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199899/cmhansrd/cm990609/debtext/90609-16.htm>

[9] *Electronic Commerce*  
<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199899/cmselect/cmtrdind/648/64802.htm>

[10] *The Cost of Accessing the Internet*  
[http://www.unmetered.org.uk/reference/resp\\_310399.htm](http://www.unmetered.org.uk/reference/resp_310399.htm)

[11] *Yes, Minister, but ...*  
<http://www.unmetered.org.uk/news/news231099.htm>

[12] *Minutes of [OFTEL Internet Forum] Meeting of 16 November 1999*  
<http://www.oftel.gov.uk/oif/meet03/oifmm03.htm>

[13] *Another momentous announcement*  
[http://www.unmetered.org.uk/news/news071299\\_2.htm](http://www.unmetered.org.uk/news/news071299_2.htm)

[14] *Draft Direction ... Flat Rate Internet Access Call Origination Product*  
<http://www.oftel.gov.uk/competition/fria0400.htm>

[15] *Telewest leads the way with launch of unlimited Internet access ...*  
<http://www.cableinet.co.uk/html/surfunlimited.html>

[16] *Telewest takes the lead in broadband interactive services*  
[http://www.telewest.co.uk/investors/press\\_releases/pdf/blueyonder.pdf](http://www.telewest.co.uk/investors/press_releases/pdf/blueyonder.pdf)

[17] *NTL's free Internet service launches ahead of schedule*  
<http://www.ntl.co.uk/press/display.asp?id=251>

[18] *The Register Guide to Flat-Fee ISPs*  
<http://www.theregister.co.uk/000314-000028.html>

[19] *Worldcom takes on BT, offers alternative Surftime*  
<http://www.zdnet.co.uk/news/2000/15/ns-14910.html>

## Appendix

Our definition of 'unmetered':

Many people refer to 'free Internet access', largely because this is an expression often used by the media and even telecommunications providers in their promotions.

However, we suggest that you become more precise and refer instead to 'unmetered Internet access'. There are three main objections to 'free':

- *'Free' is not free.* Although there may be no subscription fee you pay indirectly for such access, usually by telephone calls charged by the minute.
- *Using 'free' encourages trivial responses* such as 'you can't get something for nothing' or 'there's no such thing as a free lunch'. Using 'unmetered' emphasises that you pay a single subscription fee for access, say every month, and there is *no* per-minute call cost.
- *'Free' is much abused.* For example, Freeserve has nothing to do with 'free': although it levies no subscription fee, you're still paying by the minute to access its services.

It's the same argument for unmetered voice calls. 'Unmetered' implies you pay a single subscription fee for the service ... and that's all you pay.

There's no question of 'something for nothing': we demand **fair**, not free, charges.

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