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PHOTOGRAPHY KEITH EMMITT

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Consumer Direct was created to help the public tackle rogue traders. We ask its new director how well it is performing

Our promise

Expert advice when you need it

Which? aims to help you choose the best goods and services – and avoid the worst. We're entirely independent – we take no ads, no freebies and everything we test is paid for at full price. Since

1957 we've informed, influenced and campaigned on behalf of all consumers in the UK.



Best Buys

These are products that achieve high total test scores.

Don't Buys

These are products that have performed extremely poorly in at least one of our key tests or that have achieved very low total test scores.



Exceptional Value

Our coveted award is given on those rare occasions to products that are of both superb quality and outstandingly priced.



MEMBERS' HELPLINE Call 01992 822 800/0845 307 4000 Email which@which.co.uk

You can't assume that shops which offer great value on groceries and clothes will offer an equally good deal on personal finance **PAGE 20**



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Comment

Ofcom's chance

Ofcom, the broadcasting regulator, has a major opportunity to show its mettle in its response to the growing demand for a ban on junk-food advertising before the 9pm TV watershed. Obviously, food manufacturers are going to oppose such a ban, and the TV companies don't want to lose precious advertising revenue. But Which? has now been joined by 23 other bodies in asking for sense to prevail.

It's not that there is a shortage of evidence. Recent government research confirmed the view that the UK is the shameful obese champion of Europe. Of course, this obesity crisis is not solely due to kids being exposed to the marketing of unhealthy foods. But it is impossible to argue that such adverts are not a factor.

This isn't a request for a nanny state. We are calling for a ban to protect those who can't necessarily protect themselves – and perhaps help them avoid the problems that their elders are facing now. It's a simple measure that shouldn't be controversial. Obese kids grow up to be obese adults. Prevention is better than cure.

The UK is facing an epidemic of frightening proportions. Many say they are taking it seriously. Ofcom can lead the way. Unfortunately, its apparent unwillingness to give the watershed debate a fair hearing gives it the appearance of being on an entirely different wavelength.

Supermarket sweeteners?

The tempting financial treats that have replaced sweets at supermarket check-outs in recent years should probably carry health warnings. The offers of loans, insurance and credit cards look good, are from a trusted source and in the right place at the right time.

But be careful. Supermarkets and the big chains have achieved much for the consumer – lower prices and better-quality goods, for example. But finance, as we show on p20, isn't one of their best lines yet, despite some honourable exceptions.

Shop around before you sign up. Not every best buy can be carried home in a shopping trolley.

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THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

2,000

The number of hours we played music on the MP3 players throughout our test. Find out which of the 27 players are music to your ears on p40.

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The number of hours we ran our digital camcorders for to test battery life. See how our 24 models fared in this and our other tests on p68.

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The number of music and speech tracks our panel listened to for this month's test on 16 digital radios. Sound out our results on p72.