



## Campaigns round-up

### STAR BACKING

■ TV presenter Sarah Beeny has backed our Kids' Food campaign. She is the voice of our new video, which shows a mum plagued by food promotions to children while doing her weekly shop. The video – which you can view at [www.which.co.uk/kidsfood](http://www.which.co.uk/kidsfood) – comes after our research revealed that more than half of the 20 programmes most watched by children aged under ten aren't covered by advertising curbs, adding fuel to our fight to get a 9pm watershed on junk-food ads.



### BROCHURES REPORTED

■ Our sweep of cosmetic surgery and treatment brochures offered at a consumer show uncovered 20 cases of adverts breaking the rules, including inducing people to having surgery with £100 discount if they referred a friend. We've reported each case to the industry body, the Independent Healthcare Advisory Service.

### CALL FOR CONSUMER CASH

■ Which? Chief Executive Peter Vicary-Smith has warned the Financial Services Authority that it must ensure consumers don't miss out on billions of pounds. He's concerned that companies such as Norwich Union and Prudential might short-

change with-profits policyholders when dividing up billions of their surplus assets. Which? wants 90 per cent of such money to go to policyholders.



The new year brings new, increased train prices but the old crowds are set to remain for some time

# Standing fury

Commuters urged to complain about overcrowding

## RAIL TRAVEL

Rail commuters are being hit by inflation-busting, new-year price hikes of as much as 14 per cent – with an average rise of around 5 per cent – but many look set to stay standing due to overcrowding as they travel in 2008.

A spokesman for the Association of Train Operating Companies said that there would be some extra seats available in the coming months but he had no figures on investment to ease overcrowding resulting from this year's rises.

Meanwhile, harassed passengers are being urged to write to train companies and the government over the levels of overcrowding on commuter services.

Network Rail admits that 100,000 commuters stand on London-bound trains each day. It says overcrowding is also a problem on some long-distance commuter services, with passengers standing for considerable distances.

There are also 'severe' crowding problems on some regional services and significant peak crowding around other cities, including Manchester and Leeds.

Even train drivers are urging travellers to take action. One commuter told us that a driver on a packed morning train from Hertfordshire into London in November used the train tannoy to implore passengers to make a stand. Sharon Shields said: 'The driver seemed

very agitated. He told us the train was overcrowded and that the only way things would improve was for us to email train operators.'

Rail unions Aslef and the RMT both endorsed the driver's actions and urged passengers to complain.

An RMT spokesman said: 'We have great sympathy with that driver. It's lamentable that this should have to be the case. We would wholeheartedly endorse people contacting rail companies and also the ministers who make the spending decisions.'

More people are using trains than at any time since 1946, and the Office of Rail Regulation says that passengers' concerns about overcrowding are the most common complaint that it receives.

The government has said that there will be 1,300 extra rail coaches by 2014 to deal with the huge increase in demand. It says this will mean thousands of extra seats going into trains in cities like Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham and Cardiff.

But the Campaign for Better Transport – which used to be Transport 2000 – says that's not enough. A spokeswoman said: 'Many areas are badly overcrowded now and already operating to capacity. The extra carriages are not going to arrive soon enough and there won't be enough of them.'

### ON THE PLATFORM

What commuters told us at Liverpool Street station, London



'The trains are very crowded, particularly during the evening. I've been travelling for 27 years and the rubbish you hear from rail companies beggars belief.'

**Tim Fry, Rayleigh**



'I don't know why they don't put more carriages on here.'

**Neil Sumner, Billericay**



'I travel in and out of Liverpool Street from Southend. I'm lucky – I get on at the first stop, but by the third everyone has to stand.'

**Emma Anderson, Westcliff on Sea**

To unlock or not to unlock – that is the question

# Dilemma over iPhone

## SMARTPHONES

Apple has warned that an iPhone could stop working if you unlock it to use whatever mobile network you want, but should customers really be worried?

Under an exclusive arrangement with O2, iPhone customers have been 'locked' in to an indefinite contract.

Apple says that if users unlock their iPhone and sign up to another network, the £269 iPhone could become 'permanently inoperable' if they then try to download software updates. It would also invalidate their warranty.

But one company we spoke to, iPhone Unlock UK – which sets up users on a network of their choice – claimed there would be no problems as long as customers check with it before attempting downloads.

It is legal to unlock your phone and sign up with another mobile network; it costs about £40. Jodie Sanders, Managing Director of iPhone Unlock UK, said: 'It's not dangerous or damaging. It can be a

**It is legal to unlock your phone and sign up to another network**

hassle but is worth it if you want a choice of contract.'

He said that on-screen voicemail details would not be possible on an unlocked phone, but predicted there would be little difference otherwise from O2 users' phones.

In the UK, iPhone customers who buy from phone shops have to sign up to an O2 contract for 18 months, costing at least £35 a month. At the end of the deal they will have to take out another O2 contract.

If you want to use one on a different network, it's best to buy directly from Apple, rather than a phone shop, as you won't have to sign up to O2 there and then – but the phone will still be locked.

Over in France, however, customers can choose between a locked phone and a more expensive unlocked one that can be used on any other network. Under French law it's illegal to sell a phone tied to one network because of concerns about competition and the length of contracts.

In Britain, however, exclusive contracts are legal and there's no sign of any imminent change. The phone regulator Ofcom told us it thought the mobile market was competitive at present, although it did say it was reviewing whether phone contracts were overly long.

**VERDICT** We haven't tested the iPhone for unlocking, so we cannot be sure that unlocking won't damage the mobile in some way or restrict some of its functions.



Apple says its iPhone will become inoperable if unlocked

## **Gadgeteer** Finer foods

Pity those for whom Christmas 2007 will forever be remembered as the year Santa spent £60 on a silver lid for their Marmite pot.

An eagle-eyed reader spotted this gem in a catalogue entitled *Presents for Men*. But does the man who has everything really want silver pot lids? We suspect

not. Those who disagree will be disappointed to know that the Bovril lid depicted is not available. The others pictured here are on sale for £59.99, or £49.99 for the mustard lid. Go to [www.presentsformen.co.uk](http://www.presentsformen.co.uk) for these and silver-plate versions, which are cheaper.



### ALL CHANGE FOR CHEQUES

■ You can now earn interest on cheques after two days and withdraw that money after four days, under rules drawn up by the banking industry. And consumers now enjoy guarantees that after six days the cash is theirs, even if a cheque then bounces. Despite the new rules, you're still warned to be wary of accepting cheques from people you don't know or trust.



### UNDERSTAND ENERGY RATINGS

■ Look out for a new energy rating system on white goods being introduced to update the A-G efficiency ratings. Some products are now exceeding the A benchmark and are rated A+, leading to the European Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Electrical Appliances launching plans for a revised, more meaningful, scheme.

### TACKLE TRADERS FROM ACROSS EUROPE

■ A new centre to deal with UK shoppers' complaints about businesses on the continent is open to help with problems caused by shoddy goods, flights or holidays purchased elsewhere in Europe. The UK European Consumer Centre expects to deal mainly with complaints about online shopping. See [www.ukecc.net](http://www.ukecc.net) for details.



### CHRISTMAS CARD ACTION

■ Our investigation into charity Christmas cards (see *Which?*, December 2007, p4) prompted MPs to call for a minimum donation of 10 per cent in order for cards to be labelled as charity cards. Signatories to the Early Day Motion want a code of practice on the labelling of charity Christmas cards and urged retailers not to exploit the public and charities during the season of goodwill.