

# [take issue]

Give your view and get involved

## YOUR LETTERS

**Cordless danger**  
I've recently bought a digital cordless phone. However, after reading reports in the press about radiation from mobiles, I'm concerned that the same applies to cordless phones.

*Elwira Down  
Herts*

It doesn't. Cordless phones are the same as mobiles in that they use radio signals to communicate between the handset and base station. But, with cordless phones, the distance the signals have to travel is only a fraction of that for mobile phones. As a result, cordless phones need to emit only a fraction of the power of mobile phones.

**I've been clamped**  
My car was clamped while I was visiting friends. I had to pay £165 to have it released – which seems a huge

## ★ Good cod?

After reading about oily fish in your January report on food scares, I've been wondering whether there's any danger from PCBs and dioxins in the recommended daily dessertspoonful of cod liver oil.

*Ted Thornton, by email*

There shouldn't be. PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) and dioxins, which are associated with cancer and other health problems, accumulate in fatty tissue and the liver of some fish, so they can occur in liver oil



supplements. In 2002 the Food Standards Agency tested 33 fish oil supplements

and found that some did exceed the European maximum dioxin limits. Two products were withdrawn and it's now an offence to sell supplements that exceed the dioxin limits.

**amount. Are private clamping companies regulated or can they charge what they like?**

*Jules Stacey  
Hants*

Since last year, private clamping has been regulated by the Security Industry Authority and, as of

last month, private clampers can't operate without a licence. However, firms can still charge what they like to take a clamp off or release a car from the

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pound. If you park where there are clear warning notices of clamping, you have few grounds for recourse.

**Puzzled over sugar**  
Like Mary Latham in January's 'Take issue', I too am puzzled about labels on food – only my problem is with sugar content. For instance, some fruit juices have high levels of sugar. But how can you tell how much is added refined sugar? And why is the sugar in fruit juice bad for your teeth?

*T Gray  
by email*

One way to work out how much added sugar is present is to look at the ingredients list – if sugar or other forms of sugar (such as glucose, fructose, lactose and corn syrup) appear near the top, it's likely there are significant amounts.

Natural sugars in whole fruit are less likely to damage teeth because they're locked into the fruit's structure (that's why they're known as intrinsic sugars). Once the fruit is turned into juice, the sugars are released and can cause serious damage to teeth – especially if you drink fruit juices often.

**Double the debt**  
Your January report on credit missed out another ruse by credit card companies. When I transferred a balance from one card to another, it took six working days. During that time, I owed both companies the same amount – effectively doubling my debt.  
*Graham Imber  
by email*

Thanks to our dawdling electronic transfer system (see p38 of our June 2003 issue), this can happen. But the delay doesn't matter if both cards have a 0 per cent balance transfer rate.

## HELP WANTED Help us with our research for future reports

### House insurance

Have you recently claimed on your house insurance as a result of flooding or subsidence? Perhaps you haven't had to make a claim but are having problems finding cheap insurance because your house is considered at risk from either of these things? We're looking for people who would be willing to tell us their experiences. If you can help, please contact Dept CW.

### Delayed in France

Have you been seriously delayed going to or from France because the French authorities failed to deal with blockades of the Channel Tunnel, ports or motorways? Your experiences could help support our challenge to the EC to enforce your right to move freely around the EU. Please send brief details of the delay, and any action (or not) by police and other authorities, to Dept SJC.

### Bank gripes

We'd like to hear of any gripes you have with your bank. Perhaps you're fed up with seeing new customers get better deals or you're sick of being flogged products that you don't need. Maybe you're frustrated by the time it takes to clear cheques or you've been caught out by misleading adverts. If you're happy to be featured as a case study, contact Dept RS.



**Blocked in France?**  
Tell us about delays

## contact us

[helpwanted@which.co.uk](mailto:helpwanted@which.co.uk)

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Please quote the department given – it helps us direct your reply to the right person. We are unable to help with individual

problems or to acknowledge all your replies. You'll find more requests for help online at [www.which.co.uk/whichextra](http://www.which.co.uk/whichextra).



## Farmers' subsidies to be disclosed

Consumers will soon be able to see where at least some of the money goes under the Common Agricultural Policy. Lord Whitty (pictured), of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, has said that individual subsidy payments to farmers should be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act. We're delighted with this decision. We've long argued for greater openness about payments so consumers can decide whether they're justified. Lord Whitty hasn't yet said what he plans to do with the figures but we've written to him calling for the list of payments to be published annually.

## HEART DRUG AD CLAIM CHALLENGED



Pharmaceutical company McNeil Ltd (formerly Johnson & Johnson MSD) has been forced to issue a corrective statement in the *Mail on Sunday* and *Evening Standard* about ads for its Zocor Heart-Pro product. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has agreed with us that the ads

were contravening advertising regulations.

We had complained that the ads breached a previous MHRA ruling by including the misleading phrase 'protection for hearts', which fails to convey the message that Zocor won't provide absolute protection from the risk of heart attack but should be taken in conjunction with changes in lifestyle.

## Add your biting comments

If you want to add your voice to our campaign for better access to NHS dentistry (see p59 of February's *Which?*), why not tell Tony Blair, Michael Howard and Charles Kennedy what you think? The *Which?* Campaigns website enables you to send

main political parties so they can campaign in their local areas for better access to NHS dentistry.

Nick Stace, Director of Campaigns at *Which?*, said: 'People have told us they expect access to good-quality NHS dental care to be

**“Access to good NHS dental care is a right, not a privilege Nick Stace”**

a message direct to the political party leaders, demanding that affordable NHS dental care be made available to everyone. You can also mail the leaders your own experience of trying to find an NHS dentist.

We've sent campaign packs to prospective parliamentary candidates of all the

a right, not a privilege. *Which?* is calling on politicians to make NHS dental treatment a top priority in their election manifestos.'

● **Log on now to** [www.which.co.uk/dentists](http://www.which.co.uk/dentists) – and to find out more about all our campaigning work, go to [www.which.co.uk/campaigns](http://www.which.co.uk/campaigns)



Does Tony Blair have the gumption to make access to NHS dentistry a priority?

## CAMPAIGNING BY YOU

Simon Bunce has started an action group for drivers who've had problems with brand-new Renault cars. Simon, who featured in May 2003's 'Inside story', took Renault to court after his new Laguna broke down 18 times in four months. After several months of battling, he won £16,000 in an out-of-court settlement. Simon told us: 'I want people to know they don't have to put up with shoddy service. If they've been treated badly, I can use my experiences to help them.'

If you've had problems with a new Renault, contact Simon at [scbunce@btinternet.com](mailto:scbunce@btinternet.com).

## round-up

### ● Credit industry

The Treasury Select Committee's latest report into the credit card market has slammed the industry for still not going far enough in tackling anti-consumer tactics – thus echoing many of the issues we raised in our January 2005 article.

### ● Estate agents

Our Private Members' Bill for an independent redress system against rogue estate agents will be debated on 4 March – though the predicted general election will get in the way of it becoming law. We've written to the main political parties asking them to commit to tackling it in the next parliamentary session.

### ● Card cheques ban

We hope that the government will agree to ban unsolicited credit card cheques as part of the Consumer Credit Bill. We've long called for their ban as they're often targeted at people already in debt, and can be subject to fraud.



## contact us

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