

Your Which?

We'll fight to protect consumer rights

Which? chief executive Peter Vicary-Smith benefits from the expertise of our lawyers

Disaster struck while I was moving a favourite table of mine a few weeks ago.

The top was damaged and needed professional restoration. According to my insurer, I simply needed a quote for repair and it would take care of the rest. But a reputable antique dealer to whom I turned had bad news for me.

The table, which I purchased in good faith as a Georgian antique elsewhere, was nothing of the kind – well, not quite. The legs were certainly Georgian, but the top was most likely Victorian and had been sanded down.

My situation seemed bleak. But I consulted Which? Legal Service and one of its lawyers had good news for me – I had a watertight case as the



vendor had breached both the Misrepresentation Act 1967 and the Sale of Goods Act 1979.

Armed with my consumer rights, and the original receipts, I tackled the dealer from whom I bought the table two years earlier – and I was fully reimbursed without argument.

I am immensely grateful to Which? Legal Service, which provided first-rate advice. But were it not for the two pieces of legislation in place to protect consumers

like me, unscrupulous tradespeople would be able to operate with apparent impunity.

However, the government is now looking at whether consumer legislation is effective. Nothing has been decided, but we're concerned that some suggested ideas could weaken consumer rights, particularly that current legislation could be replaced with a framework that asks businesses only 'to trade fairly'.

Agreeing what's 'fair' will be extremely difficult and may water down your rights. It will certainly cause uncertainty for businesses and consumers.

Which? will fight to preserve the current, excellent consumer legislation in the UK. Meanwhile, I urge you to follow in my footsteps and assert the consumer rights you have – while you still can.

Which? people



Adam Williams
senior media relations officer

While Which? has more than 600,000 members, we work to improve the rights of all consumers across the UK.

That's why millions of people need to hear about our testing of products and services – and our campaigning, according to Adam Williams.

As one of our senior media officers, he says: 'Media work is a crucial part of our arsenal – it helps raise awareness of important consumer issues.'

'By putting issues in the spotlight, consumers are more informed – and it makes them harder for companies, regulators and politicians to ignore.'

Each month, the Which? media office deals with more than 1,000 queries from journalists and 120 requests for broadcast interviews with our researchers and editors.

From enquiries about our research to questions about any consumer issue, our press officers must get answers for busy reporters quickly.

So, like many journalists, press officers take on subject areas – and Adam has developed expertise in our campaigns areas. However, this still means being informed about anything from bank overdraft charges to the use of nanotechnology in cosmetics.

'I've spent a lot of time working on our bank charges campaign, and it has been really satisfying to see Which? emerge as the leading commentator on the issue,' he says.

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