

**Which?**



**2013/14 Charitable review**  
Working with consumers

**Which? works for you**



## Chairman

**The Consumers' Association is a registered charity. Our mission is to make consumers as powerful as the organisations they have to deal with in their daily lives. Unlike most charities, however, we're entirely funded by our commercial activities. Our magazines and online services carry no advertising and we accept no donations, grants or government funding. This model underpins our independence from both government and industry.**

Our group is a not-for-profit social enterprise and the largest consumer body in the UK.

The Consumers' Association, a registered charity, is better known by our brand name, Which?. We now have almost one million members and campaign supporters: we understand consumers and what makes them tick. Our mission is to make individuals as powerful as the organisations they deal with in their daily lives.

We drive change in three ways: by providing information and advice to make complex markets easier to navigate; by campaigning for fundamental change in markets; and by developing products and services that put customers' needs first and are worth paying for.

We began life in a garage 57 years ago as a volunteer organisation committed to providing expert and impartial advice. From these roots, we have grown into an independent, apolitical, not-for-profit group working for all UK consumers and funded solely by our commercial ventures.

We receive no government money, public donations, or other fundraising income. We plough the money from our commercial ventures back into our campaigns, and our information and advice for all. Over the last 10 years this has enabled our charitable arm to increase its spending nearly six-fold to £10.9m in the year.

This doesn't mean that we act as two organisations or that the only role of our commercial business is to generate a financial surplus to fund our campaigning. On the contrary, as Mike Clasper, Chair of the commercial business, says in his introduction to our commercial report, our business activities contribute to our mission directly in several important ways, as well by funding our campaigning.

The challenge of our structure is that our ability to deliver the mission is wholly dependent on the success of the commercial business. When I first served as a member and then Deputy Chair of the Council in the late 1990s, this was a serious worry. Because of the increasing competitiveness of the magazine market and the fast growth of free online information, the expectation was that our long-term revenue would either be flat or, more likely, slowly decline. Since then, the problems in magazine publishing have got even worse, but our commercial business has consistently bucked the trend, outperforming the market year after year. One result of this success is that it has enabled us to invest in new ventures to secure our long-term survival, with a more diversified commercial business.

The other benefit has been that we've been able to increase our investment in policy research and campaigning nearly six-fold over the last 10 years. We've used this investment to expand these activities and to make them more sophisticated. For instance, over the last year, we've developed our digital campaigning platform and doubled our online campaign supporter base to over 200,000. Our work on 'real consumers' - drawing on the latest research on how people actually respond to complex information and choice in markets - has also gone from strength to strength, informing our policy and campaigning in banking, energy and other consumer markets.

Highlights of our work to bring about positive change this year include working closely with Sir Richard Lambert on his proposals to change the culture of banking; being invited by the Chancellor to help shape the implementation of the Guidance Guarantee in pensions; securing a commitment from the government and banks to give consumers information to help them choose the best-value current accounts; an energy market referral to the Competition and Markets Authority; and the establishment of a nuisance calls taskforce.

We've also launched two new free websites for all consumers, Which? Elderly Care and Which? Birth Choice. These give consumers the information they want and advice related to their circumstances. We've also continued to expand Which? University and Which? Consumer Rights, ahead of the implementation of the Consumer Rights Bill.

We've increased our influence on the European and international stage, particularly through our involvement in the EU/US Transatlantic and Investment Partnership talks, where we've been a strong voice representing the interests of consumers and small businesses. We also launched our first bilateral campaign with the Spanish consumer group OCU to tackle rip-off car hire charges that British tourists face in Spain.

I'd like to thank the outgoing Which? Council members and the Which? staff for their continuing passion and dedication to achieving change for UK consumers. As you'll see from the rest of this report, there's plenty to show for their efforts.

*Patrick Barwise*

**Patrick Barwise**  
Chairman



### Group Chief Executive

**Our strong commercial performance over the last 10 years has enabled us to consistently increase our investment in our charitable activities year on year. We've seen the benefits delivered through stronger advocacy on behalf of all consumers, greater levels of positive change in core markets and the development of free services for all consumers.**

We've seen some great changes this year in two of the most critical markets for consumers: financial services and energy. From the Chancellor's pension announcement, following 10 years of Which? campaigning, abolishing the requirement to buy an annuity, to the publication of Sir Richard Lambert's report on banking standards, there is a genuine shift towards supporting the interests of consumers in personal finance. On energy, we've finally seen the spotlight shone on a market that has failed consumers and we look forward to continuing to work with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) as it progresses its competition review.

We've also expanded our campaigning in other areas this year, launching a campaign on food fraud in the wake of the horsemeat scandal and Elliott review, and calling for greater enforcement of food standards in the years ahead.

This has also been a strong year for our engagement with industry, driving change at the very core of the economy by taking our campaigns and insight direct to business leaders. This was showcased by record senior figure attendance at our Which? Awards ceremony this year, as the best of business turned out to join us in celebrating the benefit of good businesses for the UK economy. This year, I have also taken up a role on the steering group for the CBI's Great Business Debate, which aims to involve consumers in the future purpose of business in the UK, and I am pleased to see this starting to take shape.

Which? has also enhanced its role on the European and international stage and I have been

pleased to take the consumer viewpoint to the heart of discussions on international trade, both in Brussels and in Washington. Our call for a pro-consumer agenda has secured public assurances that when these trade agreements are made, consumer outcomes will be considered and consumer protections maintained.

I used my time as President of the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) to develop and champion the need for a more focused promotion of the priorities of its members. Before stepping down in March, I was pleased to twice welcome the European Commissioner to our offices in London, giving him the opportunity to learn more about Which? and the interests of UK consumers. We plan to build on this contact going forwards.

We've supported the growth in our campaign activity with the expansion of our free advice websites, offering consumers increasing free information at some of the critical decision points they face in life, from choosing a university, to giving birth, to choosing a care facility for an elderly relative.

We've also increased our campaign supporter base to over 200,000 people which, combined with our over 800,000 members, means that more people than ever before are directly engaged in our work, and we are reaching many more. We're excited by the opportunities that lie ahead.

**Peter Vicary-Smith**  
Group Chief Executive

## Information and advice for all consumers

We empower consumers to make informed choices about goods and services by researching important areas and publishing what we find. We aim to change the way markets work to ensure that they are fair and operate in the best interests of consumers.

### Information and advice in health and care

Which? research has found that many people feel they aren't able to access the information and advice they need in order to make the best decisions about health and care services, leaving them feeling vulnerable and helpless. We launched two new information and advice sites in early 2014 to help to address this issue.

#### Which? BirthChoice

In early 2014, we launched the Which? BirthChoice site, which helps expectant parents to understand their birth options and compare local services based on their preferences and circumstances. Powered by data, the site provides relevant facts and figures for individual needs, along with comprehensive information about local maternity facilities. The site has been endorsed by the Royal College of Midwives, shortlisted for the prestigious E-Health Awards, and well-received by consumers and opinion formers. The NCT and BabyCentre websites both host a version of the tool, and the site is highlighted in NHS email communications to expectant parents.

In the coming year we will be running further user-testing of the site to generate insights about how people make decisions in health and the implications for policy, with strong interest from government and the NHS in this work.

#### Which? Elderly Care

The Which? Elderly Care site helps people to get through a highly complex and emotional time by bringing together key information and advice in a friendly, accessible way. It combines extensive step-by-step guidance with an advice filter to enable people access to content quickly and easily, together with a directory of local service providers around the UK. Launched in spring 2014, we have already received some very moving feedback from consumers expressing their gratitude and relief in being able to use our site to find key information. We've also been able to understand what issues are causing concern, and will use this insight to help plan further developments for the site, such as financial calculators.

In the coming year we'll be developing the site further and exploring how we can give more tailored, regional support where appropriate. We'll also be looking to develop our relationship with relevant charities, information sources and opinion formers, so that they can help direct consumers to our site at the crucial point of need.



# Information and advice for all consumers

## Which? Consumer Rights

The Consumer Rights website continues to go from strength to strength, having attracted more than 4 million visits in the eighteen months since launch. Traffic numbers have seen an increase of more than 100% year-on-year, with monthly visitors to the site topping 340,000.

The website continues to support consumers in finding solutions to their everyday consumer problems. With more than 200 template letters and step-by-step guides, it helps consumers complain effectively and get the redress they deserve. Almost 2% of all visits have included a letter download - we aim to double this by July 2015.

Over the coming year we aim to deliver a programme of digital development to improve navigation and user experience, ensuring we provide the best product offering free consumer rights information and advice.

Meanwhile, we have been supportive of the Consumer Rights Bill, highlighting areas where it could be strengthened and questioning how it will be enforced, while also sitting on the Consumer Rights Implementation Group to ensure that consumers are fully considered when the new legislation comes into force.

## Which? University

Which? University, our free-to-use website which helps students make more informed choices about higher education, continues to grow and have an impact. 31% of this year's university applicants reported that they had used it when choosing courses as part of their Ucas application.

We've now exceeded more than 4 million visits since launch in September 2012, with around 3 million of those in the past 12 months alone. Our best month for traffic saw us hit the 350,000 visit mark.

This year has seen some exciting new additions to the website to extend its appeal to students at an earlier stage of deciding what to study at university, including 79 in-depth degree subject guides revealing key information about studying different subjects at university, from typical entry requirements to long-term career prospects.

Our printable materials, meanwhile, are taking Which? University directly into the classroom and are proving popular with teachers and careers advisers - with 9,000 guide and poster resources downloaded.

We've got an exciting year of developments planned for the website in the coming year to ensure we're offering the best product for choosing and comparing universities and courses. This includes a revamp of our popular advice section, an overhaul of our core course search tool and a series of mobile optimisation enhancements.

## Personal Finance

### Money Helpline

It's been another very busy year, with helpline staff dealing with almost 22,000 calls on a diverse range of subjects. Car, home and travel insurance were again the most popular areas, but many people also sought help claiming compensation for mis-sold card protection plan policies. We took more calls than last year about tax, particularly in January as the end of the tax year loomed, and thanks to the Chancellor's announcement in the Budget about significant changes to pensions, March was our busiest month ever.

We passed a significant milestone this year, having helping people win back more than £2.1m in redress and compensation from companies since launching the helpline. Notable successes include £36,000 in redress for overpayments and interest paid on a mortgage whose term was extended without informing the borrowers, and more than £10,000 compensation for a mis-sold pension.

### Which? Money online

The money section on which.co.uk continues to go from strength to strength. Total visits for the year stand at 1,950,567, an increase of 29% on 2012/13. Driving this growth has been the creation of new, consumer-focused content in areas such as tax, credit cards, retirement and savings, and smarter ways to draw visitors to the website. The money section has begun the roll-out of company brand pages in credit cards, mortgages, savings and insurance, which give visitors a detailed breakdown of the customer service offered by different providers. This has been responsible for thousands of new visitors to the site. We successfully attracted almost 100,000 visitors through our extensive free coverage of the 2014 Budget, and our new pages on the pension reforms continue to perform well.

The biggest development on the money vertical, however, has been the development of Which? Money Compare, a new comparison service free to all consumers. We have long found problems with opacity and low trust in the price comparison site market, so Which? Money Compare offers a transparent antidote, giving consumers near whole-of-market access to objective information on credit cards, mortgages and savings accounts. Our comparison tables enable users to filter products not only by the best deals, but using our customer satisfaction scores, giving us the unique advantage of enabling users to pick financial products based on quality of service as well as price.

## Best Buy Icon

Which?'s endorsement schemes, Best Buy and Recommended Provider, recognise the very best products and services and play an important role in helping consumers make informed buying decisions. By enabling companies to publicly promote their Which? endorsement, our schemes make this information freely available to all consumers, helping them to identify those products and services that excel in the market, are reliable and provide value for money.



# The trusted voice of consumers

## Communications and Engagement

We publicise our work widely both to raise awareness of the issues faced by consumers and to drive change in support of our campaigns.

Last year we launched 15 new campaigns and saw our supporter numbers increased by over 100,000 to 207,000. These supporters were highly engaged, undertaking over half a million actions over the year, ranging from signing a petition to writing to a company CEO. We were mentioned in 2,538 national media articles, 800 of which were broadcast and 50 were front page mentions or interviews. This helped us to deliver positive change on the issues that really matter to consumers by keeping them in the spotlight.

Our digital presence also continued to grow. We made an increasing amount of content available for all consumers online, with 329 new videos and 80 podcasts going live. Which? Conversation, our blog site for consumers, published 526 comment pieces, and attracted over 1.7 million visits and more than 21,000 comments, giving consumers the opportunity to get involved in debates and to help us to shape our campaign agenda.

During the year we also were mentioned in Parliament over 320 times. We also engaged with over 300 business representatives, MPs, Lords, think-tanks and other opinion formers, taking our policy knowledge and campaign asks to a broad audience to help us achieve positive change.

# Changing markets

Our fundamental aim as a charity is to change the way markets work to ensure that they are fair and work in the best interests of consumers. Where turning our research into information and advice alone will not do enough to empower consumers, we advocate for change, making evidence-based proposals to government, regulators and business to change practices and markets for the benefit of all UK consumers. This year we have intervened in the energy, financial services and food sectors as well as advocating for change in public services and various aspects of consumer rights.

## Energy

After several years of Which? pressing for major reforms to the energy market, the regulator Ofgem has referred the market to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) for a far-reaching competition investigation. Which? has played a leading role in the debate so far and we will engage with the CMA throughout the inquiry to ensure that real change is delivered.

### Energy sector reform

In spring 2014, Which? launched the 'Fix the Big Six' campaign highlighting the need for reform throughout the energy market from more competition in both the wholesale and retail markets to more transparent trading, quicker switching and restoring trust in the industry. With the Government calling on Ofgem to work with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) and the CMA to produce an assessment of the energy market, we actively engaged in this process and demanded a full market inquiry. Ofgem's referral of the market to the CMA was a significant campaign milestone for Which?. This referral offers the opportunity for a significant and strategic review of the energy markets. Meanwhile, we have also been working with companies and have had a number of successes around separation of generation and supply.

Having pressed for some years for reforms to the Green Deal, the government's flagship energy efficiency scheme, Which? strongly welcomed the decision to abolish early repayment charges for people paying back a Green Deal loan ahead of time. We successfully fought to retain Green Deal consumer protections such as insurance backed guarantees, and succeeded in persuading the government to refocus the Energy Company Obligation towards low-cost measures and to increase cost transparency under the scheme.

Finally, we have continued to press for greater scrutiny of infrastructure costs on consumer bills. As concerns remain about how new investment in energy generation will be passed on to consumers' energy bills, Which? welcomed the government's Electricity Market Reform decision to introduce more competition into contracts for difference and to include a breakdown of levies on consumer bills. We have also secured the support of the Public Accounts Committee on this issue and will continue to campaign in the year ahead.

### Improving energy retail practices

Following our Which? magazine investigation in 2012 highlighting the fact that many energy companies hold onto high credit balances for people who pay by direct debit, we asked the energy minister, Greg Barker, to put pressure on the industry on this issue as well as engaging all the big players directly. Five of the big six energy companies have now agreed to refund balances over £5 at the annual account review and the government has charged the trade body Energy UK with agreeing a best practice approach with the industry.

Again following pressure from Which?, the energy suppliers have now made a commitment to cut switching times by more than half to no more than 16 days by December 2014, as well as agreeing to introduce 24-hour switching by 2018.

Recent Which? work on Economy 7 tariffs found that there was often a lack of clear information for customers, including the specific information about low and high rate periods. In response to our work, Scottish Power has improved the information available on its website to ensure that customers can easily check their low-rate time periods.

### Controlling policy costs on energy bills

In autumn 2013, the government recognised that environmental and social levies on energy bills were playing an increasing role in driving consumers' energy costs up. Our 'Cut Them Down George' campaign pressed for changes to these levies that would cut their impact on bills, while continuing to ensure that funding was available for energy efficiency programmes and people in fuel poverty. The campaign asked the Chancellor to cut the cost of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), take the Warm Homes Discount off bills and freeze the carbon floor price. The first two were achieved in the government's Autumn Statement in 2013, saving people £50 off their bills and the third in the 2014 Budget. We are pressing for all of the energy companies to pass these savings on to their customers.



# Changing markets

## Financial Services

Which? campaigns have had a significant impact in the past year leading to reforms to tackle both the culture and competition in the banking industry, cap pension charges and ensure that high cost credit is better regulated.

### Banking culture

The Banking Reform Act became law in December 2013, legislating for many of the recommendations of the Which? Big Change campaign. Criminal sanctions are being introduced, the Prudential Regulatory Authority (PRA) has been given an objective to promote competition and the accountability of retail banking staff will be increased.

In early 2014, former CBI chief executive Sir Richard Lambert was asked to create an independent body to promote high standards of behaviour and competence across the industry. Which? engaged closely with Sir Richard, and his report in May 2014 recommended that an early priority of the new Banking Standards Review Council (BSRC) be to develop a code of conduct to raise professional standards in the banking industry, a key Big Change campaign ask.

### Pension and annuity reforms

In March 2014, the government announced a 0.75% per year cap on pension charges in schemes used for automatic enrolment, to be implemented from April 2015. This is the culmination of seven years of Which? campaigning, including our 'Hands off My Pension' campaign for robust pension quality standards launched in autumn 2013. The reforms contain a number of our campaign recommendations, including stopping charges from being increased when people switch jobs and banning commission payments for auto-enrolment schemes.

In the 2014 Budget, the Chancellor announced reforms to give people greater flexibility around how they use their pension pot at the point of retirement, along with a pledge to provide everyone with free face-to-face guidance on the choices. Which? has been pressing both the Treasury and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) for many years to tackle the flawed annuity market and strongly welcomed the removal of the effective requirement to buy an annuity. The Chancellor and the Pensions Minister have been keen to engage with Which? to make sure that the reforms ensure that consumers get clear information, impartial guidance and appropriate retirement products.

### Banking competition

In November 2013, Which? launched a campaign to press the government to use its reserve powers and oblige the retail banking industry to provide current account consumers with their personal usage data. Charges are now so complex that bank account costs and benefits cannot be compared without this information. Which? analysis showed the significant financial detriment for consumers with the 'wrong' current account.

In March 2013, the Chancellor announced that the government had reached a voluntary agreement with the six biggest account providers to provide this data. This initiative should ultimately allow consumers to plug their personal data into price comparison websites to work out how much they paid in bank charges over the previous 12 months, and if they would have paid less with a different account. We are continuing to work with the Treasury and the banking industry to make this a reality and expect this to be in place by March 2015.

### Credit

In October 2013, Which? launched our Clean Up Credit campaign to influence the FCA as it took over the regulation of consumer credit. A key campaign call was for excessive default fees to be tackled and we welcomed the government's decision to give the FCA a duty to cap the cost of payday loans, including default fees. The FCA announced new rules for regulation of the payday lending industry in spring 2014. These contained a number of Which? campaign recommendations, including a cap of two on the number of times a payday loan can be rolled over and requirements for better affordability checks.

Our campaign also called for the FCA to make lending work for consumers whatever form of credit they were using. Which? highlighted the detriment consumers were suffering as a result of high, complex and difficult to compare overdraft charges, as well as the difficulties they face when shopping around for credit cards. We have welcomed the FCA's announcements in spring 2014 that they will conduct a credit card market study and will also investigate overdrafts. We will continue to engage with the FCA on these issues in the next year.



# Changing markets

## Food

Our public-facing campaigning and behind the scenes influencing in the UK and EU have led to improvements in several areas that will enable consumers to make more informed choices and have greater confidence in the food they and their families eat.

### Food fraud and enforcement

The horsemeat incident shook consumer confidence and highlighted the complexity and vulnerability of many food supply chains. We called for improved traceability, industry checks and more effective enforcement, including better surveillance. Several government reviews have echoed our concerns, including the Elliott review set up in the wake of the horsemeat incident.

Our own investigation revealed a wider problem: 40% of lamb takeaways we tested contained other meats and in some cases no lamb at all. Our Stop Food Fraud campaign called on the government and local authorities to make tackling food fraud a much higher priority. The Food Standards Agency immediately stepped up its own checks on takeaways and over 15,000 consumers had signed our petition within a week.

We also undertook a more fundamental review of trading standards and environmental health services within local authorities. Our analysis revealed a mixed national picture on compliance with food hygiene rules and interventions on food standards.

We'll continue to focus on the government's response to the horsemeat incident, and local authority delivery to ensure that people can trust the food they eat. We're also working at EU level to strengthen the European regulation.

### Pricing it right

Food prices continue to be one of people's main concerns. In-depth research enabled us to understand how rising prices, combined with squeezed incomes, are affecting shopping habits. People are comparing prices and shopping around far more in a bid to keep food bills down, so it is essential that prices are clear.

In December, all 10 major supermarkets committed to improve the clarity and consistency of their unit pricing following our campaign. Six of the 10 also agreed to provide unit pricing information on special offers, enabling people to assess the value compared to other products. As a result of our campaigning, Which? has been invited to sit on the government's expert working group reviewing the legislation. We will be pressing for simplicity, and for more consistent pricing of fruit and vegetables.

Our work on ensuring that people can trust supermarket special offers continued with the launch of the Make Special Offers Special campaign in November. Research monitoring food prices highlighted that many special offers are still anything but, with supermarkets routinely breaking the rules on promotions. We found examples of products that were at the special offer price longer than the supposedly normal price, and products that were cheaper bought individually than as part of a multi-buy promotion. The guidance for supermarkets on the use of special offers is now being reviewed and we will continue to campaign for these to change, highlighting our evidence of misleading practices going back over five years.

### A new food agency for Scotland

A new food agency for Scotland is on the way, and we are working to ensure that this builds on the success of the FSA, operates openly and transparently, and puts consumers first. Food Standards Scotland will have responsibility for food standards, safety and nutrition. We were invited on to the expert group set up by ministers to review its powers in the wake of the horsemeat incident. We are working to strengthen the legislation behind the new agency as it is debated in the Scottish Parliament to ensure that a strong, independent agency is created.

## Public services

Our increasing work in public services has started to shift debate onto the areas that really matter to people.

This year we increased the profile of our work in health, social care and higher education, in line with our long-term ambition to be as powerful an advocate for consumers in public services as we are in private markets.

### Making complaints count

Our research has found people often don't complain when things go wrong in public services such as health, care and education: because they don't know how to navigate the complex systems, they're sceptical whether it will make a difference for others, or they're fearful of the consequences. Yet if people don't feel able to complain, serious issues can go unnoticed and remain a problem for other users.

In early 2014 we launched a campaign to simplify the complaints system to make it easier for people to know how to complain and to create a stronger link between people's experiences of services and regulatory inspections. We gave evidence to two select committees, fed into two government reviews of complaints in public services, and the minister responsible, Oliver Letwin, has publicly supported our call for a single public services ombudsman. We worked with performers George the Poet and Jakwob to produce a song to highlight the problems people face in making their voice heard when complaining about poor public services. Over 50,000 people supported the campaign, with over 6,000 of these sharing stories about their experiences. We will be continuing to push for super-complaint powers in private markets to be extended to public services and for regulators of public services to take greater account of complaints.

### Improving people's experiences of the care system

Which? research has highlighted that many people feel they aren't able to access adequate information and advice in order to make the best decisions about health and care services, leaving them feeling vulnerable and disempowered. We published a policy report on the need for better face-to-face information and advice for older people and their relatives at the point of needing care: often a highly stressful decision taken at a moment of crisis. We undertook ground-breaking research on consumer perceptions of the new capped cost system for funding care, including its likely impact on people's behaviour in planning for and meeting the costs of care in older age, and how potential risks for consumers can be mitigated. We have been feeding the results of our research into the Department for Health's consultation on how to implement its reforms to the care system, which will come into existence after the next election.

### Higher education

Which? has continued to raise concerns about value for money in undergraduate higher education in light of the big variations in teaching and feedback revealed in our research. We submitted evidence to the OFT on the lack of good comparable information for prospective students on what's on offer and the need for better regulation of minimum quality standards. As a result the CMA is looking in greater depth at how this market is operating from the student perspective. We're publishing a new report in the autumn about how the system should be reformed, looking at how students can be better empowered to make informed decisions through the provision of better information and advice, and how student interests might be better protected through the sector's existing systems of quality and financial regulation, and through better application of consumer protection law.

# Changing markets

## Consumer Rights

It has been another busy year, with considerable changes to the consumer landscape including the abolition of the OFT and creation of the Competition and Markets Authority on 1 April 2014. Parliament also began its consideration of the Consumer Rights Bill, the first major update of UK consumer law in over 30 years.

During the year, Which? has been supportive of the Consumer Rights Bill being considered by Parliament, while highlighting areas where it could be strengthened and questioning how it will be enforced and put into place. If enacted, the Bill will update the unfair contract legislation and help Which? to take action against firms that have breached UK competition law. We are committed to up to date content about consumer rights, so it is good news that our consumer rights website has gone from strength to strength, with traffic increasing by a huge 267% year on year to April 2014.

### Calling Time on Nuisance Calls and Texts

Our Calling Time campaign, backed by over 110,000 supporters, urged the government, regulators and industry to do more to tackle unwanted marketing calls and texts. Following a supportive select committee inquiry and an all-party group report that we helped produce, coupled with significant media interest - 234 print articles and 115 broadcast interviews covered the campaign - in March 2014 the government published an action plan outlining how it would tackle the scourge of nuisance calls. The plan includes our campaign recommendations to make it easier for regulators to share information and take enforcement action, while the Minister has also asked Which? to convene a taskforce to look at the issue of consent, reporting back to government by the end of 2014. Which? also influenced two leading trade associations to force their members to reveal their phone numbers - Caller Line Identification - for their outgoing calls, making it easier for people to identify and report nuisance calls. Over 40,000 consumers submitted complaints using our reporting tool, giving evidence to the regulators so they can take action.

### Costly Calls

The UK implementation of the EU Consumer Rights Directive gave Which? an opportunity to get companies to stop using costly customer service phone lines (numbers starting with 084 and 087) and replace them with 'basic rate' numbers (those beginning with 01, 02 and 03). We successfully lobbied for UK legislation to include passenger travel services and pressed the Cabinet Office to issue guidance requiring government departments and public bodies to switch to 03 numbers too. Our campaign also convinced the FCA to consult on changing the rules for financial services companies in line with the directive, although several banks, insurers and travel companies have already committed to do so in response to our demands. All of which means that consumers should no longer pay a premium for calling companies' customer services or complaints lines.

### Ticket Fees

We launched our Play Fair on Ticket Fees campaign in December 2013, calling on companies that sell tickets for music, theatre and other events to end hidden fees and justify the level of fees they charge. We identified seven companies that don't always show compulsory fees upfront where the price is first advertised, and within six weeks of launch persuaded all of them - including Ticketmaster and SeeTickets - to make changes to their websites and show their fees upfront. We have since passed on our evidence to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).

### Copycat websites

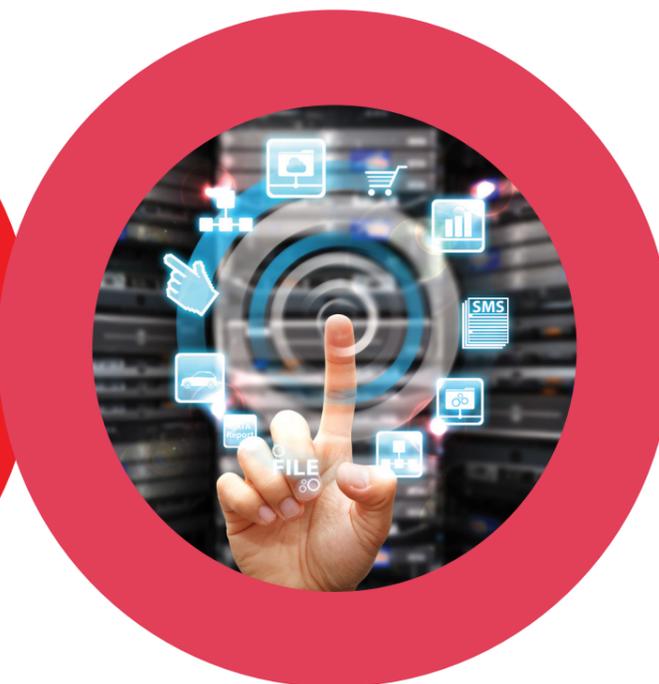
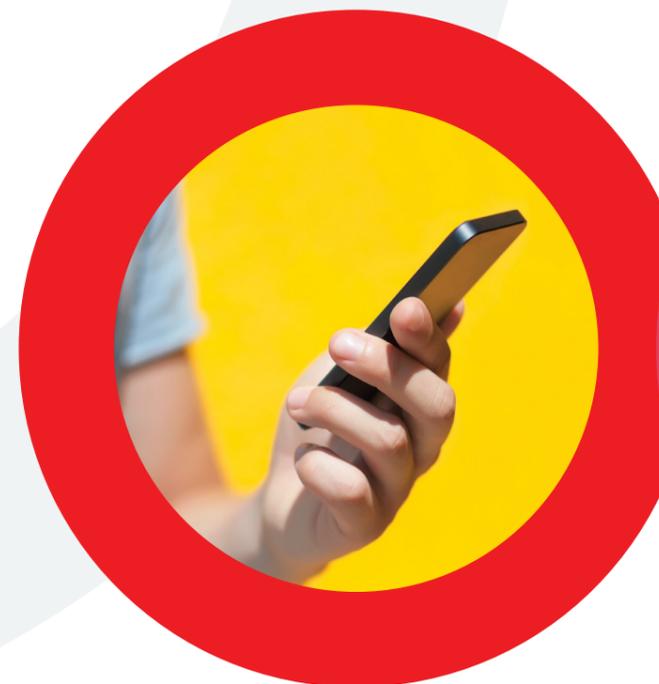
Following reports from concerned and misled Which? members, we called on the government to crack down on copycat websites that mimic official government services and leave consumers out of pocket. We complained to the ASA, and worked closely with trading standards and Google to ensure that action was taken swiftly. Google no longer allows adverts for sites that simply copy government or official services, trading standards has taken enforcement action against a number of offenders, and the government has launched an awareness raising campaign.

### CMCs brought under remit of Legal Ombudsman

Targeted lobbying in November 2013 secured another win for consumers when the government finally agreed to bring claims management companies (CMCs) within the remit of the Legal Ombudsman - something we've been calling for since 2007! The change should be in force by autumn 2014.

### Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

We have taken an active part in discussions on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the free trade agreement currently being negotiated between the EU and the US. TTIP is important for UK consumers as a successful deal could lead to benefits such as reduced prices, as trade tariffs are lowered, and increased choice. Our involvement has led to decision makers in London and Brussels looking at our idea of using TTIP to tackle the high delivery costs consumers can incur when ordering goods from the States. Of course, there are always risks associated with this type of agreement, so we have also pressed the UK government, the European Commission (EC) and the European Parliament to ensure that hard-won EU protections for consumers are maintained, and that corporations are not given the opportunity to use the deal to then challenge existing consumer laws via the courts. We have also developed positive relationships with the EU chief negotiator, the EC's Trade Commissioner and as well as British Ministers, MPs and MEPs to promote the need for the consumer voice to be heard throughout the negotiations.



# Financial review

## Charitable spend

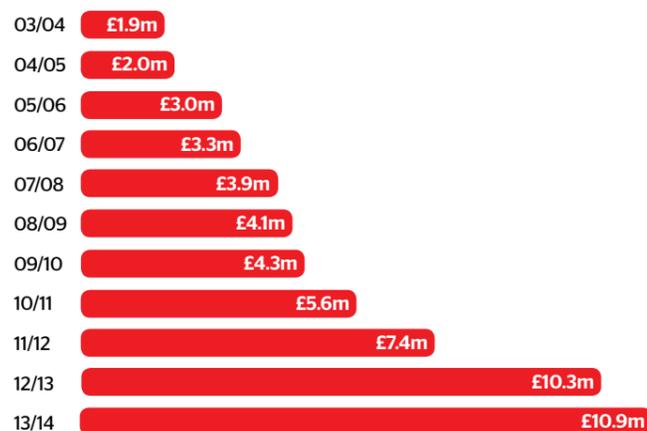
Success in our commercial operations has enabled us to do more charitable work than ever before. As the adjacent graph shows, we have spent a record amount on promoting consumer interests. In 2003/04 we spent £1.9m, but in 2013/14 we invested £10.9m – almost a six-fold increase. As our new ventures become more profitable, we expect to see further significant growth in our charitable activity.

## Group financial position

Despite the rapid expansion in our charitable activity and continued investment in our new ventures, the group still has an extremely strong balance sheet with zero debt.

In summary, net assets before the pension liability were broadly flat year-on-year. The £2.1m reduction in overall net assets (from £51.6m to £49.5m) was almost entirely due to the £1.9m increase in the FRS17 pension scheme liability.

### Promoting consumer interests



### Group reserves



## Charitable salaries

Charity employee costs during the year amounted to:

- Salaries and wages
- Social security
- Pension costs
- Benefits in kind

Total 2013/14 £'000	Total 2012/13 £'000
9,172	7,982
1,080	900
849	830
266	95
11,367	9,807

The number of full-time equivalent employees who earned over £60k for their charitable activity was as follows:

	Number of employees 2013/14	Number of employees 2012/13
£60,001-£70,000	2.0	2.4
£70,001-£80,000	2.3	-
£80,001-£90,000	3.0	3.0
£90,001-£100,000	2.0	2.0
£120,001-£130,000	1.0	1.0
£140,001-£150,000	0.7	-
£190,001-£200,000	1.0	-

The highest-paid individual working for the charity earned £198,000. The Group Chief Executive was paid £80,000 for running the charity.

**Council members**



**Patrick Barwise** (Chair)  
**Mark Addison** CB  
**Dan Bogler**  
**Peter Cartwright**  
**Jo Coburn** (January to February 2014)  
**Melanie Dawes** CB



**Harriet Kimbell** MBE  
**Sue Leggate** (until January 2014)  
**Natalie Macdonald** (until January 2014)  
**Jennifer Oscroft** (Deputy Chair)  
**Paul Preston** (Deputy Chair)  
**Tim Roberson**



**Peter Shears**  
**Anna Walker** (from November 2013)  
**Tony Ward** OBE  
**Chris Willett** (from January 2014)  
**Brian Yates** (until January 2014)

**Which? Limited Board**



**Mike Clasper** CBE (Chair)  
**Claudia Arney**  
**Patrick Barwise**  
**Jacques Cadranel** (Group Finance Director)  
**Neil Cameron** (until August 2013)



**Chris Gardner** (Managing Director, Which? Publishing)  
**Andrew Mullins**  
**Peter Vicary-Smith** (Group Chief Executive)  
**Kevin Wall**  
**Tony Ward** OBE

**Which? International Limited Board**



**Peter Vicary-Smith** (Chair)  
**Jacques Cadranel**  
**Nick Castro**  
**Chris Gardner**  
**Paul Preston**  
**Paul Smith**

**Which? Financial Services Limited Board**



**Peter Vicary-Smith** (Chair until May 2014)  
**Michael Barley** (from July 2013) (Chair from May 2014)  
**Kim Brosnan**  
**Jacques Cadranel**  
**Nick Castro**



**Matt Cooper**  
**Chris Gardner**  
**Michael Johnson** (from July 2013 until October 2014)  
**Mike Lawton** (until April 2014)  
**Paul Smith** (from October 2014)

**Group Audit Committee**



**Nick Castro** (Chair)  
**Sue Leggate** (until January 2014)  
**Tony Ward** OBE  
**Tim Roberson** (from March 2014)

**Investment Committee**



**Brian Yates** (Chair until January 2014)  
**Mark Tapley**  
**Tony Ward** OBE (Chair from February 2014)  
**Patrick Barwise** (from January 2014)

**Remuneration Committee**



**Paul Preston** (Chair until May 2014)  
**Patrick Barwise**  
**Dan Bogler** (Chair from May 2014)  
**Mike Clasper** CBE  
**Anna Walker** (from March 2014)

**Nomination Committee**



**Paul Preston** (Chair until March 2014)  
**Jennifer Oscroft** (Chair from March 2014)  
**Mark Addison** CB  
**Peter Shears** (until March 2014)  
**Tony Ward** OBE

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