



STATES OF GUERNSEY.

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Submission to CICRA on the Sale of Cable and Wireless to Batelco

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By E-Mail

FTAO Mr Andrew Riseley

I would start by saying that I was totally against the sale of Guernsey Telecoms to Cable & Wireless in the first place and voted against it in the States at the time. The fixed line phone service to this community in my view has deteriorated rapidly since C&W took over from the first class quality service we received from our own GT and all the assurances of proper regulation in the best interests of the consumer haven't amounted to very much.

The decline started with the outsourcing of our local directory enquiries which led to UK operators incapable of pronouncing local names or local streets or addressees. D.E was also a service GT provided free and the company still made good profits. The slide then progressed to ever increasing line rental charges and monthly billing, and then came card charges and other charges for paying phone bills at our post offices.

We have now arrived at the point with C&E, where you cannot even dial up the operator anymore, just to check if there is a fault on the line, or to ascertain via the operator whether people truly are engaged in conversation.

The attitude of C&W management and some staff is appalling and they have become known locally as Cable & Useless because of the constant problems islanders have had with broadband and other aspects of the company.

Having got that off my chest I will move on.

This island is hugely dependant on its communications and as a premier offshore Finance Centre its business community is wholly reliant on a good communications network and broadband connectivity.

The States of Guernsey has no control over this sale or the new company and we are solely reliant as a government and as a customer on the Regulatory body CICRA to protect the islands and the consumer's interest. Unfortunately the O.U.R or now CICRA have shown themselves in the past to be pretty ineffectual in protecting those interests, to such a degree that the jury is still out amongst politicians as to whether to continue with the present model of regulation or to bring the utilities that we still own back under government supervision, with a different regulatory framework for the telcols.

In the meantime we need to see what can be done to protect our interests under the present regulatory arrangements. I want to see CICRA putting in conditions of this sale, certain criteria that make it abundantly clear that BATELCO will not be allowed to treat us as a captive cash cow and increase costs because we have little choice on landlines, although I understand that competition is on the way for fixed lines which will help.

I also want on behalf of our people, much tighter controls on broadband costs and roaming charges of which we are clearly not getting the value for money we see elsewhere in the world.

I have kept this short as I am raising the issue around the Policy Council table and I know that the C&E department on behalf of the Policy Council has put forward its views on this sale and what conditions it might like to see, a copy of which Ministers have had early sight of and which I agree with wholeheartedly.

Yours



Deputy Dave Jones