ITSPA

NEWS RELEASE

Internet Telephony Services Providers' Association
The Voice of Advanced Communications

25th July 2012

ITSPA welcomes open Internet principles

25th July 2012 – ITSPA, the IP Communications (VoIP) trade body in the UK, today welcomed the formalisation of an industry code of practice to safeguard against negative discrimination on the open Internet but was disappointed that not all communications providers (CPs) had signed up.

The code, signed by a majority of CPs, supports access to all legal Internet services including voice and video communication (VoIP) services and follows on from lengthy discussions coordinated by the Broadband Stakeholders Group (BSG) to ensure that traffic management techniques are not used as a cover for anti-competitive behaviour, such as blocking or charging for Internet services such as VoIP.

Eli Katz, Chair of ITSPA, said, *"ITSPA welcomes this excellent initiative and is grateful for the work conducted by the BSG to get to this point. Our members have long been concerned about some of the traffic management and transparency practices of certain CPs, particularly by some mobile operators. It is unfortunate however that not all CPs have signed up, as ITSPA feels that all consumers should have the ability to clearly determine whether or not their internet access is truly open. It is vital that all of industry endorses this document to ensure consumers are provided with more transparent information and that new and innovative Internet services can grow, without fear of anti-competitive behaviour."*

The code follows on from the Communications Minister Ed Vaizey MP's statement in 2011 that the concept of an open internet should be guided by three principles:

- users should be able to access all legal content
- there should be no discrimination against content providers on the basis of commercial rivalry; and
- traffic management policies should be clear and transparent.

The Minister, Ofcom and the stakeholder community including ITSPA have been heavily involved and ITSPA believes the final document is a valuable addition that the entire industry must follow. ITSPA shared its research, completed in late 2011, which revealed how in most cases mobile network operators (MNOs) were not transparent about their policies towards VoIP over mobile data. It also highlighted how MNOs serving the majority of the market either prohibited VoIP in their terms and conditions and/or charged a premium for using it and/or actively blocked it. This is a highly restrictive practice for consumers and certainly not what they are expecting; it is at best confusing and possibly misleading.

Katz added, *"We applaud the signatories, including O2 and Three, in their approach to traffic management practices, in particular allowing VoIP services and not adding in charges. ITSPA would encourage all major MNOs as well as all fixed line providers to sign up to this code. We also look forward to Ofcom's upcoming review of traffic management practices this summer, to ensure all CPs are following the principles outlined by the Communications Minister. This is an opportunity for the UK to lead the world in net neutrality, which will allow the communications industry to build innovative new services, benefit consumers, and grow UK businesses."*

ITSPA will also continue to review the practices of major CPs, to ensure that all VoIP services are not unfairly disadvantaged by network operators.

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Note to editors:

About ITSPA (www.itspa.org.uk)

ITSPA is the UK's industry body for Internet Telephony Service Providers. Founded in 2004, with over 60 members, ranging from the largest Tier one operators to the new entrants, providing services to millions of consumers and businesses.

About VoIP

Internet Telephony is the ability to make voice calls over any Internet Protocol (IP) connection, particularly broadband, using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). IP Communications also enable a rich multi-media set of advanced services, including Video, High Definition Sound, Instant Messaging and Presence. Internet Telephony Service Providers can provide regular and enhanced phone line services – often at substantial cost reductions.