

## Debate» Should governments force the ISPs to provide clean bandwidth?



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regional director,  
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**FOR** Many industries accept that with power comes responsibility. The media was brought under the control of libel laws and water firms are accountable for the safety and cleanliness of their output. Now ISPs must adopt this approach, and offer customers bandwidth free of viruses and malware.

Legislation is needed to ensure that ISP services are regularly tested for levels of 'toxicity', with ISPs prosecuted for falling below standard. Even if ISPs raise prices in response, the result would benefit users and lead to drastic reductions in the amount of malware in circulation. A clean internet isolates enterprises and users from most threats.

ISPs could have an amount of leeway in this. Carbon-producing companies in Europe have the 'carbon emissions trading' initiative which allows carbon producers to trade quotas; clean ones profit from not polluting, and vice versa. Similarly, ISPs could benefit from touting their 'green credentials'. Other ISPs would have to pay to 'pollute', losing customers to rivals with cleaner services offered at premium prices.



**John Turley**  
managing director,  
Checkbridge

**AGAINST** ISPs and business have both the technical capability and commercial interest to solve this problem. I don't think legislation is needed.

To date, clean bandwidth has not been provided for two reasons. First, most ISPs used to find security uneconomic to run in-house, while most outsourced services were designed more for businesses. This is no longer true. Managed services are available that cater for ISPs, allowing good protection and profit.

Second, corporations dealing with consumers feel more exposed due to the services they share (online banking, sharing dealing). Today, that threat might outweigh the benefit of the service. Action is essential, yet corporations cannot protect all their clients directly.

Companies should demand a stronger line on consumer protection and talk to ISPs about making clean bandwidth possible. It's in the interest of all to get make this a reality. The London Action Plan from the Office of Fair Trading will help kickstart this dialogue. It can make all parties take action without any interference from legislation.