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Mobile phone costs in plunge

Telephone watchdog Oftel has hailed its competition policy a success as it reported mobile phone costs have plunged over the last year.

Average prices of mobile telephone services, including connection fees and call charges, tumbled by 17 per cent in 1999.

Customers with pre-pay phones saw costs fall even further — down 23 per cent.

Oftel has worked to ensure pricing is clear, enabling consumers to easily identify the best deals, encouraging greater competition.

The falls emerged as part of a review of charging begun by Oftel in January last year and covering companies Vodafone AirTouch, BT Cellnet, Orange and One 2 One.

David Edmonds, Oftel's director general of telecommunications, said: "Our review shows that increasing competition means consumers really are getting cheaper calls from their mobile phones.

"This supports Oftel's view that competition is the best way to deliver lower prices."

Call charges were also driven down as a direct result of Oftel rulings and are on average 25% cheaper than a year ago, the watchdog said.

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Classic cat is back on the road again



Philip Porter and director of Classic Cars Andrew Tart before the restoration work



Philip Porter with the fully restored classic E-Type Jaguar at Bridgnorth
By Motoring Editor Sharon Walters

The "purr" has been restored to a classic E-Type Jaguar which lay almost derelict in a barn for more than 20 years. Classic Cars in Bridgnorth have spent just under a year bringing the big cat back to life for owner Philip Porter from near Tenbury Wells.

This E-Type, registration 9600 HP, is revered by fans as the oldest and most famous model in the world and was the secret prototype which underwent pre-launch testing, including high speed runs on the then very young M1, before the wraps came off at the Geneva Motor Show in March 1961.

Philip said: "I bought it with two others, including the E-Type used by Michael Caine in the Italian Job, back in 1977 and never had the money to restore it or found a firm

that could the job properly, until now."

"Classic Cars have done a tremendous job. It has been more a conservation job than rebuilding. They have tried to do everything as it was back then and it is looking fantastic."

Today Philip set off to re-create the car's first run to Geneva when Bob Berry, then PR for Jaguar, had to race against the clock to get the car there on time.

Next week he takes the car to the Millbrook proving ground to try to reach the magical 150mph that made the car so special back in the early 60s.

Philip isn't saying how much the project has cost but current prices indicate the car should now be worth about £130,000.

Ramblers get record numbers

Shrewsbury and mid Shropshire Ramblers will meet on Sunday when Emyr Jones will lead a moderate nine-mile walk from Leintwardine.

Ramblers should meet at the Rowley's House Museum in Shrewsbury at 9.30am.

Last Sunday 24 walkers enjoyed a fine spring walk from Clun up to the Iron Age Fort at Bury Ditches before turning south to Clunton.

Graham Barker led a separate walk with nine enthusiasts to Snowdonia.

A spokesman for the group said membership has recently reached a record total of 402.