BT joins price war over access to internet

New scheme may force online service providers to change how they operate.

By Juan Cane and Cathy Newman

British Telecommunications' bid to drive down the cost of online access by war with a scheme that would force internet service providers to make contractual changes to their business.

The dominant UK broadband operator announced a new service that it said would mean UK consumers paid less and had more choice than their US counterparts.

But the SurfTime service - yet to be approved by the regulator - would break away from the arrangement whereby internet service providers such as freewave receive a proportion of the telephone revenue generated by calls to them.

This has been important in enabling them to offer free internet access rather than paying fees.

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