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No 3

May 1997

Editorial

*JRC Newsletter 3 heralds a **new era of Government** in the UK. After 18 years of rapidly changing DTI Ministers under the Conservative administration (I recall being invited to a party hosted by Peter Lilley to celebrate his success at being the first Secretary of State for Trade & Industry for 12 years to re-use a Christmas Card list!), we now have Margaret Beckett as President of the Board of Trade. John Battle has not only taken the Energy portfolio, which he shadowed, but also Science & Technology. We understand that his Parliamentary under Secretary, Nigel Griffiths will not only cover Consumer Affairs, but also other issues for which John Battle is the prime focus. As responsibilities become clearer, JRC will be seeking an early opportunity to meet the incoming Ministers to brief them on the importance of the new Spectrum Management proposals to ensuring the availability of vital communications for the utilities.*

*Before the change in the UK Government took place, I should also record that the mantle of **Chairmanship of JRC Ltd** passed on annual rotation from Graham Hall, Group Executive Director, Yorkshire Electricity to Roger Garner, Director, Marketing Services at BG Transco on 1 April 1997. We are grateful to Graham for his leadership of the JRC during a formative stage in its existence, and welcome Roger back in the chair for a second term.*

*Adrian Grilli
Managing Director*



Graham Hall (above left), Chairman of JRC 1996-97, and Roger Garner, (above right), Chairman JRC 1997-98. Pictured to the right, from the left Paula Murphy, JRC Office Manager, Directors Robert Vince (EA) and David Boyd (BG), together with Company Secretary, Marie Smith.

SPECTRUM MANAGEMENT WHITE PAPER

The Radiocommunications Agency (RA) says that **detailed drafting of the new bill** is virtually complete for presentation as a non-controversial measure for adoption by the new administration. If accepted, RA think they could have the new primary legislation in place by Christmas! Before any pricing could be introduced, secondary legislation would have to be implemented. This sets the earliest date for the Fee Regulations as July 1998, followed by a three year introductory phase, yielding 2001 as the potential date before the full force of spectrum pricing could be felt (though auctions could be implemented more speedily if generating money became the prime mover).

JRC is represented on two RA working groups developing detailed recommendations for implementing spectrum pricing. For **mobile radio**, the outlook is positive. The White Paper lists charges for national channels at £16k each (JRC manages 76 plus about 28 regional allocations), but indications are now that we would be aggregated with other categories at around £10k per national channel – a reduction of some 36%. Although utilities are unlikely to be affected directly by current proposals for determining congestion premiums, there may be opportunities for exploiting our infrastructure if implementation follows current plans.

For **microwave fixed links**, the pricing proposals are now less draconian than previously, but the congestion definition looks less fair. David Priestley will be preparing a separate note for comment deadline for end of May as the impact varies across the UK. The congestion 'grid' that the RA is proposing would use 100 x 100 km squares which would mean premium pricing for some areas of the Scottish Lowlands and mid-Wales for example.

Regarding current fees, JRC had been concerned that the basis on which fees are based was to be changed in July this year, leading to some members facing increase of up to 30%. Assurances have now been obtained that there will be no such shocks for us, and that if we have a new set of Fees Regulations this year, we shall be largely unaffected.

DTI CONSULTATION ON THIRD GENERATION MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS

The DTI has commenced consultation on the development of third generation mobile communication systems. These are variously known as Universal Mobile Telecommunications System (UMTS), Future Land Mobile Telecommunications Systems (FLMETS) or IMT2000 (International Mobile Telecommunications for year 2000). Analogue cellular is considered the first generation, with GSM and PCN as the second (Global System for Mobiles and Personal Communications Networks respectively). Third generation systems will build on GSM and PCN to offer variable data rate access (up to 2 Mbit/s) in a seamless global network independent of the delivery mechanism (eg terrestrial or satellite). Technologies such as DECT (Digital Enhanced Communication Technology) and PMR (Private Mobile Radio) do not figure prominently in the 'generation' game, but perhaps this is because the consultation document is based on a report by an industry group dominated by the existing mobile 'phone operators'?

The report comprises 49 pages in total and invites comments by 31 May 1997. Copies are available from the JRC Office or directly from DTI on 0171-215-1785 [<http://www.gnet.gov.uk/radiocom>]. The main proposal is the establishment of a UK Third Generation Advisory Group (UKTAG) to take proposals forward.

Although the **Telecoms** arms of some of our members may have commercial interests, it is not clear that the **operational activities** have reason to comment at this stage. When third generation systems come to market, then presumably they will be assessed as an alternative communications option in the same way as GSM and PCN currently are. From the JRC perspective, our only concern at this stage is that in earmarking spectrum for these services, it must not be assumed that UMTS will replace the requirement for private networks which will retain their need for appropriate spectrum allocations. JRC will be circulating a draft response on these lines to Telecommunications Managers for comment in the next few days.

MICROWAVE FIXED LINKS

JRC is preparing a briefing note about two aspects of microwave fixed links which are impacting our members. First, some of you may be under notice to move your **1.5 GHz links** to a new band. JRC remains sceptical that this is necessary within the lifetime of existing equipment. If you have received such a notification from the RA and have not already spoken to us, you may wish to register your interest with Simon Parsons on 0171-963-5806.

Secondly, we are aware that some members are not obtaining the planned availability from their microwave fixed links, especially the **22-23 GHz band**. We are commencing discussions with RA to address this issue and will publish more information shortly.

NETWORK AUTOMATION

With the attention to improving service levels and reducing costs, all utilities are examining cost effective means of extending automation further down into the networks. **Lower cost telemetry options, including use**

of the PMR system, deregulated UHF telemetry, satellite systems and remote meter reading automation systems are four options on which JRC has been asked to focus in collaboration with our members. Further reports will be issued in due course. This may be a topic of interest which can be covered at the forthcoming JRC conference, spicing up the proceedings with competitive appraisals of commercial radio network options, mains-borne carrier and fixed telecommunications network solutions.

RADIO SAFETY

Concern about the potential **safety implications of radio transmitters** is likely to be a continuing issue. Enclosed with this newsletter is a clear and concise leaflet which may be of help in responding to enquiries. Extra copies are available directly from the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB). The JRC Strategy Advisory Group is addressing radio safety to produce more extensive guidelines on known research activities and sources of advice.

CONFERENCES – SEMINARS – WORKSHOPS

22-26 June 1997: UTC (US Utilities Telecommunications Association) Annual Conference in Portland, Oregon. Details available from JRC Office or <http://www2.dgsys.com/~utclegal/>.

11-13 November 1997: work continues on preparations for a JRC Conference. Suppliers in the form of FEI (Federation of Electronic Industries) are interested and the water industry is keen to join in. A focus on new technological solutions to existing problems and future communications options is gaining support, plus an input from one or more of the regulators.

MRUA CONFERENCE

The Mobile Radio Users Association Conference (MRUA) held at Exeter College, Oxford in April was a lively affair as usual. Presentations highlighted utility use of mobile communications to such an extent that the Chairman accused JRC of hijacking the event. This view was not shared by JRC: most of the presentations were focused on out-sourcing and commercial service provision. However, there was a presentation by Computer Cab on developing a GPS based system for automatic vehicle location in urban areas which may be of special interest. The joint presentation by Managing Director JRC and David Tripp, Chairman of the Water Industry Joint Telecommunications Advisory Committee Spectrum Management Group on user self management to the conference is available on the JRC Web Site [<http://ds.dial.pipex.com/jrcl/>]. For more information, contact Adrian Grilli.