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In this issue you will find:

*Access to the Airwave Network
UCC2002
Telemetry and Telecontrol Workshop
Digital PMR for the rest of us?
Tetrapol in the UK
Threats from the 2003 World Radio
Conference (WRC2003)
Cave Review
Automotive Directive
Joining in with the RA
Find your nearest radio tower!
New York State of Mind*

Access to the Airwave Network

The BT Airwave network has been implemented in Lancashire, and is due to be rolled out in Greater Manchester with the first of their areas going live in the autumn. DTI has published the outcome of its current review of additions to the sharers list, which now includes the replacement for the National Nuclear Accident Response Communication Systems (NNARCS), and communications support for RADSAFE (Radioactive substances Safe national transport plan) and NAIR (National Arrangements Involving Radiation).

Having completed this amendment to the Airwave Licence, DTI is initiating a 90-day consultation to define the process to be used for considering extra sharers in future. The intention is to have a mechanism in place to enable future decisions on the extension of the Airwave Licence to be taken within 28 days on a more rational basis. JRC is in close contact with DTI to ensure our views are taken into account. <http://www.dti.gov.uk/ciid/>

UCC2002

Tuesday 18 – Wednesday 19 June 2002 is now the favoured confirmed date for the Utilities Communications Conference 2002, centred in the Coventry area. Discussion are in hand with BT Airwave for an associated visit to either a local Police Control Centre using the new Airwave digital radio system, or a near-by Tetra network control centre.

Telemetry & Telecontrol Workshop

JRC will be holding a workshop on threats and opportunities for Telemetry and Telecontrol (TT&C) on Tuesday 11 September at the Advantica Research & Technology Centre at Loughborough (formerly the British Gas Research Centre). Scanning Telemetry post-UHF2 realignment will be a prime topic. All aspects of TT&C

will be addressed, not just MPT1411 telemetry but also low powered schemes for rural automation and use of the mobile networks and satellite systems for telemetry.

The Workshop will take the form of a round-table discussion. The intention is to try to form a consensus for a way of handling the transition and possible options and opportunities for improving planning and system operation in the band while the realignment takes place.

It is also likely that, from July 2002, JRC will be licensed on a national basis for the Scanning Telemetry channels, which will change the way in which charges are levied. JRC Telecoms managers will be contacted individually with further details.



Digital PMR for the rest of us?

A recent development in ETSI has brought the possibility of digital PMR for the non-Public Safety users closer to reality. DIIS, Digital Interchange of Information and Signalling, now tentatively renamed "Discus", is emerging as a strong and flexible alternative to traditional analogue PMR. With Discus it is possible to simply buy a pair of handheld radios and use them - although it's also just as possible to use repeaters and link them together to create national networks. The technology is designed to be simple and flexible, and since it's building on existing technologies such as voice codecs and GSM data technologies such as EDGE, it's likely to become available in a very short time. The first products will be available from major manufacturers some time in 2002.

<http://www.diis.org/> or E-Mail: info@diis.org

Tetrapol in the UK

Long derided as a Francophone alternative to TETRA, Tetrapol is now emerging from the shadow of the TETRA lobby to an interested public who find themselves either unable to find spectrum for TETRA or have discovered that many features promised and required for their business simply don't exist yet. A small Tetrapol demonstration system was shown recently at MR2001 and attracted a lot of interest. The main advantage in the UK spectrum environment is that Tetrapol is available for the UHF2 (450-470MHz) band off-the-shelf, whilst anyone wanting TETRA products in this band may have to wait a year before the first products appear. According to the manufacturers, Tetrapol is also capable of operating in spectrum already in use by other analogue PMR services, which has some advantages in the UK where empty spectrum to introduce TETRA is unlikely to become available for some years. <http://www.tetrapol.com/>

Threats from the 2003 World Radio Conference (WRC2003)

The utilities have grown used to countering proposals from World Radio Conferences to change frequency allocations in a way that would adversely affect existing users. Proposals currently on the table for WRC2003 will see fresh attempts by the mobile satellite community for additional frequency allocations for little LEO systems below 1 GHz, specifically in the 450-470 MHz band. There are also proposals for the feeder links to these Low Earth Orbit satellites to share spectrum with terrestrial fixed links around 1.4 GHz where utilities have low bandwidth long haul feeder links. JRC is working with the Radio Agency to ensure that JRC services are protected to the maximum extent possible. JRC will also evaluate any potential problems with the deregulated telemetry frequencies in the 450-470 MHz band, although the scope for any remedial measures is severely limited.

Cave Review

Following on from the Government's Communications White Paper and proposals for new Office of Communications – OFCOM: an Independent Review of Radio Spectrum Management by Professor Martin Cave has been commissioned jointly by DTI and the Treasury. The Consultation Paper approaches the task from an economic standpoint, and invites comments by 17 August. The JRC Strategy Advisory Group is drafting a response and seeking to meet Professor Cave. <http://www.spectrumreview.radio.gov.uk/>

Automotive Directive

JRC is now working within ETSI ERM RP12 – the group dealing with the Automotive Directive and the RA MPT1362 Drafting Group, which is working on a re-write of the Code of Practice for the installation of radiocommunications equipment in vehicles. It seems that after lobbying by ETSI and others, the Commission have acknowledged that the Directive is unworkable in some areas and are now proposing a re-write that should allow we radio users to continue with our legitimate installation of equipment into vehicles albeit in an approved format – which is where the rewriting of

MPT1362 comes in! Our main query at the moment is that a lot of us do not have "E" approved radio equipment, so we still need to clarify whether we will be able to install it in a vehicle made after 1996 when the Directive comes into force in October 2002.

Joining in with the RA

The Radiocommunications Agency has announced its 2001 Roadshow details, During October and November this year, the Chief Executive and his team will be visiting Belfast, Durham, Falkirk, Rotherham, Manchester, Southampton, Bristol, Birmingham, with the Grand Finale at Lord's Cricket Ground in London. Call the Events Hotline on 020 7720 4411 or register ONLINE at <http://www.joiningin.org.uk/>

Find your nearest radio tower!

The RA has been demonstrating its "Sitefinder" database to their new minister, Douglas Alexander. Approval to launch the service in late August is expected soon. The database fulfils one of the key Recommendation of the Stewart Report to enable members of the public to check up on details of any mobile phone masts which might be giving rise to anxiety. Discussions are in hand regarding whether the initiative will be extended to cover other radio services.



New York State of Mind

In case it escaped your notice, on 25 June New York's State Assembly passed a Bill prohibiting motorists from using hand-held cell phones while driving. In a poll in the city, 87% of New York voters supported the ban, though it is not clear how many of them did so by 'phone with only one hand on the steering wheel.