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### Consultations – Consultations – Consultations

JRC has, after consultation with members of the JRC Strategy Advisory Group, responded to a number of recent Government consultations, copies of which are available on the JRC web site:

- A proposal to create an offence of **driving while using a hand-held phone**. Apart from the principles involved, we pointed out that the Regulations as drafted would make it an offence to use a hand-held phone, laptop computer or other data entry device when stationary if sitting in the driving seat and having the engine running to power ancillary equipment such as the alternator, heater or air conditioning.
- Creation of a **Recognised Spectrum Access** facility to manage the protection and use of spectrum by organisations not able to obtain a Wireless Telegraphy Act licence, most notably satellite operators.
- The introduction of **spectrum trading**, extending from the simple flexibility to change the ownership of a radio licence when a company changes hands, to the creation of a market where spectrum can be bought and sold in a variety of ways like any other freely traded commodity.

### Current Consultations

Consultations currently under way relate to:

- **Re-alignment of the UHF2 spectrum 450-470 MHz** (see later article)
- **"Public Wireless Networks: Exemption of User Stations"** is the catchy title to a document proposing to regularise the situation whereby currently, most fixed structures working on the GSM networks are technically illegal. The current regime whereby only truly mobile terminals are covered by the exemption regulations will be changed to authorise devices such as fixed telemetry and telecontrol points. How more complex units including fixed gateway access points and other similar networks such as PAKNET and

mobile satellite terminals will be dealt with is as yet unclear. JRC, following discussion in the Strategy Advisory Group, has already responded (copy on JRC Web Site), but others can still respond before the closing date of 21 February 2003.

<http://www.radio.gov.uk/topics/pmc/consult/publicwireless/pubwire.htm>

### Forthcoming Consultations

We are expecting further consultations in the wake of the formation of OFCOM and follow-up to Professor Martin Cave's Review of Radio Spectrum Management, in particular:

- **Spectrum Pricing:** Professor Cave recommended that the initial introduction of Spectrum Pricing should now move on to the stage where the original administrative fees are all doubled. The Radio Agency (RA) has argued that the market has changed since the early work was undertaken, and a new assessment needs to be undertaken. RA is in the process of appointing consultants to undertake a study.
- **Restrictions on PMR:** some respondents to the Cave Review argued that the existing regime for Private Mobile Radio (PMR) was excessively restrictive. RA is intending to consult on the validity of these criticisms, and what could be done to overcome them if judged necessary.

### On-going Consultations

JRC continues to participate in the RA group examining the issues surrounding the publication of a **database of all UK radio sites and transmitters**. The group is carefully considering the need to balance the legitimate requirements of the industry to obtain information on radio sites and usage to optimise new networks and improve spectrum management. This contributes to better use of scarce radio spectrum and reduce environmental impact radio infrastructure, but must at the same time recognise the sensitive nature of the information. While no-one would argue that radio towers can easily be concealed, the increasing threats against deployment of essential radio infrastructure is a worrying development.

[Picture shows Northern Ireland Electricity mast destroyed by vandalism in December 2002.]



## Health & Safety Issues

JRC continues to monitor new research into Health & Safety issues surrounding radio. At the Tetra World Congress in November 2002, Mireille Levy, Head of Radio Planning – Information and Communications Technology Unit in the Home Office reported on the outcome of their programme commissioned especially to look at the perceived threats from Tetra, including its modulation characteristic close to the sensitive frequency of 16 Hz. She confirmed that no such frequency is emitted from the Base Station; it only occurs in transmissions from the mobile terminals due to the modulation frame structure. However, she produced charts showing the research measurements where the previously reported effects had been monitored, but there was no detectable effect whatsoever. Although recognising that it is impossible to prove conclusively the absence of any effect, and the intention to keep looking, in reality she was confident that there was nothing to be found. She commented that if there were to be anything found, it was unlikely to be from the 16 Hz effect on Calcium efflux. Further information is available from JRC.

## 450-470 MHz band re-alignment

RA has published its consultation on the proposal to re-align UK use in the band 450-470 MHz with the common European raster commencing in 2005. The closing date for comments has been extended to 24 March 2003. <http://www.radio.gov.uk/topics/spectrum-strat/450-470-realign/index.htm>

The subject will be debated at the JRC Workshop on 19 February and confidential briefing supplied as a result. If band re-alignment proceeds it is likely to result in changes having to be made to any radio equipment using the band 450-470 MHz, some time between 2005 and 2010. Some of JRCs prime concerns are that:

- All the costs fall on existing users while the benefits accrue to manufacturers and government.
- The concept of England & Wales migrating on a time-scale from 2005-2007 with Scotland following on in 2007-2009 will cause unacceptable cross border interference.
- The implications of co-ordination with other European administrations have not been assessed.
- The impact of interference during the transition periods need to be modelled to gauge the likely impact, especially for systems on the same or nearby sites.
- Provision must be made to manage errors during the transition from, for example, unforeseen delays in moving by some parties, and users inadvertently moving to the wrong frequency.

## Satellites banished!

With the finalisation of the report on the tests to assess the potential impact of the Orbcomm Mobile Satellite System on PMR systems operating in the VHF mid-band spectrum managed by JRC, RA has accepted that the two systems are mutually incompatible and cannot share spectrum under the designated conditions. The crux of the matter is that the satellite system was designed to work in a US environment where PMR systems in the band are invariably simpler than in the UK. In the UK, the narrower 12.5 kHz channel spacing and the use of MPT1327 signalling and mobile data means the satellite system cannot operate as it was intended. Due to this mutual interference, RA has restricted the operation of the satellite system to 149-150 MHz in the UK, leaving JRC members to safely continue to operate their high integrity PMR systems in 148-149 MHz.

## Packet Radio Telemetry and Telecontrol systems

From 1 April 2003, JRC member companies will be free to deploy packet radio telemetry and telecontrol systems in a VHF channel managed and licensed by JRC. Members will not have to pay any Wireless Telegraphy Act License Fees until 1 April 2005. JRC members will be free to deploy equipment complying to a basic specification within their operating area with minimal licensing restrictions. More information can be obtained from Simon Parsons on 020 7963 5806 or e-mail [Simon.Parsons@JRC.co.uk](mailto:Simon.Parsons@JRC.co.uk)

## Airwave

At the Workshop on 19 February, more information will be provided about the revised application for the electricity industry to be permitted to take service from the Airwave network that is being specially constructed for the Police and other Emergency Services. Although at the time of writing DTI has still not published the outcome of the process begun in February 2002, it is confidently expected that a decision will be announced shortly confirming that Transco and the nuclear industry, amongst others, will be permitted to take service from Airwave.

In anticipation of a positive outcome, JRC participates in the Airwave Sharers Forum and is developing proposals for a 'fleetmap' for utility users, and assessing other essential issues such as network resilience, coverage areas, service level agreements and mapping utility operating areas across Airwave segments (which are based on Police force boundaries).

## OFCOM

The organisations to be merged are addressing the organisational structure for the new Regulator as the New Communications Bill makes its way through Parliament. A new Chief Executive, Stephen Carter will take up post on 1 March 2003. Other senior appointments are expected to be announced soon. Stephen Carter is a lawyer by profession, and was previously Managing Director of NTL.

## Changes within JRC!

With the constant change in the utility sector, JRC's Board of Directors is a frequent casualty of job moves. On the electricity side David Start represents the Electricity Association, with Nigel Caldicott, Director of Telecommunications at Aquila the industry representative. Richard Haddon, previously Director of the Emergency Service at Transco remains a JRC director but has moved to head up the new connections business Fulcrum as Managing Director. Tim Hargest, Head of IS Strategy at National Grid Transco is the other gas industry director.



Allied to the impending changes in the membership structure, JRC has appointed Keith Jones to develop new business opportunities for JRC to help member companies and others in areas of radio spectrum management and planning. He is finding that with the reduction of skilled personnel in the industry, there is demand for experienced utility telecommunication professionals and radio coverage analysis to match service areas of radio networks with changed areas of operations. If you think you could benefit from his access to a great depth and breadth of utility expertise, contact him on 01625 526121/07831 413981 or e-mail [Keith.Jones@JRC.co.uk](mailto:Keith.Jones@JRC.co.uk)