

Telephone 0171-963-5885	Published by the Joint Radio Company Limited	Facsimile 0171-963-5995
No 6	E-mail: info@jrc.co.uk	http://www.jrc.co.uk August 1997

ALL CHANGE!

The first new style **JRC Conference has been postponed to June 1998**. The overwhelming view is that it's worth doing, but November 1997 would not allow us to do it well. However, to make sure we don't lose momentum, and to address a number of crucial issues which cannot wait until next year, we shall hold a 2nd JRC Seminar on **Thursday 4 December 1997**.

Roger Garner, JRC Chairman and Transco's Director of Marketing will host the event at the BG Research & Technology Centre at Loughborough. This prestigious location will provide an appropriate backdrop to the portion of the Seminar 'looking to the future' as we celebrate 50 years of mobile radio in the utilities.

More details will follow shortly.

WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY BILL

Out of the Lords and into the Commons

On 21 July, the Wireless Telegraphy Bill completed all its stages in the Lords and moved into the Commons. In the run-up to the Committee Stage, JRC mounted a sustained campaign to promote amendments to the Bill to achieve three key objectives:

- Constrain the freedom of Government to use the Bill for tax raising purposes.
- Strengthen the obligations on the Secretary of State to consult more fully, not only on issues relating to pricing, but also on wider issues of spectrum management. [Especially important to influence international negotiations and thereby avoid losing our spectrum as a result of international agreements.]
- Obtain assurances that the utilities would have guaranteed access to radio spectrum for the purposes of communications to safeguard their ability to maintain essential public services.

In pursuing these objectives, JRC worked closely with other organisations, and formed a special ad-hoc alliance with the water industry.

Outcome

We obtained specific assurances from the Minister [Lord Clinton-Davis] *"that it is not our [the Government's] intention that the introduction of spectrum pricing should affect the access of utilities to the radio spectrum that they require."*

We also obtained comfort regarding our concerns about satellite operators. Lord Derwent noted that *"We should avoid a situation where UK operators have their access to spectrum unnecessarily restricted by the reservation of spectrum in international treaties to satellite operators based outside the United Kingdom. Such operators would pay no UK spectrum fees and no UK taxes"*. The response although not specific, was helpful.

The issue of consultation is being progressed through a group chaired by Alastair Macdonald, DTI Director General for Industry. An initial meeting took place on 18 July which Roger Garner, Chairman of JRC attended. A follow-up meeting was held on 31 July at which David Tripp, a senior water industry figure represented utility interests.

Effect of JRC lobbying

Through JRC activities in promoting utility interests, we have:

- the prospect of improved security of tenure for our spectrum;
- prevention of the use of the legislation for revenue raising purposes;
- virtually guaranteed continued access to spectrum for core utility functions;
- protection against the spectrum we currently occupy being auctioned while we are using it;
- high profile visibility and support for the protection of our mid band VHF spectrum from enforced sharing with satellite operators; and
- front line representation in the development of new consultation mechanisms.

Financial impact

Although spectrum pricing will still result in **increased** fees overall, compared to what was proposed in the original White Paper, potential fee reductions **in excess of £1million per annum** have been obtained through judicious lobbying. Compared to the worst scenario under the SMITH/NERA proposals, we are **better off by £1.7 million** than could have been the case.

For Mobile Radio, the potential fee reduction is from the forecast £1.76m under the original White Paper to approximately £1.25m under the proposals now on the table (current licence fees approximately £500k).

For Microwave Fixed Links, only sample data is available; but on this basis, total current fees in the order of £716k will rise to £1126k rather than £1676k as would have been the case if the NERA/Smith fee structure had been followed.

Next Steps

Substantive debate in the Commons will not take place until the autumn with the second reading provisionally scheduled for 29 October. We are seeking to meet Barbara Roche, Minister for Small Firms who will pilot the Bill through the Commons. JRC has already met with Shadow Secretary of State for Trade & Industry, John Redwood, and Ian Bruce MP, architect of the Telecoms Fraud Bill (who is taking a close interest in this Bill). Members should contact Paula Murphy if they would like a copy of the Committee Stage Debate, amended version of the Bill or further briefing.

HOLIDAY READING

Knowing most of our Newsletter readers find it hard to relax away from the job, we thought we'd provide a little light reading for you around the pool this summer.

1. A reprint from *Land Mobile News* describing narrow band technology. The idea is that we could swap two existing voice channels for five voice+data channels. We could migrate gradually using our existing infrastructure, get better coverage, and buy data enabled 14.4 kbit/sec mobiles off the shelf now for \$750 a-piece. Sounds too good to be true!
2. An extract from the Nokia in-house magazine *Discovery* describing a TETRA system to be installed by Helsinki Energy in the autumn, what we suspect to be the first utility implementation.
3. A candid article by a Senior Corporate Business Manager of **Vodafone** dealing in particular with the emotive issue of priority and pre-emption.

RA UK Spectrum Strategy

And if you want something more substantial for your holiday reading, try the 1997 Edition of the RA strategy for the future use of the Radio Spectrum in the UK. This weighty third annual edition contains over 300 pages of tables analysing the key issues and strategy attached to use of each part of the radio spectrum. Although of interest to radio spectrum planners, only a little of it is of real significance to our industries. Responses to the document are invited by 31 October 1997. JRC is working through the Strategy Advisory Group to develop a commentary.

Copies are available directly from Stuart Noble at RA on 0171-211-0062/fax0059. Alternatively, speak to us and we will get a copy sent to you.

MOBILE PHONES

Use of Mobile Phones while Driving

Transport Minister for Roads, Baroness Hayman, at a meeting with the Federation of Communications Services on 2 July spoke about clear public support for taking action on use of mobile phones while driving. Responding to the strong industry arguments to differentiate handheld from handsfree, she accepted that there was need for immediate action on handheld but that more research was needed before she could decide her position on handsfree.

The Department of Transport are revising the Highway Code and intend to initiate a campaign in the autumn, in co-operation with all parties, to raise the public awareness of the road safety hazard of driving while using a handheld phone and the associated risk of prosecution. The Government, through the Home Office Minister, Alun Michael, confirmed in a written Parliamentary Question on 4 July that the police have adequate powers under existing legislation to prosecute for use of a mobile phone while driving if drivers do not exercise proper control of their vehicles.

JRC will keep a watching brief on this area to ensure members are aware of any developments which might impact on use by the utilities of their mobile communications, especially data terminals and displays.

Use of Mobile Phones in Public Places

A Backbench Conservative MP, Michael Fabricant, has introduced a ten minute rule bill on 24 July:

Mobile Telephones (Prohibition of Use in Designated Places): a Bill to prohibit the sending or receiving of mobile telephone calls in restaurants, railway carriages, buses, cinemas, theatres and other designated places.

The mechanism of a ten minute rule bill is to achieve a debate in the House rather than to gain legislation. This issue should not affect utility use of radio but may result in adverse publicity for mobile communications and their users. The second reading debate is provisionally scheduled for 13 February 1998, a Friday!

YOUNG ENGINEER COMPETITION



This year's Northern Regional winner of the Young Engineers for Britain competition, organised by the Engineering Council, was Anna Ferguson, a 'Year in Industry' student. Anna developed the project while spending a year in the Electrical and Control Department at Hartlepool Power Station before starting an engineering degree at Cambridge University in October.

Anna's project was a radio telephone, currently in use on the station fuelling machine, a mobile piece of equipment which removes and replaces spent fuel in the reactor. This allows a standard telephone to be available continuously on the fuelling machine. Previously the telephone could only be used when the fuelling machine was docked at certain points, and by climbing down from the fuelling machine cab to plug in a 'flying' telephone lead.

The competition was held at Sunderland University where the engineering projects were displayed and judged. Winning the regional competition means that Anna now goes on to compete in the national finals in London.

Anna was working in Nuclear Electric's Electrical and Control Department, under the guidance of Paul Bennett and Dave Harling during the project, and is now to be a Radiocommunications Agency sponsored student!

In the next Newsletter (scheduled for September), we will provide a brief on progress in the work programmes of the JRC Advisory Groups, and details of the new Joint Utilities Forum with the Water industry.