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WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY BILL

New Consultative Document

Hot on the heels of the new Wireless Telegraphy Bill published on 21 May 1997 (announced in JRC News Number 4 with brief details of impact), comes a further consultation document on administrative pricing (52 pages in length). Copies are available from JRC or the Radiocommunications Agency's library (0171 211 0502/0505), or the Radiocommunications Agency's web site and JRC website.

The consultation document basically publishes the working papers of the two groups on which JRC has been represented which have advised on the proposals for the detailed implementation of spectrum pricing as applied to mobile radio and fixed microwave links.

The details on microwave fixed links are similar to those circulated by David Priestley to telecomms contacts on 7 May 1997.

The timing of the consultative document gave the Radiocommunications Agency virtually no time to make changes as a result of that consultation.

On the mobile radio side, the most significant change compared to previous documents is that the agency has rejected any concept of a user self-management discount. However, in doing so, the prospect of greater freedom in the way in which bands are managed by self-management organisations is offered. This may be in our long-term interests, although may have a detrimental financial impact in the medium term.

The Radiocommunications Agency have invited comments by 5 September 1997. JRC is writing to telecomms contacts with a draft response to the document and a personal copy. The intention is that members would respond to this draft response by 31 July in order to be able to circulate revised comments at the beginning of August for final comment and submission by the deadline.

We are also working with the water industry to examine options for tabling jointly proposed amendments specifically aimed at guaranteeing access to spectrum for organisations delivering essential public services.

Meeting with Minister

With publication of the Bill and Consultative Document, JRC is pressing for a meeting with John Battle, Minister at the DTI responsible for piloting the legislation through the Commons. We have been warned that gaining access to him at this stage is difficult, but we will press hard.

We shall also be briefing Opposition Spokesmen who may be sitting on the Standing Committee in order to ensure that our views are fully understood.

Likely Timetable for Bill

Our best estimates for progress on the primary legislation is as follows:

House of Lords: Lord Clinton-Davis

First Reading: 20 May
Second Reading: 5 June

Amendments can be tabled from any time onwards

Committee Stage: 7-8pm, 1 July
Third Reading: later in July

House of Commons: John Battle, MP, Telecommunications Minister

First Reading: 7 July onwards
Second Reading: 21 July onwards
Committee Agreed: 30 July

Summer Recess

Standing Committee: 13 October onwards
Report Stage: November
Third Reading: November
Royal Assent: by Christmas recess

Ten Lords a-leaping!

To ensure that our general and particular interests are known, JRC is briefing members of the House of Lords who might speak in the Committee Stage on the floor of the House. We are nearly up to ten, but if any members have noble Lords with a particular interest in their area, please let us know.

Apart from our general points, we are working with the water industry to promote an amendment giving special recognition to the vital role played by the water, sewerage, gas and electricity industries.

New Economic Impact Study of Radio

In preparation for the publication of the Bill, the Radiocommunications Agency had commissioned Smith System Engineering and NERA to revise their original economic impact study on the use of radio in the UK which was published in October 1995. The update was published on 30 May (105 pages). Although a lot of the new analysis revolves around digital broadcasting, there are some interesting case studies on mobile radio and 1.5 GHz and 7.5 GHz fixed links. Copies are available from the RA Library (0171 211 0502/0505), or JRC office. [Statistics from this study have been cited by the Radiocommunications Agency during the recent Roadshow series.]

Spectrum Strategic Plan

To complete the picture, and not to be confused with other documents referred to above, RA still intends to publish the next version of its spectrum strategic plan in the next few weeks. Copies will be available directly from RA and it usually runs to a few hundred pages. JRC will develop its response through the Strategy Advisory Group.

Annual RA Strategic Seminar

The RA are holding their Annual Seminar to co-incide with publication on Thursday 10 July at the *May Fair Inter-Continental Hotel*, Stratton Street, London W1. Cost of attending is £100+VAT. Booking must be done through the RA Event Office and an application form is enclosed.

JRC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

JRC is working with members on the detail of the proposed Annual Conference. We are looking for a venue (and funding!) in 'middle England' – ideally around Birmingham International for good communications. Wednesday 12 November is aimed at technology: examining future mobile communications options specifically targeted at the needs of the utilities; solutions to the current challenges in telemetry and telecontrol; and analysis of why some members are extremely positive to automatic meter reading, and others negative.

Thursday 13 November would address regulatory and management issues for which we would seek to involve some of the regulators who impact on our industry (and there are plenty to chose from!). Since we are working with (and on) the Federation of Electronic Industries to act as sponsors, Thursday afternoon would be left free for any business meetings members wished to schedule with interested suppliers.

We are working also with the Telecommunications Advisory Committee for the water industry (TAC) to ensure the most favourable environment for sharing experiences – which should be the most valuable subsidiary benefits of the event.

JRC Information Sheets 3 & 4

Enclosed with this Newsletter are Information Sheets 3 and 4 dealing with applications for Scanning Telemetry Assignments and Frequently Asked Questions about the 1.5 GHz Microwave Fixed Links band.

Information Sheet 1 details the spectrum managed by JRC and 2 describes the two JRC Advisory Groups on Strategy and Operations. Further information sheets are planned on use of VHF mobile radio system for fixed telemetry links, microwave fixed links and automatic meter reading, but please let us know of other areas where you feel an information sheet would be helpful.

More Press snippets

Attached are cuttings which a number of members have asked to see about recent terrorist interest in the electricity supply system, and a cutting from Utility Week about a recent communications network failure.

Hot desk in SW1

Many of you are acquainted with the JRC Office within the Electricity Association building at 30 Millbank near to the Tate Gallery. If you're not, call by and introduce yourself next time you're in London. We are also clearing our spare desk to provide a **hot desk** for any of our members with an hour or two to pass in London between engagements. We can provide fax, photocopier, 'phone and coffee machine. Give us a ring if we can help.

Hot desk in SE1



Most of you will be familiar with Jim Norton, Chief Executive of the Radiocommunications Agency and the force behind its modernisation over the last four years. Jim Norton was appointed Chief Executive in May '93, after more than 20 years in the Telecommunications and Information Technology industries. He has a fixed term contract to serve five years with the Agency under a Government initiative to introduce senior managers from the private sector into the Senior Open Structure of the Civil Service.

Jim is 44 and an electrical engineer by profession. He joined BT (then Post Office – Telecommunications) in 1970 under a university sponsorship scheme and won a first class honours degree in Electrical Engineering at Sheffield University. He holds that university's 'Mappin Medal' for Electrical Engineering and other university and Institution of Electrical Engineers Prizes. After 17 years in BT, which he left in 1987 as Senior Manager in charge of all global business development for BT-International, Jim moved to become practice director at Bulter Cox and Marketing Director of Cable & Wireless Europe.

Without his drive and determination, it is unlikely that the radio industry in the UK would have progressed to its current world leading role. An issue of vital importance to the industry will be what happens at the end of his five year fixed term contract in May 1998.