



# JRC Response to the Consultation on UK “Digital Communications Infrastructure Strategy”

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## Key Points

- ❑ JRC is grateful for the opportunity to comment on the UK Digital Communications Infrastructure Strategy and welcomes the recognition that advanced digital communications are the backbone of a successful 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy.
- ❑ JRC welcomes moves to enhance the capacity and geographic coverage of broadband services, both fixed and wireless.
- ❑ JRC notes the government strategy aims to ensure that the UK builds on its strong digital foundations to benefit from world class communication networks to support economic growth and wider social benefits. At the same time, the Digital Taskforce wishes to identify any issues that might affect the development and deployment of digital infrastructure and consider how these can be addressed.
- ❑ While the Government is committed to making the UK the best connected country in the world, JRC draws attention to the fact that the whole strategy is underpinned by a reliable source of electricity. Modern electricity networks are comprehensively interconnected and completely dependent on underlying telecommunications networks. Consumers – and even business – can often survive for short periods without telecommunications, but control of electricity networks is a minute by minute – sometimes second by second activity. Electricity networks must dynamically balance supply and demand at any instant. Without dependable telecommunications, electricity networks cannot operate safely and reliably.
- ❑ Thus there is unlikely to be a ‘one size fits all’ solution for telecommunications networks suitable for all users. Indeed, a wide-scale telecommunications network capable of supporting all utilities would most likely be unaffordable for most consumers and businesses. Most users do not need such extremely high levels of performance and resilience, and would not want to pay for a grade of service they do not need.
- ❑ In developing broadband data networks to support the vast majority of business and domestic users, government must not sacrifice critical requirements for specialist networks for utility operations.
- ❑ The quality of life in developed Western Society is crucially dependent on reliable, sustainable and affordable utilities. In developing a new generation of telecoms networks, these vital utility telecom services must be guaranteed continued access to the resources they need to operate, especially telecommunications - and where appropriate access to suitable and sufficient radio spectrum.”

## **Background**

- A. JRC Ltd is a wholly-owned, non-profit-making joint venture between the UK electricity and gas industries specifically created to manage radio spectrum allocations for these industries used to support operations, emergency and safety-critical operations.
- B. JRC manages small blocks of VHF and UHF spectrum for Private Business Radio applications and for telemetry & telecontrol services. JRC created and manages a national cellular plan for co-ordinating frequency assignments for a number of large radio networks.
- C. The VHF and UHF frequency allocations managed by JRC support telecommunications networks to keep the electricity and gas industries in touch with their field engineers throughout the country. The networks provide comprehensive geographical coverage to support the installation, maintenance and repair of plant in all weather conditions on a 24 hour/365 days per year basis.
- D. JRC's Scanning Telemetry Service is used by radio based System Control And Data Acquisition (SCADA) networks which control and monitor safety critical gas and electricity industry plant and equipment throughout the country. These networks provide resilient and reliable communications at all times to unmanned sites and plant in remote locations to maintain the integrity of the UK's energy generation, transmission and distribution networks.
- E. JRC co-ordinates utility radio links with medium and large wind turbines to ensure that their locations do not compromise the integrity of operational utility radio links by interfering with their transmissions.
- F. JRC participates in European radio harmonisation and standardisation activities and plays a role in a number of international utility telecommunications associations.

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