



Temporary access to UHF spectrum for programme-making and special events

Statement

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Section 1

Temporary access to UHF spectrum for PMSE

This statement sets out our decision to allow temporary access to channels 63 to 68 for programme-making and special events in the regions where Digital Switchover will first take place, up to the point where new users need access to the spectrum.

- 1.1 We gave notice on 20 December 2005 that programme-making and special-events (PMSE) users would lose access to 14 channels of analogue interleaved UHF spectrum—so-called because it is shared with analogue television—between 470 and 854 MHz as Digital Switchover (DSO) took place across the UK. These channels would not be reserved for digital terrestrial television (DTT) after DSO, instead being made available for new uses. PMSE users were advised that their use of frequencies in this band might well be subject to change, that we might revoke or vary any licences relating to this band so that the spectrum could be redeployed and that they should take careful account of this risk before making any decisions to invest in equipment for access to this band.
- 1.2 On 19 December 2006, we published our Digital Dividend Review (DDR) consultation on awarding the spectrum freed up by DSO.¹ We proposed auctioning both the spectrum to be cleared of broadcasting and the new pattern of spectrum interleaved with DTT. Recognising the risk of causing disruption to the large community of professional PMSE users, the auction of the digital interleaved spectrum would be subject to guaranteed access for PMSE for a transitional period, until at least the end of 2012.
- 1.3 Many responses to the DDR consultation argued that a fragmented PMSE sector could not compete successfully at auction and/or that a longer period of transitional access to the digital interleaved spectrum was needed. We reflected on these responses and on 20 June 2007 published a consultation specifically on future access to this spectrum for PMSE.² This recognised that a number of factors could make it difficult for the sector to engage in a market for spectrum access quickly and effectively. We proposed a number of options under which the sector could access the digital interleaved spectrum while avoiding disruption and promoting optimal use of the spectrum over time. This would be additional to continued access to both channel 69 and the analogue interleaved spectrum until DSO took place in each region.
- 1.4 The consultation ended on 31 August 2007, and we are considering the responses that we have received. We will address them in the statement that we expect to publish by the end of the year detailing our decisions on the DDR as a whole.
- 1.5 A significant number of responses to the PMSE consultation expressed concern that there is uncertainty about the frequencies within the digital interleaved spectrum that will be available for PMSE in each region after DSO takes place, starting with Whitehaven in October 2007 and continuing in the rest of the Border region between

¹ www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/ddr/ddrmain.pdf.

² www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/pmse/pmse.pdf.

the last quarter of 2008 and the second quarter of 2009. This is because DTT will use different frequencies in different locations, while the packages of interleaved spectrum suitable but not reserved for local television that we proposed to award in the DDR consultation would also differ by location.

- 1.6 We expect to identify the frequencies that will be available for PMSE access after DSO by the end of this year. However, we recognise the need to provide as much certainty as we can as quickly as possible so that users can continue to plan their use of equipment.
- 1.7 We have therefore decided to allow temporary PMSE access to channels 63 to 68 in the regions where DSO will first take place, up to the point where new users need access to the spectrum. The expected dates for DSO in these regions, and hence when temporary access will become available, are as follows.

Date	Transmitter area (region)
October–November 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whitehaven (Border)
Fourth quarter 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selkirk (Border), serving the Scottish Borders
Second quarter 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beacon Hill (West Country), serving south Devon, including Plymouth • Stockland Hill (West Country), serving southwest Somerset, part of west Dorset and southeast Devon, including Exeter • Caldbeck (Border), serving Dumfries & Galloway, Cumbria and the Isle of Man
Third quarter 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huntshaw Cross (West Country), serving north Devon • Redruth (West Country), serving west Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly • Preseli (Wales), serving southwest Wales • Caradon Hill (West Country), serving much of Cornwall and Devon, including Plymouth • Carmel (Wales), serving south Wales, including Swansea
Fourth quarter 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter Hill (Granada), serving the entire region, and dependent relays serving Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Cheshire • Llandonna (Wales), serving northwest Wales, including Anglesey • Moel-Y-Parc (Wales), serving northeast Wales

- 1.8 It is not possible to be definitive about the end point for temporary access as this is dependent on the timing of the award of this spectrum, the issue of licences and the date when new users need access. We currently expect the award to take place in early 2009, with licences issued shortly thereafter. Temporary access should therefore continue until at least then and possibly longer. In any event, we will give six months' notice before ending temporary access to these channels.
- 1.9 Temporary access to channels 63 to 68 for PMSE complements continued access to channel 69, to the analogue interleaved spectrum until DSO takes place in each region and to the digital interleaved spectrum in due course.