

The spectrum used for Programme Making & Special Events and licensed on behalf of Ofcom by JFMG is currently undergoing a number of significant changes. It is hoped that this information sheet will provide you with a brief description of the most significant developments and how they could affect your use in future. So please read carefully and contact us if you have any further queries.

The impact of Digital Switch-over for users of 470– 862MHz

Digital Switch-over will affect the entire UK when it starts in the Border region at the end of 2008; however for PMSE licensees who use the spectrum 470-862 MHz (UHF channels 21-69) it will have an additional impact.

Digital terrestrial TV requires fewer channels than analogue to transmit to the whole of the UK. Digital switchover will therefore result in the release of 14 UHF channels from broadcast use. As some of these are currently used for radio microphones and talkback PMSE users will also be affected.

The DSO plan proposes that 32 UHF channels will be retained for digital terrestrial broadcasting. It is possible that other services, such as PMSE, could be interleaved in this spectrum in a similar fashion as is done currently. Ofcom are considering carefully how best use can be made of the interleaved and cleared spectrum after digital switch-over as part of its Digital Dividend Review project, including full consideration of the needs of PMSE users.

JFMG customers who hold licences for this spectrum have already been informed of the potential changes to spectrum availability in this band, and once more information is available they will be provided with an update. Most immediately, users should take careful account of this risk before making any decisions to invest in equipment for PMSE use in this band.

Ofcom published information regarding “The Ofcom Digital Dividend Review (DDR)” in November 2006 and have engaged Analysys and Aegis consultants to look at possible uses of the released spectrum. Further information can be found on the Ofcom website at:

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/radiocomms/ddr/documents/ddroverview/#content>

Auction of L-Band spectrum (1488-1491 MHz)

In January 2005, Ofcom published the “Spectrum Framework Review: Implementation Plan (SFRIP)”. This can be found on the Ofcom website at: <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/sfrrip/>

The statement announced that 1452-1492 MHz (part of L-Band) had been identified as spectrum that would be made available for award during 2006/07. PMSE use of 1488-1491 MHz within L Band has been at risk for a number of years and as a result the Radiocommunications Agency allocated the 1517–1525 MHz band as replacement spectrum some years ago. As a result of the impending award process, PMSE use will no longer be available in the 1488–1491 MHz band from 1 April 2007.

RRC and DAB in Band III (174-230 MHz)

There are two factors that will impact PMSE use of Band III (174-230 MHz) from the end of 2006.

First, Ofcom has announced that sub-band 3 (specifically 211-217MHz) will be released to provide more T-DAB capacity in the UK, resulting in the need for PMSE users to vacate this spectrum in time for the new T-DAB networks to become operational. The DAB licences are expected to be advertised towards the end of 2006.

Secondly, the introduction of T-DAB and DVB-T in the rest of Europe will also affect PMSE use. As a result of the Regional Radio Conference (RRC) to be held in May/June this year Europe will replace analogue TV transmissions in Band III with digital transmissions. This re-planning may mean that it is necessary to move PMSE users in Band III.

PMSE licensees have already been alerted to these issues and further information will be provided after the RRC and technical tests have been completed. Most immediately, users should take careful account of this risk before making any decisions to invest in equipment for PMSE use in this band.

Further information about Ofcom's plans for T-DAB can be found on the Ofcom website at: <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/vhf/>

Use of 2500 – 2690MHz

The Radiocommunications Agency notified licensees in December 2002, of the closure of the 2500-2690MHz band to PMSE users on 31 December 2006 and the opening of 2025-2110MHz and 2200-2290MHz from 1st January 2003 as an alternative. The closure of the band is expected to make way for additional services. No final date has been set by Ofcom for an auction of this spectrum, but it is expected to be held during the course of 2007.

Given that it is undesirable for the spectrum to be unused for any significant period, Ofcom will allow PMSE licensees to continue to use the band beyond 31 December 2006. Most immediately, users should take careful account of this risk before making any decisions to invest in equipment for PMSE use in this band.

Ofcom currently expects to offer PMSE use beyond 31st December 2006 subject to a final notice period of a minimum of 3 months. Licensees will be contacted later in 2006 to clarify how this proposal will work in practice.

If you require any further information regarding any of the issues mentioned in this information sheet please contact Ofcom at pmse@ofcom.org.uk.