

Q1

This question should not only ask about developments in technology and the market, but also about developments in society. And then, the answer is that Ofcom needs to acknowledge the new boom in Amateur Radio. And although we are fully aware that Amateur Radio takes up only a small part of the spectrum, it is very important for the future as a powerful tool in training children and adults. It is not only beneficial for the education of future radio engineers, but also for the whole of society. A better educated general public will be able to discuss issues like technological risks on a more factual basis.

Another point of Amateur Radio is that it is an alternative communication service, which can be most beneficial in emergency situations. The activities of RAYNET show how efficient Radio Amateurs can be in emergency traffic.

Q2

Yes, on a near-annual basis with information as proposed in the Spectrum Framework Review.

Q3

Q4

In Germany the UMTS (3G) licences were auctioned at prices disastrous for the involved telecommunication companies. Ultimately, the burden was on the customers. The lesson to be learnt for Ofcom is not to be greedy.

Q5

No. Maximising the use of trading is short sighted without protecting Amateur Radio from market forces. Amateur Radio is allowed no commercial interest and will not survive in a liberal market environment. This would be disastrous for the future of the nation as Amateur Radio is vital for the education of next generation's radio engineers, as well as in adult education and as didactic tool in schools.

Q6

The Amateur Radio bands need to be protected from liberalisation beyond the bare minimum (which arises from international treaties). Otherwise the British Amateurs risk suffering disadvantages compared to other nations. Especially the GHz Amateur bands, which are of most interest to commercial companies, are the Amateur's most innovative region of the spectrum.

Q7

Yes, as long as this is not taken from Amateur bands.

Q8

Q9

Q10

No. Ofcom needs to keep in mind the special nature of Amateur Radio, and protect it from harm in a market-based environment. Also, Ofcom needs to understand that it has a responsibility for Amateur Radio, and must give support and protection. This includes protecting Amateur Radio bands from interference or intruders which can only be done efficiently by Ofcom itself.

Furthermore, only Ofcom can licence Amateurs adequately. It is also important to have a tight link of communication between Ofcom and the Amateurs. Otherwise Ofcom might lose contact to the Amateur Radio service (as many fear it already has).

It needs to be kept in mind that Amateur Radio is booming with thousands of youngsters becoming

newly involved in radio engineering every year. New clubs are founded all over the UK, many of which are school clubs. This boom is due to the existing licence structure: the recently introduced three-tier scheme from the easy (but not too easy) entry level and the rewarding Full licence which needs skills and learning. Keep it as it is! Any changes, especially a simplification of the licence would severely put the thriving Amateur Radio scene at risk.

A simpler licence will ultimately lead to lower operating standards among Radio Amateurs, lowering the efficiency in emergency communications, one prime example of which is RAYNET.

There are many examples (including this Spectrum Framework Review) showing that Ofcom has not totally understood the importance of Amateur Radio and Ofcom's responsibility for it. Instead, Ofcom's main concern seems to be the economy, as can be seen on nearly every page of this Review. Unless Ofcom fully supports the Amateur Radio service (and that includes licensing the Amateurs as is practice now), the radio-related education is under serious threat.

And education is what Amateur Radio is about. In schools, Amateur Radio provides didactic help in many subjects: electronics, communication, language, physics, maths, chemistry, geography and astronomy to name the most obvious. Many radio engineers, physicists and astronomers have started their career as Amateurs. Amateur Radio also provides one of the most fascinating and challenging topics for adult education.

We have successfully trained many amateurs, both children and adults, who have now a very high level of understanding of radio technology. The opportunity to learn while actually using the technology, together with the necessity to learn to obtain the licence, is a unique combination, which is the most motivating and effective way of learning. If the access to Amateur licences were simplified radically this motivation would be lost, with atrocious consequences. While education of adults is a very important issue, the real strength of Amateur Radio lies in the education of children. And for children and young adults, the fact that the licence is provided by Ofcom (and not an organisation run by Amateurs) is a major source of pride and motivation.

Q11

Q12

Yes, definitively. There are very many reports among Radio Amateurs where they suffered from interference from other services, but there was no help from Ofcom. This is very frustrating and might lead to the idea that Amateur Radio were an "unprotected service". Ofcom should protect Amateur Radio and take this protection very serious. Ofcom should help and resolve issues raised by Amateurs. Ofcom should also keep the noise floor in the Amateur Radio bands to an absolute minimum, as most of the technology in Amateur Radio uses low power and/or ineffective antennas.

Q13

Amateur Radio is one important source of innovation and must not be confused with the innovations in licence-exempt radio, which, by nature, is limited to very low power. To Ofcom this does not seem to be obvious. But Amateur Radio can be seen as Test and Development licences for everyone willing to learn and experiment. Amateur Radio would be severely weakened by lowering the standards of training necessary for the licences. Amateur Radio would also suffer if it lost bands in the spectrum allocation.

So, Ofcom should support and protect Amateur Radio as much as possible.

Q14

Beyond the international treaties, there is the need to keep the Amateur Radio bands harmonised internationally to allow companies to produce equipment for a large enough market.

Q15

Q16

Yes! Only when the spectrum is divided by frequency it is possible to assign a range of bands across the complete spectrum, which is vital for Amateur Radio. Only if Amateur Radio can use bands from all over the spectrum, the education of future generations can be secured, as amateurs need to be able to perform experiments and self-training on frequencies relevant at that time.

Q17

Q18

No. The Regulatory Impact Assessment shows that the primary objective of Ofcom is to maximise the profit of companies involved. But Ofcom needs to keep in mind other benefits from spectrum usage, such as the educational benefit of Amateur Radio. A weakened Amateur Radio would be devastating for the education of children and adults, and therefore devastating for the future of the nation.