I fully support the comments made in the response by the RSGB as I am a radio amateur. I have been interested in the hobby since 1962 and became licensed in 1971. My particular interests are weak signal contacts at both HF and VHF.

One of my main concerns is that in the cause of deregulation and a light touch approach to spectrum management there is a tendency for the overall noise floor across the rf spectrum to become higher by inappropriate standards for equipment whether licensed or not thus making it difficult for amateur radio users to seek out the weaker signals. It is far better to regulate these devices now to prevent the situation arising where new technologies cannot be implemented because of high levels of radio frequency pollution. There is an analogy here to the anti-pollution legislation as exemplified by the clean air act, etc.Far less costly in environmental terms to keep the situation under control now than for it to become out of control leading to lots of expense and unexpected effects to sort out in the future.

Many radio amateurs are very concerned that they will be squeezed out of the spectrum by market forces or by sharing with inappropriate users such as computer LANs, traffic information syatems, car keys and broadband over power line. In this connection it is interesting to note that Japan has already abandoned BPL technology.

Harmonisation.

It is absolutely essential that amateur radio bands be harmonised on a world wide basis to enable contacts on the HF bands as well as the satellite bands. There is a need for harmonisation on a European level as many amateurs exploit anomalous propagation modes at VHF, UHF and microwave across the continent.

Interference Issues

It is essential that OFCOM continues to investigate and arbitrate in matters of interference. This impinges directly on the availability of low noise levels and interference free spectrum for the utilisation of new technologies. Imagine a new generation of low powered and therefore intrinsically safer mobile phones which have difficulty in working effectively because the overall man made noise floor prevents the base station from hearing them.

Deregulation of Amateur Radio

It is difficult to see how the service can be deregulated when there is a minimum qualification that has to be achieved for each of the current licence categories. Does this mean the abolition of these categories? Does it mean the abolition of a qualification? Does this mean that radio amateurs would be permitted to use a higher maximum power level than at present?
There is the matter of callsigns by which the amateurs are identified which is analogous to the use of callsigns in the maritime and aeronautical service. Radio amateurs identify each other by their callsigns and an organisation would have to allocate them. There could be scope here for the RSGB to take on this role and potential for personalised callsigns.

It is worth noting that the amateur system of licensing has been radically reformed in the UK in the last couple of years or so and so there is a strong case to let these changes fully take effect before they can properly be evaluated.

I look forward to the further consultation document on the amateur service which I hope will clarify the exact nature of your proposals.

There seems to be some confusion as to the difference between Citizens' Band and Amateur Radio. There is a comment about CB using high power. This is a factual error as they are specifically limited in power. As CB uses low power and type approved equipment it could quite easily be deregulated in the way that many other services have been. One of the main reasons for the decline in CB radio has been due to the high levels of interference and either the unwillingness of RA or lack of sufficient resources to police the band.
Apropos the use of the band for low powered religious broadcasting it could be playing into the hands of the foul mouthed abusers who have been known to frequent this band in the past.

Low Power Devices in Rural Areas.

Many of the licence exempt devices such as digital telephones have too low a power to be able to cover premises in rural locations. Frequently ranges of 200m are quoted which is an ideal line of site figure. Once the effect of buildings and terrain are taken into account the range reduces dramatically to a few tens of metres making much of this wireless technology useless to the country resident. I would therefore welcome an increase in the permitted power of such devices.