

Ofcom Consultation

British Entertainment Industry Radio Group (BEIRG)

Ofcom Draft Annual Plan 2020 / 2021

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Introduction

BEIRG has worked well with Ofcom over the last year in finalising the details of the 700 MHz Funding Scheme and helping to ensure its smooth operation. We have been encouraged by the development of a strong working relationship in which Ofcom have listened to the concerns of the PMSE community and acted upon them.

It was therefore disappointing to see no mention of PMSE in Ofcom's plans for the forthcoming year. As a key stakeholder and contributor to the thriving Creative Industries sector, BEIRG would have hoped for a commitment from Ofcom to continue working with the PMSE community and to give us the confidence to invest in the future development of technology.

Security of tenure

BEIRG is grateful to Ofcom for identifying and opening up the 961-1015 MHz, 1045-1075 MHz, and 1105-1154 MHz bands of spectrum for PMSE sharing. However, the bands remain a UK-only solution, limiting their attractiveness to manufacturers and limiting the quantity and range of equipment that may be available for use in the bands.

However, the clearance of both the 800MHz and 700MHz bands has already caused significant disruption to the sector and despite Government financial support, has negatively impacted the industry over the last 10 years. The industry practices have become even more spectrally efficient and technological developments have helped that too BUT ensuring the sector has reasonable, protected access to sufficient quantity and quality of spectrum is of paramount importance, not only to the affected companies but to the entertainment industry and UK economy as a whole. Therefore, the PMSE sector is looking for some security of tenure and reassurance that this is not to be a 5-7 yearly cycle. We are concerned that there will be another clearance program, either of 500MHz or of the wider UHF band as more programme delivery becomes IP or satellite based. The upheaval for those who provide content and support our creative industries cannot be over-stated and another move would have a highly damaging impact on the PMSE community.

Conclusion

The PMSE sector faced a damaging loss of spectrum access as a result of the 700 MHz spectrum clearance, but has responded to the challenge to use the new allocation of spectrum as efficiently as possible, and have worked with Ofcom at all stages of the clearance programme.

However, it is crucially important that PMSE, once through the process of moving from 700 MHz and the associated disruption are given re-assurances by Ofcom that their new 'home' will remain as such for a considerable period of time.

British Entertainment Industry Radio Group

The British Entertainment Industry Radio Group (BEIRG) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that works for the benefit of all those who produce, distribute and ultimately consume content made using radio spectrum in the UK. Venues and productions that depend on radio spectrum include TV, film, sport, theatre, churches, schools, live music, newsgathering, political and corporate events, and many others. BEIRG campaigns for the maintenance of 'Programme Making and Special Events' (PMSE) access to sufficient quantity of interference-free spectrum for use by wireless production tools such as wireless microphones and wireless in-ear monitor (IEM) systems.

As well as being vital in producing live content, wireless audio PMSE technologies play a key role in helping to improve security and safety levels within the entertainment industry and other sectors. Their benefits include improving the management of electrical safety, the reduction of noise levels, the development of safety in communications and reducing trip hazards as well as providing an essential tool for the security orientated services. Wireless equipment and the spectrum it operates in are now crucial to the British entertainment industry.

BEIRG is a member of the Association of Professional Wireless Production Technologies (APWPT)¹, which promotes on an international level the efficient and demand-driven provision and use of production frequencies for professional event productions, as well as safeguarding such production frequencies for the users on the long run.

¹<http://www.apwpt.org/>