INNOVATIVE PROPOSALS SOUGHT FOR - RADIO SPECTRUM RELEASED BY MERGER

Edward Leigh, Technology Minister, today called for comments from all interested parties on possible future uses for the spectrum freed by the merger of two of the PCN operators - Mercury PCN and Unitel.

The Government will be particularly interested in innovative proposals for introducing further competition in telecommunications.

Launching the consultation, Mr Leigh said:

"Radio spectrum is a scarce and valuable resource. We now have a limited amount of spectrum available for potential allocation involving a pair of bands of about 10Mz each.

"We want interested organisations, including telecommunications operators and users, to feed in their views so that the Government can ensure that all possible uses are considered.

"Comments will be welcomed on all potential uses for the spectrum. Options for the band include its use for new telecommunications services. Alternatively, spectrum in the band could be held back for some years until the PCN services have had time to develop.

"I would also be willing to look at any other options which interested parties think should be considered. In considering the use of the band, the development of harmonised European frequency plans will need to be taken into account.

"I want to emphasise the Government's continued strong support for the PCN operators as they prepare to enter the market.

"In order to ensure that they have a sound basis for planning their operations I want to make clear that this consultation exercise will not lead to any reduction in the spectrum allocations already agreed with Mercury Personal Communications and Hutchison Microtel."
NOTES FOR NEWS EDITORS

1. On 11 December 1989 the Government announced that licences to run Personal Communications Networks would be offered to Mercury PCN Ltd, to a consortium of British Aerospace and four other companies, subsequently named Microtel Communications Ltd, and to Unitel Ltd. Licences were issued to the three companies under section 7 of the Telecommunications Act 1984 on 9 July 1991.

2. Earlier this year two of the operators, Mercury PCN and Unitel, merged their operations. As a result, a block of spectrum has been released and is available for allocation. It extends to 2x10 MHz with the upper band around 1820 MHz. Further spectrum may become available in the future if certain existing fixed links could be moved.

3. Anyone wishing to comment on the future use of the band should provide their comments in writing to the Radiocommunications Agency, Room 802, Waterloo Bridge House London SW1 8UA, copied to the Telecommunications and Posts Division of the DTI, location 2/153, 151 Buckingham Palace Road, London 5WlW 955. Comments should be received by Friday 15 January 1993.

Press Enquiries: 071-215 5961
(Out of Hours: 071-215 4657/8)
Public Enquiries: 071-215 5000
Spectrum subject of press release
FUTURE USE OF RADIO SPECTRUM MADE AVAILABLE BY PCN MERGER

As you will be aware, Mercury PCN and Unitel, two of the three PCN operators licensed under the Telecommunications Act in July 1991, merged their operations into one company earlier this year. Following this merger, a limited amount of radio spectrum, involving a pair of bands of about 10 MHz each, is now available for possible allocation for other applications.

There are a number of possible uses for this valuable resource, and in order to ensure that all possibilities are taken into account, the Government has decided to invite comments on potential uses for the spectrum from organisations likely to have an interest. I attach a copy of the Press Release issued today with which Edward Leigh launched the consultation.

The band of spectrum available is illustrated on the attached chart which shows the current position. The European equipment specification for PCN (DCS 1800) will cover the band 1710-1785 MHz (Base receive) and 1805-1880 MHz (Base transmit). The gap at 1875-1880 MHz reflects the decision to avoid using the 5 MHz adjacent to the DECT allocation at 1880-1900 MHz at least until such time as the potential incompatibility problem has been resolved. The other sub-band without indicated usage - between 1710-1720 MHz and 1805-1807.5 MHz - reflects the decision to maintain, at this stage, paired allocations in this part of the spectrum.

The amount of spectrum available which is the subject of the consultation cannot be specified precisely until the usage has been determined. It may be necessary, for example, to restrict the band width in order to protect services in adjacent bands. The use of the available spectrum may be further constrained in order to meet international obligations.

If you would like to comment on the use of the spectrum, whether as a potential user or otherwise, please ensure that your comments reach the Radiocommunications Agency, Room 802, Waterloo Bridge House, London SE1 8UA by Friday 15 January 1993, with a copy to me at Buckingham Palace Road.

The Government will consider all comments received before deciding how to proceed. No individual assignment of spectrum will necessarily result immediately from the consultation. The government may wish to hold a competition to select an operator to use the spectrum for a particular purpose. Alternatively the spectrum may be allowed to remain unused for some time while the PCN operators establish their services and possible new ways of exploiting the spectrum emerge.

NICHOLAS DAVIDSON - Telecommunications and Posts Division