RADIO SPECTRUM TO BE HELD BACK UNTIL AT LEAST APRIL 1995

Radio spectrum released by the merger of two PCN operators - Mercury PCN and Unitel will be held back and not allocated before April 1995, Trade and Technology Minister Patrick McLoughlin announced today. The decision follows a consultation launched last October.

Mr McLoughlin said:

"We received 22 responses to the consultation and a variety of propositions. There was strong support for the spectrum to be held back.

"The consultation did not identify any interest in a third national PCN operator although there were proposals for local or regional PCN services which were considered very carefully. The Government's decision not to invite applications for regional PCN licences does not of course preclude interested parties discussing agreements with the national PCN operators.

"Some of the other proposals are to be discussed further with the proposers as it may be possible to accommodate them in other parts of the spectrum.

"The Government believes that, having considered the various responses and taking into account both the launch of the two PCN services expected over the next 12 months and the development of harmonised European frequency plans, there should be no allocation of the spectrum until at least April 1995. Nearer the time, the Government may wish to reconsider possible future use of the spectrum".
NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. On 20 October 1992 the Government announced a public consultation inviting comment on the future use of spectrum which had been released following the merger earlier in 1992, of two of the PCN operators, Mercury PCN and Unitel. The block of spectrum extended to 2 x 10 MHz with the upper band around 1820 MHz.

2. The 22 responses covered various proposals including holding back the spectrum, not allocating it for particular uses or to particular operators, allocating it for local fixed links, for local/region al PCN, for spread spectrum technology, for mobile data, for broadcasting and test and development or innovative purposes.

3. Mercury Personal Communications Ltd expect to launch their "One 2 One" PCN service this summer and Hutchison Microtel Ltd expect to Launch in the Spring of 1994.

4. No decision has been taken on the possible use of the spectrum after April 1995.

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