

# Future use of 2GHz MSS

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Proposals for the use of 1980 – 2010 MHz  
and 2170 – 2200 MHz from May 2027

## Consultation

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For more information on this publication, please visit [ofcom.org.uk](https://www.ofcom.org.uk)

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# 1. Overview

- 1.1 This document sets out our proposed approach to authorising the 2 GHz Mobile Satellite Services (MSS) band (1980–2010 MHz and 2170–2200 MHz) in the UK beyond May 2027, when the current UK and European Union (EU) authorisations expire.
- 1.2 The spectrum is currently licensed to Inmarsat (referred to as Viasat throughout this document)<sup>1</sup> and EchoStar to provide pan-European MSS. Viasat provides an inflight connectivity service to airlines operating across Europe under its European Aviation Network (EAN). EchoStar provides voice and data services in its allocated spectrum, including an IoT network that extends LoRaWAN coverage.
- 1.3 There remains some uncertainty around the future use of the band across Europe. On 27 May 2026, the European Commission published proposals for how the band will be authorised in the EU beyond May 2027, which are now being considered by EU Member States and the European Parliament. The majority of stakeholders responding to our CFI indicated that some alignment with the European Union would be beneficial.
- 1.4 The international satellite broadband and MSS markets have become increasingly dynamic. There have been significant recent investments, many new entrants, consolidation among existing players and a rapidly evolving commercial and services landscape. At a global level, the 2027 World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-27) will consider potential new spectrum allocations for MSS services. This dynamism and uncertainty over the European process make it hard for us to assess which longer-term uses and users would deliver the largest benefits to UK citizens and consumers.
- 1.5 We are therefore proposing to continue to authorise the current licensees – EchoStar and Viasat – for a transitional period. This will prevent disruption to current services and ensure the spectrum continues to be used when the current authorisation expires next year. We are also keen to introduce greater flexibility for others to access this spectrum during the transitional period, to enable optimal spectrum use and support innovation.
- 1.6 In the longer term, there is significant interest in use of this spectrum for a range of services, in particular a) Direct to Device (D2D) – using satellite connectivity to extend the coverage area of mobile services; b) Internet of Things (IoT) – narrowband connectivity for tracking, monitoring, and managing assets; and c) Air to Ground inflight connectivity – supporting connectivity (e.g. Wi-Fi) onboard aircraft. There is also interest in using the spectrum for terrestrial mobile services and PMSE.
- 1.7 We are keen to take a decision on longer-term access to this band as soon as we have a better understanding of the uses most likely to deliver the largest benefits. To that end, we are seeking stakeholder views on potential approaches to determining longer term access to these frequencies in the UK.
- 1.8 Recognising both the potential benefits of regional alignment and the possibility of differences between EU and UK approaches, we will continue to engage with the EU as we develop our proposals for the long-term future use of this spectrum in the UK.

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<sup>1</sup> In May 2023, [Viasat completed its acquisition of Inmarsat](#).

- 1.9 The proposed extended access for incumbents would be without prejudice to our future decisions on use of this band, and would not provide any guarantee of continued access beyond the end of the authorisation period.

### **Our proposals – in brief**

We are proposing to enable continued access to 2 GHz MSS spectrum for the incumbent operators: Viasat and EchoStar, for a period of 3 – 5 years, while we continue to consider the most appropriate future use of the band.

To do this, we are proposing to introduce a new licence under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 that authorises the existing Complementary Ground Component (CGC) Network operation to continue, currently utilised by Viasat.

We are also proposing to keep the relevant Licence Exemption Regulations in place, with amendments to add the specific frequencies in which each of the satellite operator’s terminals can transmit.

We are seeking stakeholder views on these proposals and are also seeking input on:

- the appropriate approach to fees during the proposed transitional period;
- how to enable others to access this spectrum (where this would not be expected to cause undue interference to existing licensees’ services) to support optimal spectrum use and innovation over the proposed transitional period; and
- our initial thinking around the longer-term authorisation of this band.

Responses to our consultation should be submitted by **5pm on Tuesday 18 August 2026**. We plan to publish our decision on near-term proposals later in 2026.

- 1.10 The overview section in this document is a simplified high-level summary only. The proposals we are making and our reasoning are set out in the full document.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 The 2 GHz Mobile Satellite Services (MSS) spectrum band (1980–2010 MHz and 2170–2200 MHz; also known as part of “S band”) forms part of the globally allocated spectrum for MSS. These services support voice, data and critical safety-of-life communications, and can be delivered both to fixed and mobile terminals.
- 2.2 The band is currently harmonised across the European Union (EU) and the UK for MSS. It is currently licensed to Viasat<sup>2</sup> and EchoStar on an exclusive basis until May 2027<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.3 In this document we set out proposals to authorise the use of this spectrum when the current licence period comes to an end, following consideration of the responses received to our July 2025 [Call for Input \(CFI\) on the “future use of the 2GHz MSS band”](#).

## Background

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### Mobile Satellite Services

- 2.4 MSS are radiocommunications services between mobile earth stations and one, or more, space stations (satellites).<sup>4</sup> There are a wide range of MSS applications including satellite phones, maritime connectivity, aircraft connectivity, asset tracking, internet of things, direct to device and telehealth.
- 2.5 The International Telecommunications Union’s (ITU) Radio Regulations govern international radio-frequency spectrum and the associated orbital resources for MSS (amongst other services). With the growing development of MSS, international work to support these services has increased.
- 2.6 At the next ITU World Radiocommunications Conference in 2027 (WRC-27), there are several agenda items<sup>5</sup> dedicated to studying potential new MSS allocations:
  - a) Agenda item 1.12 is studying potential new allocations to, and regulatory actions for, MSS several frequency bands,<sup>6</sup> for the development of low-data-rate non-geostationary mobile satellite systems.
  - b) Agenda item 1.13 is studying possible new MSS allocations for direct connectivity between space stations and International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT) user equipment to complement terrestrial network coverage; and
  - c) Agenda item 1.14 is studying possible new allocations to MSS in 2010 – 2025 MHz, 2160 – 2170 MHz (regions 1 and 3) and 2120 – 2160 MHz (all regions).

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<sup>2</sup> The current spectrum authorisations (made up of the WT MSS Licence Exemption Regulations 2016, the spectrum access authorisation and the CGC network licence) all name Inmarsat; which now forms part of Viasat. In this document we only refer to Viasat.

<sup>3</sup> The specific expiry date in May varies by country; in the UK it is 13 May 2027.

<sup>4</sup> Or between a mobile earth station and one or more complementary ground components used at fixed locations. Such a system will include at least one space station. As per the definition used in Article 2 of Decision No 626/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2008 on the selection and authorisation of systems providing mobile satellite services (MSS).

<sup>5</sup> Detail on each of the agenda items can be found on the [ITU’s website](#).

<sup>6</sup> 1427 – 1432 MHz, 1645.5 – 1646.5 MHz, 1880 – 1920 MHz and 2010 – 2025 MHz.

## Satellite filings drive global priority access to frequencies

- 2.7 Use of spectrum allocated to MSS is internationally coordinated through the ITU satellite filing process,<sup>7</sup> but the authorisation of satellite operators within a territory remains in the jurisdiction of national administrations.<sup>8</sup> In some bands (such as the 2 GHz MSS band) the filing process operates on a first come first served basis, with earlier filings ('senior filings') taking priority over newer filings for coordination and protection purposes.
- 2.8 Coordination between different filings operating in the same or overlapping frequency bands and geographical areas is typically conducted on a bilateral basis and tends to be achieved through negotiation between the satellite operators. Under the Radio Regulations, there is currently no explicit protection for geostationary satellites from non-geostationary operations in MSS allocated bands.<sup>9</sup>
- 2.9 The current licensees of the 2GHz MSS band across Europe are supported by relevant ITU satellite filings. These satellite filings will endure beyond the end of the current EU and UK authorisations for this band in May 2027. Further information on satellite filings can be found in Annex 3.

## UK general MSS authorisation approach

- 2.10 In the UK, satellite terminals operating to MSS systems (in accordance with UK [Interface Requirements 2016](#)) are typically exempt from licensing.<sup>10</sup> In principle this enables any satellite operator meeting these conditions to provide a service to the terminals, under the licence exemption. However, as MSS use omnidirectional, low power terminals, in practice only one operator can use the spectrum in a given area at one time. This tends to be the operator holding the most senior satellite filing (see paragraphs 2.7 – 2.9).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> UK registered operators may apply to Ofcom, as the filing administration in the UK, to submit a filing to the ITU. More detail on the satellite filings process at both a national, and international, level can be found on the [Ofcom website](#).

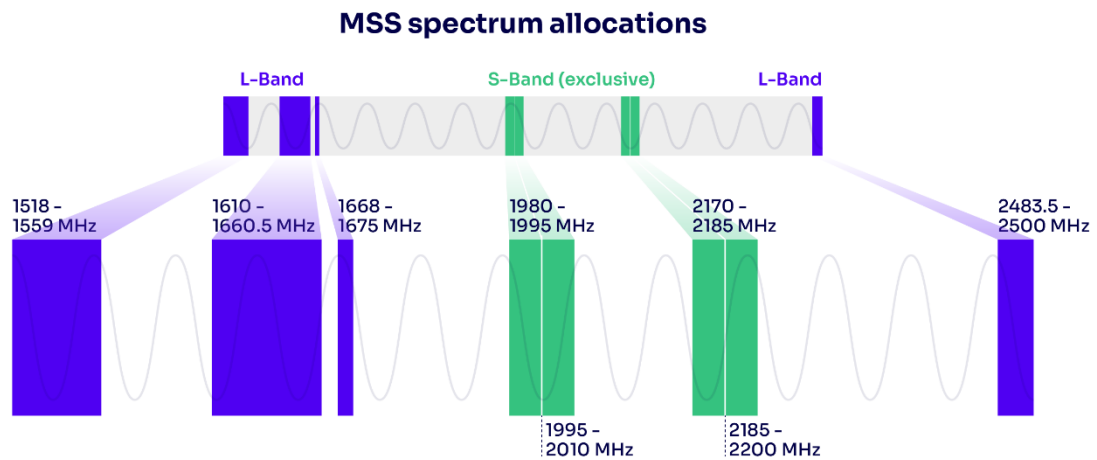
<sup>8</sup> As per the Radio Regulations. There are also long-term international agreements that have resolved filing disputes for key territories.

<sup>9</sup> Where an MSS allocation is the only satellite service allocation in the band. In bands allocated to Fixed Satellite Services, or Broadcasting Satellite Services, Article 22 of the Radio Regulations applies. Article 22 defines the interference protection framework—especially EPPD limits—by which non-GSO satellite systems must protect GSO networks and coexist in shared frequency bands.

<sup>10</sup> We have previously set out that we will consider reviewing the UK MSS authorisation framework, to support spectrum sharing between these systems in the future. We plan to undertake this work across all MSS bands shortly and will take longer term decisions on authorisation in the 2 GHz in line with this work.

<sup>11</sup> Operators may reach agreements with others to secure exclusive access of specific channels.

**Figure 1: Mobile Satellite Service bands available in ITU Region 1 between 1 – 3 GHz (includes UK and Europe)**



2.11 Whilst authorised under a different framework (see paragraphs 2.12-2.20 below) the 2 GHz MSS band (S-band) is broadly substitutable with L-band MSS spectrum due to the similar propagation characteristics, and ability to support similar services.

## 2 GHz MSS has a pan-EU authorisation framework

2.12 In 2008, the European Commission set out its EU-level selection criteria and authorisation framework, which established a centralised EU selection procedure, removing national discretion on who may use the band by requiring Member States to authorise the selected operator(s) at a national level.

2.13 In 2009, the European Commission formally awarded Viasat and Solaris Mobile Limited (now EchoStar, referred to as such throughout the document)<sup>12</sup> exclusive access rights to 2x15 MHz of spectrum in the 1980 – 2010 MHz and 2170 – 2200 MHz range, under the pan-European framework. Each Member State went on to authorise the selected operators at the national level, in accordance with the EU framework.

## The current UK authorisation framework

2.14 The UK implemented the EU Decision ([626/2008/EC](#)) and the Commission Decision ([2009/449/EC](#)) in 2010, and made the Statutory Instrument ([SI 2010/672](#)), creating [the Authorisation of Frequency Use for the Provision of Mobile Satellite Services \(European Union\) Regulations 2010](#) (“the 2010 Regulations”). These Regulations set out the legal framework for Ofcom to authorise Viasat and EchoStar exclusive rights to deliver mobile satellite services within these frequency bands across the UK.

2.15 Viasat and EchoStar were granted spectrum authorisations for the use of space station(s) as part of a mobile satellite system under the 2010 Regulations. We implemented licence exemptions to enable the user terminals to connect to the satellite network, and Viasat was granted a Complementary Ground Component (CGC) network licence pursuant to the

<sup>12</sup> In January 2014, [EchoStar acquired sole ownership of Solaris](#). Solaris Mobile was originally selected as an MSS operator by the EC. However, due to issues with the S-band antenna during the launch of the satellite which limited its coverage and power, Solaris struggled to provide services. This resulted in minimal use of the spectrum, leading to EchoStar’s acquisition of Solaris Mobile in 2014.

authorisation granted by 2010 Regulations. We set out the different components of the authorisation below.

### **The Wireless Telegraphy (Mobile Satellite System Equipment) (Exemption) Regulations 2016**

- 2.16 [The Wireless Telegraphy \(Mobile Satellite System Equipment\) \(Exemption\) Regulations](#) (S.I. 2016/1074) came into force in 2016. They provide an exemption for user terminals (e.g. satellite phones) used to access services via a licensed MSS network in the UK in the 2 GHz band.<sup>13</sup> The exemption only applies to MSS networks operated by Viasat and EchoStar.<sup>14</sup>

### **Complementary Ground Component Network licence**

- 2.17 The CGC network licence authorises Viasat to deploy terrestrial ground-based stations. Viasat pay an annual fee for this licence, on a per-base station basis.
- 2.18 The ground-based stations are used at fixed locations in order to improve the availability of mobile satellite services in the geographical area covered by those services. The CGC authorisation therefore enables Viasat to improve the service availability and performance of its EAN in circumstances where satellite-only delivery may be constrained. The CGC authorisation is closely linked to the underlying MSS authorisation, and CGC use is not intended to provide a standalone terrestrial mobile service. Rather, the CGC is intended to be an ancillary element of the MSS network, and its authorisation is designed to preserve the principle that the satellite component remains central to the overall service offering.
- 2.19 Viasat's CGC network licence expires on 13 May 2027, coinciding with the expiry of the spectrum authorisation of space station(s) of a mobile satellite system, granted under the 2010 Regulations, as set out in paragraphs 2.14 – 2.15.

### **Expiry of current framework**

- 2.20 The 2008 EU authorisation framework created authorisations that were time limited. Accordingly, the current spectrum authorisations for the space station(s) and the associated CGC network licence expire on 13 May 2027. The UK government has [revoked the 2010 Regulations](#) (which formed the legal basis of these authorisations), with effect from 14 May 2027.

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<sup>13</sup> As set out in paragraph 2.25 EAN aircraft terminals are authorised separately under the Aircraft Radio Licence.

<sup>14</sup> Regulation 2, The Wireless Telegraphy (Mobile Satellite System Equipment) (Exemption) Regulations 2016.

## Current use of the 2 GHz MSS band in the UK under the 2008 EU authorisation framework

- 2.21 EchoStar has provided voice and data services in the allocated spectrum, including an Internet of Things (IoT) network that extends LoRaWAN coverage across Europe using satellite links.
- 2.22 More recently, the FCC has approved [SpaceX's has acquisition of EchoStar's 2 GHz spectrum access rights globally](#).<sup>15</sup> Press releases suggest that SpaceX has plans to deploy the next generation of its Starlink direct-to-device services using the 2 GHz MSS frequencies.<sup>16</sup>
- 2.23 Viasat partnered with Deutsche Telekom in 2015 to utilise Viasat's 2 GHz MSS spectrum for the European Aviation Network (EAN), which combines satellite coverage with terrestrial base stations (Complementary Ground Component (CGC)) to deliver in-flight connectivity across Europe.
- 2.24 Ofcom granted Viasat a CGC licence<sup>17</sup> in 2017, and the EAN service has been operating across several airlines since its launch in 2019.<sup>18</sup>
- 2.25 Under the current licensing framework, to enable Viasat's EAN network, Ofcom also authorises the installation and use of equipment on aircraft, which forms part of MSS operations in the 2GHz band. This is provided for under the Aircraft Radio licences. The Aircraft Radio licence includes specific conditions for the installation and operation of satellite facing terminals and CGC facing terminals onboard the aircraft.
- 2.26 In addition to the licenced MSS use, there has also been some opportunistic short-term use of these frequencies on a secondary basis by PMSE services for low power video links.

## We are considering the future use of the spectrum in the UK after 2027

### July 2025 Call for Input

- 2.27 In July 2025, we [published a Call for Input](#) (CFI) seeking input on the types, and mix, of services that could be authorised in these frequencies in the future in the UK. In this CFI, we focused the questions on the long-term future use of the band. We set out a summary of responses in Section 3.
- 2.28 In addition, we looked to understand how much spectrum is required to provide a good service for potential use cases, and views on the appropriate duration of future authorisations. We also asked stakeholders for input on the importance of alignment with the EU for economies of scale and technical coexistence.

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<sup>15</sup> The [FCC approved the acquisition](#) on 12 May 2026.

<sup>16</sup> [EchoStar response to July 2025 2 GHz MSS CFI](#), [EchoStar Announces Spectrum Sale and Commercial Agreement with SpaceX](#), and [EDGAR Filing Documents for 0001628280-26-036936 – S-1](#)

<sup>17</sup> See paragraphs 2.17-2.19.

<sup>18</sup> [Viasat response to July 2025 2 GHz MSS CFI](#).

## Steps taken by the European Union

- 2.29 In parallel, the European Union is determining its future authorisation approach to enable access to the spectrum, post-May 2027. The EU has published several documents over the past two years<sup>19</sup>:
- a) The [Radio Spectrum Policy Group published its opinion in February 2024](#), outlining the potential applications that could utilise the band, and their associated spectrum needs. It also outlined four allocation scenarios under consideration for the future of the band.
  - b) The [European Commission published a consultation in May 2025](#) on use of the EU 2 GHz MSS frequency band after May 2027. It sought views on potential use cases, capacity requirements and sharing capabilities. It consulted on several options for possible band segmentation, including:
    - i) Two operators, each holding 2x15 MHz bandwidth
    - ii) Three operators, each holding 2x10 MHz bandwidth
    - iii) Three operators, split as 2x15 MHz, 2x10 MHz, and 2x5 MHz
    - iv) Two operators (one holding 2x15 MHz bandwidth, one holding 2x10 MHz bandwidth) and a shared pool of 2x5 MHz.
  - c) [Detecon published a report in June 2025](#) on the current regulatory framework and overview of the satellite connectivity market, outlining key trends and examining ITU regulations on MSS.
- 2.30 On 27 May 2026, the European Commission [set out its proposals](#) for a regulation for the selection and authorisation of MSS providers to use the 2 GHz MSS band in the EU, once the current licences expire in 2027. At a high level, it has proposed to:
- a) Grant a 2-year extension to incumbents, upon request, to continue using the spectrum. During this extension the incumbents' rights of use could not be transferred, leased or sub-leased.
  - b) Establish a centralised EU authorisation – the Commission would be responsible for selection, issuing licences, and overseeing compliance and enforcement.
  - c) Run three distinct selection procedures, with 2x10 MHz available under each procedure: (1) for a secure MSS/hybrid system, (2) for a Commercial MSS system, (3) for a second Commercial MSS system.
  - d) Procedures (1) and (2) above would be open to EU-owned or controlled operators only. Procedure (3) would be open to EU operators or third-country applicants that meet specific security conditions (as set out in the proposal).
  - e) Procedure (1) requires a satellite filing held by EU member state. Procedures (2) and (3) can be operated under an ITU filing (with suitable seniority) held by a third country.

## We are now considering the most appropriate next steps in the UK

- 2.31 In accordance with Ofcom's overarching statutory duties to achieve optimal use of the radio spectrum and promote competition in the interests of citizens and consumers, Ofcom must consider the most appropriate next steps following the expiration of the legislation (the 2010 Regulations), derived from the 2008 EU authorisation framework.

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<sup>19</sup> In addition to these documents, in January 2026 the EU adopted the [Digital Networks Act](#), to modernise and harmonise EU telecoms and connectivity regulations, and encourage cross-border investment.

2.32 There are three broad options:

- i) Upon the expiration of the authorisations, Ofcom could remove any current use and clear the bands. As noted, the 2010 Regulations will no longer have legal effect from 14 May 2027. The authorisations granted under those regulations (including the CGC network licence) also cease to have effect. Ofcom could complete clearance of the band itself, by revoking the Wireless Telegraphy (Mobile Satellite System Equipment) (Exemption) Regulations 2016 (2016 Exemption Regulation). Ofcom could consider afresh the most optimal use of the spectrum bands and consult on specific proposals for the longer term in 2027;
- ii) A sub-option of (a) is to clear the band and leave the spectrum fallow until the future EU framework, service readiness and specifics of expressed demand become more certain – meaning we would likely consult on specific proposals for the longer term at a later date ; or
- iii) Taking account of the current uncertainty around the EU framework, future service readiness and the specifics of expressed demand, Ofcom could consider allowing a temporary extension of existing business usage until there is further clarity on these issues. This could be done using statutory powers under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 to authorise radio spectrum by use of licences and the 2016 Exemption Regulations, which will remain in force after the expiry of the EU authorisation framework.

2.33 Ofcom’s analysis of these three options is set out in more detail in Section 4. We are currently minded to pursue the third option – permitting a temporary extension of existing business use. This would enable ongoing use of the band for MSS to the benefit of consumers, avoiding business disruption during a period of significant uncertainty on the optimal usage and assignments over the long-term.

## Ofcom’s duties

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2.34 The proposals outlined in this document have been developed with regard to our statutory duties and powers in relation to spectrum management, which are set out primarily in the Communications Act 2003 (the “2003 Act”) and the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 (“WTA”). We set these out in detail in Annex 1. This includes our principal duty to further the interests of citizens and consumers in relation to communication matters in relevant markets by promoting competition, where appropriate.<sup>20</sup> In particular, we consider that our proposals on the future allocation of this band will potentially enable major benefits for UK citizens and consumers, including the extension of connectivity to rural, underserved areas.

2.35 Under the WTA, we have a duty to have regard to the extent to which spectrum is available for use, the demand for use and the demand that is likely to arise in future for the use (or further use) for wireless telegraphy.

2.36 We also have a duty to have regard, in particular, to the desirability of promoting efficient management and use of the spectrum for wireless telegraphy, the economic and other benefits that may arise from the use of wireless telegraphy, the development of innovative services, and competition in the provision of electronic communications services.

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<sup>20</sup> Section 3(1) Communications Act 2003.

2.37 In exercising our regulatory functions, we are also required to have regard to the desirability of promoting economic growth. In particular, we must consider the importance for the promotion of economic growth of exercising the regulatory function in a way which ensures that regulatory action is taken only when it is needed, and any action taken is proportionate.

## Structure of this document

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2.38 The structure of this document is as follows:

- **Section 3** provides a summary of the responses to the CFI, alongside our assessment of them and the implications for future access to the 2 GHz MSS band;
- **Section 4** details our analysis of the three broad policy options we have considered regarding the most appropriate approach to authorising the band, post-May 2027.
- **Section 5** sets out our proposals to enable a short-term transitional period of continued access for the incumbents, the authorisation mechanism, and the potential for sharing;
- **Section 6** outlines our initial thinking with regard to the long-term use of the 2 GHz MSS band;
- **Section 7** sets out the next steps upon closure of this consultation

2.39 This consultation also contains the following annexes:

- i) Legal framework
- ii) Impact Assessments
- iii) ITU Satellite Filings considerations
- iv) Responding to this consultation
- v) Consultation principles
- vi) Consultation questions

2.40 We welcome comments and input on our consultation. Deadline for any responses is **5pm on Tuesday 18 August 2026**.

# 3. Consideration of CFI responses and market developments

- 3.1 This section provides a summary of responses to our July 2025 CFI and our analysis of these comments, with respect to both the current and future demand for the spectrum, and the relevant technical requirements.
- 3.2 Alongside this, we consider relevant market and regulatory developments that have helped inform our provisional assessment, and proposals, on use of the 2 GHz MSS band after May 2027.

## Summary of CFI responses

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- 3.3 In July 2025, we published a Call for Input (CFI) that sought input from stakeholders to help shape our proposals for the future use of the 2 GHz MSS band, after the current licence periods expire. We asked specific questions about future demand for the spectrum, bandwidth requirements, deployment timescales and considerations relating to coexistence with the EU.
- 3.4 We received 32 responses to the CFI: 9 non-confidential; 12 partially confidential and 11 fully confidential. Respondents consisted of satellite operators, MNOs, and airlines. All non-confidential responses are available in full on the [Ofcom website](#).
- 3.5 Overall, the responses:
  - a) indicated demand for access to the band, in particular for services such as Direct to Device (D2D), Internet of Things (IoT) and Air to Ground inflight connectivity (ATG);
  - b) were clear that there are potential benefits to regional alignment with the European Union;
  - c) flagged the risk of service disruption for consumers if there is not an alternative authorisation in place for the EAN once the current licence expires; and
  - d) provided differing views on optimal bandwidth allocations and authorisation duration.

## Current and future demand

- 3.6 All stakeholders recognised the importance of this band for satellite services, as it is harmonised globally for such use. Most expressed interest in using the band to enable satellite use cases, including Direct to Device (D2D), Internet of Things (IoT) and inflight connectivity (IFC) services.
- 3.7 Several major players (including Amazon LEO, Space42, and VodafoneThree/AST SpaceMobile, [§<CONFIDENTIAL], and [§<CONFIDENTIAL]) emphasized D2D as a transformative capability for improved connectivity and service. Almost all stakeholders suggested this could enhance the resilience of safety and emergency services communication by providing service where terrestrial mobile is currently unavailable.

- 3.8 Omnispace flagged that major chipset manufacturers have announced product roadmaps based on 3GPP's Release 17+ NTN standards, and major smartphone original equipment manufacturers, such as Samsung and Google, have launched devices that support D2D-MSS on NTN standards. Amazon LEO commented that authorising D2D MSS services in the 2 GHz band in the UK would provide the regulatory clarity that developers and investors need to begin including support for this band in future devices.
- 3.9 IoT was also highlighted as a key potential use case of this spectrum by Sateliot, [§<CONFIDENTIAL], [§<CONFIDENTIAL], and [§<CONFIDENTIAL], who also noted its reliance on NB-IoT and NTN standards for industrial, environmental and public-safety applications.
- 3.10 EchoStar and Sateliot highlighted that the 2 GHz MSS band is also standardised for 5G NB-IoT capabilities (3GPP release 17 and successor standards).
- 3.11 Viasat, [§<CONFIDENTIAL], and [§<CONFIDENTIAL <sup>21</sup>] stressed the importance of maintaining and expanding the European Aviation Network (EAN) for in-flight broadband services, stating that access to the current 2x15 MHz assignment is critical to continue and expand the service. It was also noted that demand for in-flight connectivity is expected to increase over the coming years across the EAN service area.
- 3.12 However, some suggested that In-flight Connectivity (IFC) could be provided by alternative services using other frequencies (such as those services provided via Ka/Ku band spectrum). Viasat and [§<CONFIDENTIAL <sup>22</sup>] said that for the EAN, a transition to alternative equipment could take around three years, and that passengers in EAN-equipped aircraft would lose access to in-flight connectivity services if their authorisation were not renewed beyond May 2027, creating a significant disruption for both European businesses and consumers.
- 3.13 Some stakeholders submitted confidential plans for future use of the band. The maturity of these plans varied, with some operators already using satellites carrying S-band payloads, some planning to launch imminently, and others requiring 3-5 years to develop a service.
- 3.14 EchoStar also suggested the potential use of 2 GHz MSS for public safety and security services, as satellite communications can be vital when terrestrial services are not available due to natural disasters or other network outages.
- 3.15 BT/EE suggested that the band could also be used for terrestrial mobile use in the long-term, but that the greatest benefits from this use would be realised through harmonisation with Europe.<sup>23</sup> The other UK MNOs, VMO2 and Vodafone, both focused on use of the band for D2D services.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> [§<CONFIDENTIAL]

<sup>22</sup> [§<CONFIDENTIAL]

<sup>23</sup> [BT/EE response](#).

<sup>24</sup> [VMO2 CFI response](#) and [Vodafone/AST Space Mobile response](#).

- 3.16 Overall, we assess that there is demand for continued access to the 2 GHz MSS band to support incumbent services.<sup>25,26</sup> We also recognise that there is significant interest in alternative future uses, as above.

## Future authorisation duration and spectrum needs

### Future authorisation duration

- 3.17 Kinéis, Omnispace, and Space42 suggested a license term of at least 15 years to allow satellite operators to make substantial investment to procure and deploy MSS satellites and ground infrastructure.
- 3.18 A majority of respondents recommended licence terms of at least 10 years. Amazon LEO suggested a license term of 10-15 years, to provide certainty for sustained investment and innovation.
- 3.19 Some respondents, such as Sateliot, suggested a licence term of 5–10 years to maintain flexibility and encourage investment, as well as to prevent spectrum hoarding and stagnation.<sup>27</sup>
- 3.20 We recognise that long-term authorisations can provide the regulatory certainty needed for investment in high quality satellite services.

### Bandwidth requirements and spectral efficiency

#### D2D

- 3.21 There did not appear to be consensus among potential D2D users on the minimum spectrum necessary to offer a viable service. Some suggested that 2x5MHz would likely be a minimum requirement for voice, messaging, and some basic data services. Amazon LEO, Eutelsat, Lynx and [§<CONFIDENTIAL] suggested that 2x10 MHz would be a minimum requirement to provide a good service.<sup>28</sup> Others such as EchoStar and Vodafone/AST Space Mobile have suggested that 2x15 MHz may be necessary.<sup>29</sup>
- 3.22 Space42 suggested that no single operator should be assigned more than 2 x10 MHz of the 2 GHz MSS band, in order to maintain consumer choice.
- 3.23 We recognise that each system or constellation is likely to have a unique design. There could therefore be some variation in how many customers an operator can serve, and the quality of service delivered.<sup>30</sup> However, we assess that 2x5MHz is likely to limit a D2D service to messaging and basic data services, with voice likely to be available only where the density of users is low; whereas 2x10MHz will likely provide enough capacity for some voice

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<sup>25</sup> There has also been some opportunistic short-term use of these frequencies by PMSE services. We recently published our [Updated - Call For Input Sector Spectrum Review Programme Making and Special Events \(PMSE\)](#) to seek input on what spectrum demand for PMSE applications could look like in the future and how that demand could be met.

<sup>26</sup> Taking account of responses to our CFI, [information provided to the European Commission's Targeted Consultation on Mobile Satellite Services](#) and other information shared with us on a confidential basis.

<sup>27</sup> [Sateliot response](#).

<sup>28</sup> [Amazon LEO response](#); [Eutelsat response](#); [Lynk Global response](#); [§<CONFIDENTIAL] response.

<sup>29</sup> [EchoStar response](#) and [Vodafone AST SpaceMobile response](#).

<sup>30</sup> The type of service delivered will depend on several factors such as the size and number of satellites, the size and number of satellite beams on each satellite, the size of each satellite beam (and therefore the opportunity for spectrum reuse).

and data services, with 2x15 MHz likely enabling service provision to a larger number of consumers.

## IoT

- 3.24 Respondents indicated that IoT channel requirements were ~250 kHz and said that 1 MHz per operator could allow for several channels; this aligns with the approach taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and by Australia. It was also suggested that IoT services could be supported within the guard bands between the wider bandwidth services.<sup>31</sup>
- 3.25 We note that low bandwidth IoT services require far less spectrum, with operators noting needs of ~1MHz per operator and that these services are more likely to be able to share with each other – and other services.

## IFC

- 3.26 [REDACTED].
- 3.27 We recognise that the EAN has been developed as a 2x15 MHz service and that a reduction in bandwidth might affect service quality.

## Spectral efficiency

- 3.28 The required bandwidth identified by respondents varied between services and operators. We received responses relating to guard bands and coexistence. EchoStar's response referred to the 5G New Radio standard<sup>32</sup> and stated that authorising more than two operators would result in lower spectrum efficiency<sup>33</sup>. Most respondents considered that 3GPP technology would be most applicable to D2D and IoT applications in this band, for which the occupied bandwidth and associated guard bands are defined in the relevant specifications.
- 3.29 Overall, we recognise there will be a trade-off regarding the number of operators we authorise in these frequencies: fewer operators may result in an increase in the quality and availability of each service; however, enabling more operators to access the spectrum could support competition. We discuss this further in Section 6.
- 3.30 We also note the comments regarding guard bands and their alignment with 3GPP standards; we recognise that having multiple guard bands between different users authorised in the band may affect the overall efficiency of the band.

## Coexistence and regional alignment

- 3.31 The majority of respondents stressed the importance of alignment with the EU across the 2 GHz band; noting harmonisation would enable economies of scale, cost efficiencies, interoperability, and reduced risk of interference. Some indicated that global alignment would be more important. Most respondents expressed concerns around the potential for divergent regulatory approaches between the UK and European Union, stating this could lead to operational complexity and increased costs. However, several responses suggested that the UK could have some flexibility around the choice of licensee but that

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<sup>31</sup> See [Lynk Global](#) response.

<sup>32</sup> The minimum channel bandwidth requirement for a single 5G New Radio (NR) carrier is 5 MHz.

<sup>33</sup> EchoStar's response indicated that for a 2x15 MHz block assignment, 6% of the spectrum would be lost to guard band allocation whereas for a 2x5 MHz + 2x10 MHz block assignment, 13% of the spectrum block is lost to guard band allocation.

alignment with the EU around the bandwidth split, and types of services, would still be important for the reasons set out above.

- 3.32 We also received responses from stakeholders on how satellite beam sizes affect cross-border interference scenarios. Amazon LEO, [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] noted that since satellite beams rarely align with national borders, some level of cross-border coordination is unavoidable. Some respondents noted that, while it is technically feasible to separate the UK and EU with beams from NGSO satellites, it is not possible for beams from GSO satellites (which are currently operating in the band), as they have larger footprints.
- 3.33 D2D services were identified by some respondents as being of particular interest in the 2GHz MSS band, to provide mobile coverage in remote areas and some redundancy for terrestrial mobile network outages<sup>34</sup>. Adopting D2D services, if aligned with the EU, could bring additional benefits in avoiding cross-border issues and enable coverage in areas where terrestrial networks are not available (e.g. over the sea).
- 3.34 Myriota considered that alignment with the EU would be unavoidable, noting the parallels in demand between the UK and EU. Other IoT providers, such as Sateliot and [REDACTED], also supported a harmonised approach.
- 3.35 We have noted stakeholder comments on the potential benefits of some degree of alignment between the UK and EU approaches to the future use of this spectrum. In particular, we recognise that:
- a) using MSS for D2D services across Europe would have advantages: it could be simpler than the use of IMT spectrum as it would enable harmonisation of the frequencies, would not require MNOs to forgo bandwidth which could otherwise be used for standard terrestrial mobile services and would reduce the need for cross-border arrangements. However, we also note that user equipment (smartphones with these frequencies enabled) is not yet available.
  - b) authorising the same service(s) and using the same frequency allocations as in Europe could allow satellite operators to benefit from equipment harmonisation. A larger customer base which results from regional harmonisation may increase the viability of a provider's services compared to a UK-only provider, to the extent there are economies of scale. It could also support the development of a device ecosystem.

### **Risk of cross border interference**

- 3.36 We have noted stakeholder responses on the likelihood of interference into services between the UK and EU if different services were authorised, and the need for coordination and technical compromises to address this. As set out in Section 2 and Annex 3, the satellite filings framework determines priority access to these frequencies. Under this framework, there are coordination procedures, and earlier filings ('senior filings') taking priority over newer filings for coordination and protection purposes.

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<sup>34</sup> [Amazon LEO](#), [Vodafone AST SpaceMobile](#) and [EchoStar](#) responses.

## Recent market and regulatory developments

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- 3.37 There is significant interest from satellite operators, MNOs and the wider technology sector in the burgeoning market for providing services which could use 2 GHz MSS spectrum. As a consequence, since the publication of our July 2025 CFI, a number of partnerships, mergers and acquisitions have occurred in this space.
- 3.38 In relation to D2D:
- a) [SpaceX has acquired the spectrum rights to EchoStar’s 2 GHz spectrum access rights globally](#);<sup>35</sup>
  - b) [Starlink has announced a D2D deal with VMO2](#), with the [UK service](#) going live in February 2026;<sup>36</sup>
  - c) [Viasat and Space42 have launched Equatys](#);
  - d) [SES has partnered with Lynk and Omnispace](#);
  - e) [Amazon LEO has proposed to acquire Globalstar](#), with a new agreement with Apple to support the emergency SOS service; and
  - f) [Vodafone and AST SpaceMobile have launched a joint venture](#) - Satellite Connect Europe.
- 3.39 In-flight connectivity has also evolved rapidly with much higher capacity services coming onto the market through the availability of LEO services. Relevant market developments include:
- a) SES has partnered with OneWeb, building on their existing Ku band GSO services.
  - b) Starlink has partnered with [British Airways](#) (as part of its agreement with [IAG](#))<sup>37</sup>, the [Lufthansa Group](#); as well as other airlines such as [Emirates Group](#), the Korean Air group, [Southwest Airlines](#) and [Virgin Atlantic](#).
  - c) Amazon LEO is also seeing airlines sign up for its broadband services (such as [Delta](#) and [Jet Blue](#)).
  - d) In parallel, [Viasat, Türksat and SkyFive Arabia have announced plans to advance inflight connectivity \(IFC\)](#) utilising SkyFive’s ATG network and Viasat’s integrated satellite and CGC network.
- 3.40 We also note that several administrations, including [Canada](#) (ISED), [the United States](#) (FCC), and [France](#) (ARCEP), have recently consulted, or made decisions, on MSS and the use of L- and S-band spectrum.
- 3.41 As outlined in paragraph 2.30, the European Commission has set out its proposals for the 2 GHz MSS band, providing detail on the proposed timings and process.

### Implications of market trends for 2 GHz MSS

- 3.42 The market trends outlined signal significant interest and value in MSS frequencies. This is likely to drive innovation and growth across this sector, which we are keen to encourage. However, there remains uncertainty over the type and scale of potential users of this spectrum, and the timelines of future service availability. This raises questions regarding the

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<sup>35</sup> The [FCC approved the acquisition](#) on 12 May 2026.

<sup>36</sup> [Starlink has also partnered with Deutsche Telekom](#), with plans to launch a D2D service in 2028 across several European markets.

<sup>37</sup> International Airlines Group.

likelihood of the spectrum being usefully used in the short term, as well as prospects for future competition.

- 3.43 Market developments also show that alternative frequencies could be used to offer the types of services which have been identified as potential use cases for 2 GHz MSS<sup>38</sup>:
- D2D services using MSS bands: There is currently around 115 MHz of L-band and S-band licence exempt spectrum (in addition to the 60 MHz of 2 GHz MSS spectrum). These other MSS bands may be capable of exerting a competitive constraint on a D2D player using 2 GHz MSS. We have observed new D2D entrants acquiring incumbent MSS spectrum access rights to provide D2D services – such as SpaceX’s acquisition of EchoStar’s 2 GHz MSS spectrum access rights, and Amazon LEO’s proposed acquisition of Globalstar. These developments suggest that the marketplace can react to demand, and competitors can emerge through acquisition.
  - D2D services using IMT bands: Ofcom has recently enabled D2D providers to use sub-3 GHz FDD<sup>39</sup> and SDL<sup>40</sup> mobile spectrum in the UK. Use of this spectrum for D2D requires satellite operators to partner with MNOs, and a willingness of MNOs to relinquish spectrum from use for terrestrial mobile services to D2D. We have seen such partnerships emerging (for example, VMO2/Starlink and VodafoneThree/AST Space Mobile). Currently, most partnerships use only 2x5 MHz of spectrum. However, were 2 GHz MSS to be authorised for (some) D2D use, the bandwidth used for D2D in IMT spectrum could be increased as a competitive response to D2D use in 2 GHz MSS.<sup>41</sup>
  - IoT services and other frequencies. Our provisional view is that there are bands other than 2 GHz MSS available for IoT use. For example, 136-137 MHz and 399.9-403 MHz, and SRD bands (862-870 MHz). There is also potential for additional of mid-band spectrum to become available for IoT subject to the outcome of WRC-27.
  - In-flight connectivity services can be supplied using a number of different technologies, including satellite connectivity. The technologies currently available are (i) satellite-based connectivity in Ka or Ku band; (ii) ATG connectivity such as 4G/5G/LTE; and (iii) hybrid systems that use both satellite and ATG connectivity, such as the EAN. The UK’s Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) examined the in-flight connectivity industry in its Viasat / Inmarsat merger inquiry.<sup>42</sup> It found that ATG and satellite-based services compete in the same economic market. This view is supported by recent market developments, which show a recent satellite-based entrant into this segment (Starlink) winning customers from incumbents.
  - Terrestrial mobile services: a large amount of spectrum in the UK below 3 GHz has been licensed to UK MNOs on a nationwide basis. These frequencies are being used to provide mobile services within the UK. Details of the specific spectrum holding for each MNO can be found on our website.<sup>43</sup> This indicates that alternative bands are available for providing

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<sup>38</sup> Noting that there has also been some opportunistic short-term use of these frequencies by PMSE services, we discuss PMSE spectrum usage and demand in our recent [Call for Input – Sector Spectrum Review: Programme Making and Special Events \(PMSE\)](#).

<sup>39</sup> Frequency Division Duplex

<sup>40</sup> Supplementary Downlink

<sup>41</sup> Partnerships offering both wholesale services and retail services (such as Vodafone/AST Space Mobile) and the Satellite Connect Europe JV may have stronger incentive to respond in this manner.

<sup>42</sup> CMA Viasat/Inmarsat merger [inquiry](#).

<sup>43</sup> Frequency allocations: [mobile and wireless broadband below 5 GHz](#).

mobile services by MNOs. However, we accept that demand for mobile data continues to grow and utilisation of these bands may also increase.

- 3.44 In conclusion, we assess that continued access to the 2GHz MSS spectrum by incumbents is unlikely to prevent the deployment of new services during an interim period. This reduces the risk that continued access to the spectrum by incumbents will unduly hinder competition or innovation. Trials, trading and other commercial arrangements could also create opportunities for more intensive spectrum use during this interim period, if national regulations permit spectrum access in these circumstances.

### **Implications of international regulatory developments for 2 GHz MSS in the UK**

- 3.45 We note that due to ongoing developments internationally, there is some uncertainty around the future use of the band globally – beyond the UK and Europe.
- 3.46 Given our proximity to the EU, we think it is important to gain greater clarity on the EU authorisation approach when considering proposals for the longer-term UK approach. We think we will be better able to take a view on this when the European Council and European Parliament have completed their considerations of the European Commission’s recent proposals.

## **Provisional assessment of implications for optimal use of the band beyond May 2027**

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- 3.47 We have considered the responses received to the CFI, along with broader market and regulatory developments, in line with our statutory duties and powers in relation to spectrum management.
- 3.48 Overall, we assess that:
- a) There is immediate demand from the current authorised users and their customers to continue service provision beyond 13 May 2027;
  - b) There is significant interest from several services, for access to this spectrum in the medium term, in particular for D2D services given the expectation that new smartphones will have capability to use this spectrum soon;
  - c) It is likely that some level of alignment between the UK and EU approaches would be beneficial to support coexistence, provide for economies of scale and reduced operational complexity – potentially enabling higher quality of service across all areas, including border areas, at lower cost;
  - d) The international framework for use of this and related bands is evolving – with the future EU approach not yet determined and potential global changes on the agenda for WRC-27;
  - e) There has been significant change in the market over the past few years – with an increasing number of mergers, acquisitions (of companies and/or spectrum access assets), and joint ventures - creating uncertainty over the type and scale of potential users of this spectrum, and the timelines of future service availability.
- 3.49 In view of the above, and in particular the interaction between (b) and (c) – i.e. the potential for benefits being realised by aligning with the EU approach, but the detail of that approach not yet being confirmed - we provisionally consider that optimal spectrum use over the near and longer term would be best enabled by:

- a) in the near term, authorising the current users to continue to have access to this spectrum ;
- b) enabling others to access this spectrum during the transitional period, where this would not be expected to cause undue interference to existing licensees' services, given the potential benefits of enabling additional spectrum use and innovation; and
- c) confirming the longer-term UK approach once we are able to have a better understanding of the EU's direction and the potential benefits of some degree of alignment.

3.50 We will discuss our proposals for (a) further in Sections 4 and 5.

3.51 Noting the evidence laid out in this section, in Section 6 we set out some options regarding how we could approach to authorising this band beyond the end of this temporary period.

## 4. UK authorisation options beyond 13 May 2027

- 4.1 This section sets out our analysis of the three policy options (paragraph 2.32) available to us once the 2008 EU authorisation framework expires on 13 May 2027.
- 4.2 We have considered the potential benefits and disadvantages of all the options and consider option three to be the most suitable approach moving forward.

### Option one: clear the band of its current use and move forward with long-term authorisation proposals in 2027

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- 4.3 The first option we have considered is to completely remove the current use<sup>44</sup> from the 2 GHz MSS band – essentially clearing the band. As noted in Section 2, the 2010 Regulations will no longer have legal effect from 14 May 2027. Therefore, the licences granted under those regulations (including the CGC network licence granted to Viasat) will also cease to have effect. Ofcom could revoke the 2016 Exemption Regulations, therefore completing clearance of the band.
- 4.4 Ofcom would develop proposals for the future long-term use of the band, taking our statutory duties into account, in 2027. This would include proposals on how to award and authorise the spectrum.

#### Ofcom assessment

- 4.5 Given the band’s MSS allocation in the Radio Regulations and its use globally for these services, it is our expectation that it will continue to be used as such in the UK. However, there is still some uncertainty at a European level as to whom, and how, the spectrum rights in the EU should be awarded for the longer-term. Given that MSS are international in nature since satellite beams usually transmit over multiple jurisdictions, and business models are dependent on consumer usage over wide geographic areas, proceeding with a UK only long-term approach at this time may increase the likelihood of cross-border interference issues or missed potential benefits.
- 4.6 As discussed in Section 3, the viability and timeline of new service provision remains uncertain – responses to our CFI highlighted a variation in maturity of alternative, future services. This uncertainty, coupled with the immediate demand from current authorised users and their customers to continue service provision, suggests that clearing the band and starting afresh from 2027 may not be the best approach as it could leave the spectrum unused or inefficiently used, and result in disruption to existing business use.
- 4.7 We also note that the EC has just published its proposals for its approach to long-term authorisations in the band – this approach is yet to be finalised and subject to change. As set out in Section 3, we think we will be better able to take a view on this when the

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<sup>44</sup> In this document we use terms such as current use, current users, authorised users, existing users and incumbent licensees to refer specifically to EchoStar and Viasat.

European Council and European Parliament have completed their considerations of the European Commission's recent proposals, and we can more effectively consider the benefits of some degree of alignment with the EU.

## Option two: clear the band of its current use and leave the spectrum unused until we have more certainty

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- 4.8 The second option we have considered is to clear the band of existing uses and leave the spectrum largely unused until the future EU framework, service readiness and the specifics of expressed demand become more certain. As with option one, we would look to revoke the 2016 Regulations to complete the clearance of the band once the 2010 Regulations, and any authorisations granted under them, cease to have legal effect. We would likely make proposals for the longer term UK authorisation approach at a later date, compared with option one.

### Ofcom assessment

- 4.9 We consider that this would be an inefficient and sub-optimal use of the spectrum and would not align with our statutory duties – particularly given that it is possible to achieve usage of the spectrum over the short-term by continuing existing use.
- 4.10 Clearing the band prior to making proposals for any future long-term use would require incumbent operators and service providers to cease operations in the band immediately upon 14 May 2027, absent any transitional measures. This would result in disruption to ongoing commercial activities, could result in abrupt loss of service for existing UK consumers, and is inconsistent with Ofcom's duty to further the interests of citizens and consumers by securing the availability of communications services.
- 4.11 Taken together, these impacts suggest that immediate clearance of the band without appropriate transitional arrangements or replacement authorisations would likely give rise to material adverse effects for both industry and consumers.

## Option three: a short-term extension for authorised users

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- 4.12 The third option we have considered takes account of the current uncertainty around the EU framework, service readiness and specifics of expressed demand. Under this option, we could consider allowing a temporary (short-term) extension of the existing business usage until there is further clarity on these issues.
- 4.13 This temporary extension could be authorised using the statutory powers under the WTA 2006 to authorise the radio spectrum by use of licences and exemptions, which would still remain in place after the expiry of the 2008 EU authorisation framework.

### Ofcom assessment

- 4.14 We currently consider this to be the best option because it will enable a continuation of spectrum use and continued alignment for incumbent services across the region, whilst also allowing Ofcom more time to consider the developments with the EU framework, service readiness across the market, and the specifics of expressed demand.

- 4.15 It is possible for Ofcom to continue with a package of authorisations under the WTA, which would have the effect of reflecting the current spectrum usage rights, enabling a continuation of current spectrum use by businesses which depends on the availability of this band. As part of this we believe it could be beneficial to also allow other parties to access these frequencies on a time-limited basis, where possible, provided that this does not cause undue interference to existing licensees' use of the spectrum.
- 4.16 Specifically, and as set out in Section 3, a short-term extension would (i) mitigate business disruption and adverse effects on consumers, (ii) allow Ofcom to monitor market and service developments and (iii) enable Ofcom to consider the potential benefits of some degree of alignment with the EU's long-term approach in our future proposals.
- 4.17 The proposed extended access for incumbents would be without prejudice to our future decisions on use of this band, and would not provide any guarantee of continued access beyond the end of the authorisation period.
- 4.18 In the next section, we set out our proposals for a short-term extension for incumbent users.

**Question 1:** Do you have any views on the options for managing the 2 GHz MSS band after 13 May 2027? Are there any options that Ofcom has overlooked?

**Question 2:** Do you agree with our proposal for a short-term transition period, which authorises Viasat and EchoStar? Please set out your reasoning.

# 5. Proposals for short-term authorisation of 2GHz MSS from 14 May 2027

5.1 In this section we set out, for consultation, proposals for a short-term transitional interim approach for the authorisation of 2 GHz MSS after 13 May 2027, including alternative options. We would welcome all comments and views on these options.

5.2 We are proposing:

- to **extend access to the spectrum for the incumbents (Viasat and EchoStar) in the UK**, under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006;
- a **short-term authorisation for incumbents for 3 – 5 years**, during which period we would bring forward proposals for the longer-term use of the spectrum thereafter;
- A **package of authorisations that will enable the continuation of business use of the band**, until long-term authorisation decisions are made; and
- options to **enable greater sharing and use of the spectrum** during the short-term transitional period.

## Timeframe for interim authorisation duration

5.3 We are considering two timeframes for the proposed short-term authorisation, both of which would commence immediately upon the expiry of the existing framework:

- a) **Option one**: a three-year fixed period
- b) **Option two**: a five-year fixed period.

5.4 It is important to note that any extended access for incumbents does not guarantee continued access beyond the end of the extension. However, in future Ofcom might exceptionally propose a further two-year extension if we determined this would be appropriate, based on a number of factors, including the progress of a consultation on the long-term authorisation of the spectrum and any material developments in regional policy, technical standards, market demand or service readiness.

5.5 Our current preference is for option one (three years) as we believe this approach allows for greater flexibility and in principle could enable a nearer-term decision on our longer-term approach.

## Option one: Short-term authorisation period of three years

5.6 We propose to provide a short-term authorisation period for incumbents for an initial fixed period of three years.

5.7 We consider that a minimum three-year authorisation period for existing incumbents would ensure continuity of existing services whilst also allowing enough time for migration planning, where relevant. It would also ensure that the spectrum does not lie fallow upon the expiration of the existing authorisation framework, whilst Ofcom continues to assess emerging evidence on potential future, alternative uses, including D2D and IoT.

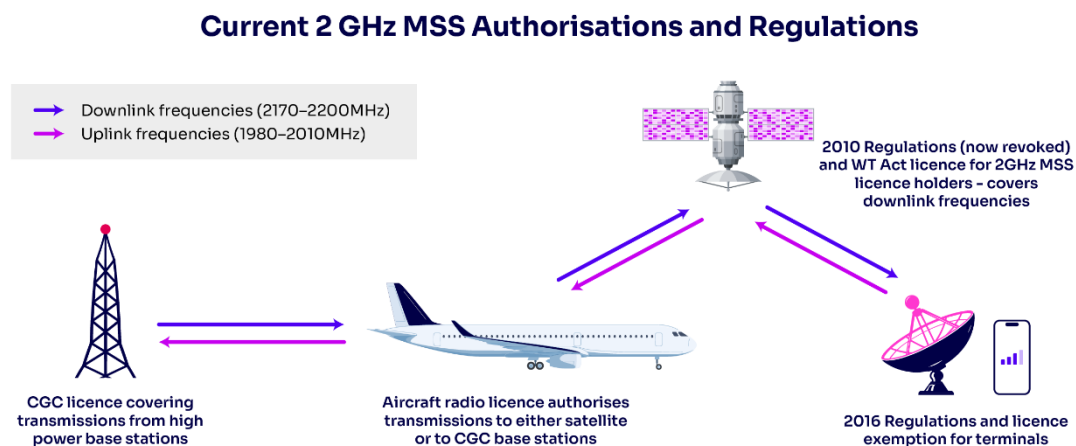
- 5.8 This option would also enable Ofcom to respond more quickly in introducing the longer-term framework, should there be material developments in regional policy, technical standards, market demand or service readiness. A shorter initial authorisation period of three years may therefore be appropriate where there is an expectation that greater clarity on future use could emerge within that timeframe. We recognise that there may still be uncertainty for long-term use of the band following a three-year period. However, we believe this is unlikely, due to the level of innovation in the market.

#### **Option two: Short-term authorisation period of five years**

- 5.9 An alternative option is to provide a short-term extension for incumbents for a fixed-term period of five years. A longer transition period could provide greater regulatory certainty for existing operators, while allowing sufficient time for developing satellite services and related markets to mature. However, a longer transitional period also increases the period during which prospective alternative users might be denied access to the band. This could, to some extent, be mitigated if alternative operators are granted access to the spectrum during the transition period.

## Proposed package of authorisations to continue existing business use

- 5.10 As set out in Section 2, the current authorisation framework is made up of several components, including spectrum access authorisations, CGC network licences and WTA licence exemption regulations. For ease of reference, Figure 2 below provides a visual of the current framework in the band.



**Figure 2: Current authorisation framework for the 2 GHz MSS band**

- 5.11 Given the approaching expiry of the existing framework, we have considered several authorisation options to enable continued use of the spectrum for the incumbent users.
- 5.12 We are proposing a package of authorisations that reflect, as closely as possible, those granted under the 2008 EU authorisation framework. These authorisations would be granted under the WTA; more detail on this can be found in Annex 1.

## Our proposed approach to authorisations for the interim period

- 5.13 We are proposing that this package will be made up of:
- a) **The Wireless Telegraphy (Mobile Satellite Service equipment) (Exemption) Regulations 2016** – we would look to make slight amendments to these to:
    - i) Clarify the frequencies on which the equipment can connect to the relevant satellite network; and
    - ii) Remove references to EU legislation or the 2010 Regulations.
  - b) **The Aircraft Radio licence** – enabling the continuation of the installation, establishment, and use of 2 GHz equipment on board aircraft supporting the EAN. No changes to the existing licence would be required; and
  - c) **A licence (or licences) to replace the existing CGC Network licence** for ground-based equipment transmitting to the aircraft – this would be available to both operators. We propose to include a fixed expiry date of the licence, in line with any timeframe for the transitional period.
- 5.14 To phase out the authorisations we would take action to revoke the 2016 Exemption Regulations at the end of the relevant period.

## We have considered an alternative approach to authorisation

### Satellite Operator licence authorising both network of terminals and CGC base stations

- 5.15 Alternatively, we have also considered the mechanism of granting a licence to operators. Under the WTA Ofcom has a wide discretion in granting a licence. We can grant a licence subject to such terms, provisions and limitations as we think fit, if they are objectively justifiable, proportionate, transparent and do not unduly discriminate. We set out the legal framework for granting authorisation via a licence in Annex 1.
- 5.16 Under this option, we would create a new stand-alone licence, held by the satellite operator(s), authorising user terminals and deployment of CGC base stations connecting the satellite network.<sup>45</sup> We would look to make this licence tradeable, to encourage competition and ensure optimal use of the spectrum. The workability of this option is, however, dependent on the nature of the end user terminal.
- 5.17 We would propose to grant this authorisation via an exclusive licence to the satellite operators currently authorised to use the spectrum, EchoStar and Viasat. While this may amount to a departure from the process we would usually adopt for the grant of a licence, we have come to the preliminary view that there are exceptional circumstances that justify the grant of an exclusive licences in order to ensure the avoidance of inefficient use of the spectrum.
- 5.18 This new licence product would set out suitable conditions for the uplink transmission from user terminals to the satellite, and protection requirements for co-channel and adjacent channel users. We would also propose to add a licence schedule containing the necessary technical and non-technical conditions to enable the deployment, or continued deployment, of, a CGC network. However further details on the nature and operational control of the end user terminals would be required before we could make a final determination as to whether a licence, rather than an exemption, would ultimately be the correct approach.
- 5.19 Under this option, we would look to revoke the 2016 Regulations from the date of implementation. Instead, the user terminals would be authorised directly under the licence framework. Additionally, we would propose to include a fixed expiry date of the licence, in line with any timeframe for the transitional period. As set out above, Ofcom might exceptionally propose a further two-year extension if we determined this would be appropriate, based on a number of factors, including the progress of a consultation on the long-term authorisation of the spectrum and any material developments in regional policy, technical standards, market demand or service.

## Fees

- 5.20 Ofcom has clear and well-established policy principles regarding spectrum licence fees to ensure the optimal use of the radio spectrum.<sup>46</sup> In situations when Ofcom determines that a cost-based fee would not result in excess demand for licensed spectrum, we set a cost-based licence fee. Cost-based fees are intended to ensure that Ofcom's expenses for processing and managing spectrum licenses are covered by the licensee.

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<sup>45</sup> The separate Aircraft Radio Licence authorisation would also remain in place.

<sup>46</sup> See Ofcom's [SRSP: A revised framework for Spectrum Pricing \(2010\)](#).

- 5.21 Where setting cost-based fees would result in excess demand, Ofcom applies Administered Incentive Pricing (AIP) to spectrum licences to reflect its opportunity cost. AIP encourages users to think carefully about their spectrum needs and incentivises use by the highest value user, thereby ensuring the optimal use of the spectrum.<sup>47</sup> This in turn promotes economic efficiency, as is set out in Ofcom’s spectrum pricing principles.<sup>48</sup>
- 5.22 We consider there are two approaches we could take regarding fees during the interim period.

### Option one: Retain the existing fee framework

- 5.23 In line with our proposal to continue authorising existing users under a framework that is broadly consistent with the current arrangements, one option would be to maintain the existing fee structure. Under this approach, the CGC Network Licence fee would continue to be set as it is now, under provisions in the Wireless Telegraphy (Licence Charges) Regulations 2020 – with no substantive changes. Licence exempt use would be free of charge, as now.
- 5.24 This option would support continuity for existing users and would be consistent with our broader aim of minimising changes to the current framework during a transitional period.

### Option two: Waive CGC licence fee for the duration of the interim authorisation

- 5.25 Alternatively, we recognise there have been significant market changes over time and there is currently uncertainty regarding the long-term future use of the band, such that the opportunity cost is uncertain. Since the opportunity cost of the spectrum is the basis of a licence fee when there is excess demand, there is also uncertainty over the appropriate level of the fee. We acknowledge that uncertainty over the opportunity cost of a resource is not unusual. However, in this case, we consider the uncertainty is non-trivial and will be resolved in the short to medium term.
- 5.26 In light of these considerations, an alternative option would be to waive the fees associated with the CGC for the duration of the interim authorisation. This could support a smoother transition to a long-term framework during a period of uncertainty.

## Maximising spectrum efficiency and enabling innovation during the transitional arrangements

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- 5.27 In line with our duties to enable optimal use of spectrum, promote competition, support the interests of UK consumers, and encourage growth and innovation, we are keen to enable others to access this spectrum during the transitional period proposed. This would be conditional on this additional spectrum access not being expected to cause undue interference to the existing licensees’ services. Whilst MSS services cannot easily share

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<sup>47</sup> Where there is excess demand for spectrum, one of the market-based approaches we take is Administered Incentive Pricing. The AIP approach to spectrum pricing is to set fees at market value, or equivalently at the opportunity cost of the spectrum, to replicate the price signal licensees would receive in a well-functioning market for spectrum. If a licensee is not the highest value user of the spectrum (i.e. its private valuation is below market value and hence below the licence fee), it should have an incentive to relinquish some or all of its spectrum holdings. This means the spectrum is made available to the highest-value user, either through trading or reallocation by Ofcom. See Ofcom’s recent [Review of Ofcom’s market-based approach to mobile spectrum management](#) (2024) for further details.

<sup>48</sup> See Ofcom’s [SRSP \(Strategic Review of Spectrum Pricing\) Statement](#).

spectrum in a given location at a given time, there may be scope for spectrum access. This could include partial spectrum access, such as in a defined geographic area at specified times, or in a subset of frequencies.

- 5.28 Whilst the current CGC licence does enable concurrent trading of the licence (this means that the licensee must remain named on the licence itself, but in the case of joint ventures, a second licensee can be added), it does not provide a mechanism for other types of sharing such as leasing and partial trading (e.g. for some frequencies or areas). The licence exemption only authorises spectrum access by terminals for the named parties.
- 5.29 Earlier stage access to this spectrum for research, development and trials can be requested through our [Innovation and trial licensing](#) framework. This offers quick, inexpensive access to spectrum for a range of innovation-related activities including some consumer trials. However, we recognise that some companies might wish to operate commercial services during the transitional period, such as offering larger scale 'beta' trial services, which is not permitted within the Innovation and Trial licensing framework. We also recognise that some might wish to have greater certainty around the interference environment than is provided by the non-interference non-protection basis of Innovation and Trial licences.
- 5.30 Accordingly, we are considering how we could enable this kind of activity during the transitional period, without prejudice to future decisions on the band use. We are seeking views on two different approaches we could take:
- i) Option one – Ofcom could directly licence additional users for a specified time period, provided this would not be expected to cause undue interference. This approach would be similar to the [Local Access licences](#) which we currently issue to enable local use of mobile spectrum where this is agreed by the relevant Mobile Network Operator; or
  - ii) Option two – if we continue to licence exempt authorised terminals held by named companies, we could amend the exemption regulations to also name the additional companies and relevant frequencies.
- 5.31 Subject to stakeholder views, we plan to consult on specific proposals for this authorisation mechanism later this year, once we have taken a decision on the primary authorisation approach for the 2 GHz MSS band.

**Question 3:** Do you agree with our preferred option for the duration of the proposed interim authorisation to be a three-year fixed period? Please set out your reasoning.

**Question 4:** Do you agree that our proposed approach to authorise continued use of the spectrum during the interim authorisation period through a CGC licence, licence exemption, and Aircraft Radio licence? If not, please set out your reasoning and alternative suggestions.

**Question 5:** Do you have any comments on the alternative approach we have considered, of licensing the satellite operators to use 2 GHz MSS during the interim authorisation period? If you have a preference for this approach, please set out your reasoning.

**Question 6:** What are your views on the approach Ofcom should take to fees for the interim authorisation period? Please set out your reasoning and provide evidence where appropriate.

**Question 7:** Do you agree with our proposals to enable additional users to access the spectrum during the interim period? If yes, do you have a preference for how we should enable other users during the short-term extension period? Please set out your reasoning.

**Question 8:** Do you have any other views on the details of our proposal to authorise Viasat and EchoStar during the interim period?

# 6. Further considerations regarding longer term future allocations

- 6.1 In this section we set out our provisional thinking regarding the long-term future use of the 2 GHz band. We will continue to monitor developments in the market as well as regulatory developments, in particular in Europe. These insights will help determine how we evolve our approach, which will be in line with our legal duties and the principles laid out in this document.
- 6.2 In this section we set out a framework for assessing which long-term approaches will meet our duties. Next, we outline some of the potential trade-offs that we will need to consider when determining the number of spectrum users in the band, and more broadly our long-term authorisation approach. Finally, we consider the potential implications for fees in our long-term decision.

## Framework for assessing which long-term approach will meet our duties

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- 6.3 As with our short-term approach, in considering the long-term future use of the 2 GHz MSS band, Ofcom must have regard to our duties, as discussed in Section 2.
- 6.4 We have taken the following key factors into consideration when developing our initial thinking around the future options for the band:
- a) Whether the proposed spectrum allocation provides **sufficient bandwidth** for each provider to offer an **economically viable service** that provides value to consumers (for example, whether voice, messaging, and data can be supported, and to how many users).
  - b) The impact of the need to ensure coexistence with existing GSO and NGSO systems, in line **with ITU filing priorities**, on the services that the newly authorised providers can offer.<sup>49</sup>
  - c) **Any overall capacity loss from the spectrum allocation** (for example, by necessitating the creation of guard bands, which could reduce overall spectrum efficiency).
  - d) Whether the proposed allocation is able to **achieve broader benefits from synergies with an EU authorisation**<sup>50</sup> (by enabling a pan-European service or generating additional economies of scale, to the benefit of UK users) (see Section 3 for more detail).

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<sup>49</sup> See Annex 3 for more detail on ITU satellite filings. A new operator with a lower priority filing may need to make compromises on the bandwidth that they can use or the coverage that they can offer to coordinate with the higher priority filing. This is primarily relevant to cross-border/international considerations for coexistence and is particularly relevant to GSO satellites, and NGSO satellites with larger beam footprints.

<sup>50</sup> See Section 2 for a high-level summary of the European Commission's proposals.

- e) **The impact on competition.** The relevance of different spectrum allocations on competition will depend in part on whether there are competitive constraints from other services using 2 GHz MSS ('in-band' constraints) and whether there are alternative spectrum frequencies which are being or could be used to exert a competitive constraint.
  - f) Whether the proposed spectrum allocation **supports growth and encourages investment and innovation.** For example, this might come about if the allocation enabled new and innovative services.
- 6.5 Some of these factors may involve trade-offs. For example, dividing up the band to allow more players to use the spectrum may limit the maximum bandwidth available for individual services and necessitate guard bands, reducing overall spectrum efficiency, but in some circumstances could have a beneficial impact on competition.

## Trade-offs involved in authorising different numbers of spectrum users

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- 6.6 We set out in the next section a range of different long-term authorisation approaches which Ofcom could take in the future. Some of these approaches have implications for the number of providers which might use the band. There are advantages and disadvantages from having different numbers of operators, which we discuss below.
- 6.7 As set out in Section 3, spectrum allocations may have an impact on the quality of the types of services that can be offered. Responses to the CFI signalled that there does not appear to be consensus among potential users on the minimum amount of spectrum necessary to offer a viable service for D2D. We assess that 2x5 MHz is likely to limit a D2D service to messaging and basic data services, with voice available only where the density of users is low; whereas 2x10 MHz to 2x15 MHz will likely provide enough capacity for some D2D voice and data services to a larger number of consumers (see paragraph 3.23). IFC services currently use 2 x15 MHz in this band and responses to the CFI told us that 2x15 MHz would be required to support future IFC services (see paragraphs 3.11 and 3.27).
- 6.8 Authorising more providers in the band could better support competition in some circumstances but could also reduce both individual and overall capacity for services. This is because enabling several providers<sup>51</sup>, would likely necessitate guard bands between each provider, creating an efficiency loss.<sup>52</sup> However, there may be an offsetting benefit if some of this lost capacity could be used by other players, such as IoT providers in the guard bands, which would allow additional/innovative services to use the band.
- 6.9 We have also considered a hypothetical single provider scenario. This situation might arise if we were to licence exempt the whole band (2x30MHz) as this would be likely to favour the satellite operator with the highest priority ITU satellite filings. A single provider would

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<sup>51</sup> An IoT spectrum park has been proposed by ACMA in Australia and CST in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It was also considered under the Detecon report. In an IoT spectrum park 5 MHz would be allocated to IoT providers. Users could either simply be allocated 1MHz channels each and/or share channels on a time-shared basis, noting IoT terminals tend to have very low duty cycles, transmitting data infrequently e.g. once a week or once a day.

<sup>52</sup> EchoStar's response indicated that for a 2x15 MHz block assignment, 6% of the spectrum would be lost to guard band allocation whereas for a 2x5 MHz + 2x10 MHz block assignment, 13% of the spectrum block is lost to guard band allocation.

likely not need guard bands within-band, and so provided they had sufficient demand for their services, they would be able to maximise capacity for services in the short term. However, authorising a single provider may raise competition concerns, unless alternative frequencies are available to deliver the services. Similarly, allocating the band to a single provider may mean the spectrum is only used for one type of service. This could be problematic unless alternative frequencies are available for the other services. Our provisional assessment is that there are other spectrum bands available for each of the four use cases which we provisionally consider could be delivered using 2 GHz MSS. However, it is currently unclear how strong a competitive constraint services using these alternative frequencies might pose on a hypothetical single user of 2 GHz MSS spectrum.

- 6.10 Overall, it appears that continuing to authorise two operators each holding 2 x 15 MHz allocation would effectively balance spectrum efficiency, capacity for D2D/IFC type services, and competition, with scope for IoT access to guard bands. However, authorising three operators each holding 2 x 10 MHz allocation might enable other benefits, in particular in terms of potential synergy with the EU and upsides to in-band competition.

## Potential long-term authorisation approaches

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- 6.11 We anticipate that there will be more demand than the available spectrum, and so Ofcom will have to choose an authorisation approach which excludes some potential users. There are several approaches that Ofcom could adopt, each with advantages and disadvantages. These include:
- a) **Minimal intervention (ITU filings-led approach)** – opening the band to those who meet the conditions of a general licence exemption authorisation. This approach would favour the satellite operator(s) with the highest priority ITU filings.<sup>53</sup>
  - b) **Retain status quo but introduce scope for trading** – extend the existing two licensees' authorisations for the longer term with tradeable licences and allow the market to determine the appropriate use and users of the spectrum longer term (for example, through mergers and acquisitions or spectrum trading).
  - c) **A UK-led approach, which may include a competitive award** – enabling access for multiple operators via a UK authorisation framework. This approach would also need to consider the channel split (which we anticipate would most likely either authorise two operators utilising 2x15 MHz, or three operators utilising 2x10 MHz).
  - d) **Alignment with the EC decision** – this may take different flavours; for example, authorising the same bandwidth allocations, authorising the same types of services, or authorising one or more of the same operators in the same bandwidths.
- 6.12 Below, we set out a high-level initial appraisal of these approaches, based on the framework set out above. We compare the benefits and costs of these approaches in light of our duties, and in particular with regard to the optimal use of spectrum and competition.
- 6.13 Given the current uncertainties around the EU framework, service readiness, and specifics of expressed demand, it is uncertain which of these approaches is likely to best meet our

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<sup>53</sup> Under the ITU Radio Regulations, a new operator would be required to coordinate with any higher priority filings. A coordination agreement is a bilateral arrangement that may comprise a commercial arrangement, compromises on the bandwidth that they can use or an agreement on geographic service area. Those holding higher priority filings are also expected to coordinate in good faith. See Annex 3 for further details.

duties in the long-term. As these uncertainties ease, it will become clearer which authorisation approach is most appropriate.

- 6.14 We are interested in understanding respondents' views on which allocations may be most appropriate in the longer-term, and the trade-offs we outline below. We are also interested in stakeholders' views on these trade-offs, as well as the uncertainties. This will inform our decision regarding the appropriate long-term authorisation approach in the future.

## **Option A – Minimal intervention (ITU filings-led approach)**

- 6.15 In this scenario, the band would in theory be open to any operator with a satellite filing containing these frequencies, subject to coordination in accordance with the ITU Radio Regulations and an appropriate licence exemption for terminals. As the MSS satellites would be operating to handsets using low power omnidirectional antennas, we might expect that a single provider (likely that with the highest priority filing) could seek to make use of the full bandwidth.
- 6.16 As an example, having a single D2D provider could maximise capacity for D2D services, and might allow for higher capacity D2D services to be delivered in this band. However, it would prevent in-band competition from another D2D player. This risk is somewhat mitigated by the fact that other satellite operators holding MSS frequencies are planning to deploy D2D services, and that D2D services can be supplied using L band or IMT spectrum in the UK. However, none of the current L band operators have 2 x 30 MHz of contiguous spectrum available, which may have a bearing on the strength of their competitive constraint.
- 6.17 This approach would align the UK framework with ITU filing priorities.<sup>54</sup> In practice, we expect the authorised UK provider would correspond to the highest-priority filing holder, reducing the need for complex coordination between operators, and mitigating potential inefficiencies that may arise where access depends on coordination agreement with that rights holder.<sup>55</sup>
- 6.18 This approach would not be aligned with the European Commission's proposals, and so the synergies which might arise from alignment would not be captured from this approach. There is also a risk of cross-border interference for both the UK and EU, from not being aligned.

## **Option B – Retain status quo but introduce scope for trading**

- 6.19 Under this approach, we would continue to authorise the incumbent operators after the short-term extension period has expired but make the long-term licences (each for 2 x 15 MHz) tradeable.
- 6.20 It is unclear whether the incumbents will be the optimal users of the spectrum in the long-term, given the potential demand we have seen to use this spectrum in the future as well as recent market dynamics. However, it is possible that spectrum trading and/or acquisitions could occur to ensure that the spectrum is ultimately used by firms best able to make the

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<sup>54</sup> In general, we tend to reinforce the ITU framework with our satellite authorisation framework, recognising that satellite services rely on global markets and typically need the certainty that comes with internationally agreed regulations.

<sup>55</sup> A new operator with a lower priority filing may need to make compromises on the bandwidth that they can use or the coverage that they can offer in order to coordinate with the higher priority filing.

most valuable use of it.<sup>56</sup> There is some evidence that market mechanisms could deliver good outcomes, as satellite operators have recently used acquisition and joint ventures as a means to enter new markets to deploy D2D services (for example, as SpaceX's acquisition of EchoStar's 2 GHz MSS spectrum access rights and Amazon LEO's proposed acquisition of Globalstar, and the launch of Satellite Connect Europe).

- 6.21 Since the European Commission is proposing a bandwidth split of three lots of 2x10 MHz, this proposal would not automatically align services by bandwidth, and it is uncertain whether the future-awarded parties in the EU would be the same as in the UK even if licences were tradable. If the EU's approach differed then we would risk not capturing the benefits of alignment, with the associated risk of inefficiencies associated with the need to avoid cross-border interference.

## Option C - UK-led process

- 6.22 An alternative approach is to run an independent UK-led process, which may include a competitive award (such as a beauty contest or an auction). Arguments in favour of running a UK competitive award include:
- a) the strong interest expressed in response to the 2025 CFI for access to these frequencies; and
  - b) uncertainty over the optimal spectrum block size and users, which in principle might be solvable by using market mechanisms such as an auction to optimally assign scarce spectrum.
- 6.23 Such an approach might give greater control over ensuring that a future UK authorisation is in line with our duty to secure optimal use of spectrum.
- 6.24 Depending on how a UK-led award were specified, outcomes could range from a single authorised user of 2 GHz MSS spectrum to several players. We discuss above the key trade-offs involved from having different numbers of players using this spectrum band. We also expect that prospective users' ability to reach coordination agreements with higher priority ITU filings holders would have a bearing on how successfully they can use the spectrum.
- 6.25 A potential downside of this approach is that the authorised firms may not be aligned with the EU's long-term decision, (for example, the bandwidths may be different to the three lots of 2 x 10 MHz currently being proposed by the European Commission). As before, not being aligned carries risks of lost synergies and cross-border interference.

## Option D - Alignment with the European Union

- 6.26 As discussed above, alignment across the UK and EU approaches could take different forms; for example, authorising the same bandwidth allocations, authorising the same types of services, or authorising one or more of the same operators in the same bandwidths.
- 6.27 Aligning the UK and EU approaches to some degree might be optimal where there are strong benefits to be gained from aligning. These benefits may - amongst other factors -

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<sup>56</sup> Under this approach, we would expect users of the spectrum to operate under a licence and pay a licence fee set at the opportunity cost. Setting fees at the opportunity cost encourages licensees to think carefully about their spectrum needs and incentivises use by the highest value users. This in turn promotes economic efficiency and helps support economic growth. Such an approach would lower the risk of spectrum hoarding, incentivising licensees to surrender or trade their licence if they are no longer making effective use of their licence.

include (a) enabling providers to operate a pan-European service, and (b) generating greater economies of scale for providers, increasing the viability of their service.<sup>57</sup> As detailed in Section 3, the majority of respondents to our CFI stressed the importance of alignment with the EU across the 2 GHz band; noting harmonisation would enable economies of scale, cost efficiencies, interoperability, and reduced risk of interference.

- 6.28 A full or very extensive alignment with the EU would involve allocating some or all of the spectrum to the same parties. If we considered that this would be likely to realise the greatest benefits for UK citizens and consumers we would likely decide to authorise users after the EU has completed its long-term authorisation allocation process. As the EU future process has not yet been confirmed, this would likely introduce additional delay and timing uncertainty in the longer-term UK allocation process.
- 6.29 However, there are forms of partial alignment under which the longer-term UK framework could be determined sooner, for example alignment regarding the services authorised, the size of the spectrum block and the frequencies allocated to each block. This approach might introduce some risks associated with different uses and/or users in the UK and EU but it may also allow us to choose operators that we assess would deliver greater benefits to UK consumers.
- 6.30 We expect to have a better understanding of these risks once we have greater clarity around the approach that will be followed in Europe. We therefore think we will be better able to assess the approaches when the European Council and European Parliament have completed their considerations of the European Commission's recent proposals.

## Fee implications

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- 6.31 At present, the licensed 2 GHz MSS band adopts a different approach to other substitutable spectrum in the UK, namely the L-band MSS spectrum. L-band MSS use has been licence exempt, which carries no fee. We plan to conduct an MSS review in future, where we may consider whether there is a case for changing our approach to our MSS authorisation framework and therefore the fees (or lack thereof).
- 6.32 Responses to the CFI tend to indicate that there would be excess demand for the spectrum if we set cost-based fees. On this basis, it may be appropriate to set AIPs for the spectrum for the long-term decision. We note that based on the European Commission's proposals, we expect they would apply spectrum fees to authorised users.
- 6.33 We anticipate assessing this fee based on our updated understanding of the appropriate opportunity cost of using this spectrum at the time Ofcom makes its long-term authorisation decision. We would need to consider which use case was the highest alternative value use for the spectrum (the opportunity cost). Historically, we have viewed terrestrial mobile as the opportunity cost for incumbent users in 2 GHz MSS spectrum when setting licence fees.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> We expect that users' ability to reach coordination agreements with higher priority ITU filings holders will have a bearing on how successfully they can use the spectrum.

<sup>58</sup> See Ofcom, 2009, [Authorisation of terrestrial networks complementary to 2 GHz mobile satellite systems \(MSS\)](#). Also, as set out above, a respondent suggested that terrestrial mobile could be the relevant opportunity cost in the long-term.

**Question 9:** Do you have any comments on the technical and operational implications of the four approaches to long term authorisation we have set out?

**Question 10:** Which would you consider is the optimal approach to take for long-term authorisation? Are there any alternative approaches we have not considered? If so, please outline them.

**Question 11:** Do you have any further comments on factors we should consider when determining our approach to the longer-term UK authorisation of the 2 GHz MSS band?

## 7. Next steps

- 7.1 In this document, we have set out our proposals to enable continued incumbent access to the band, for a minimum period. We have also set out proposals for how we would authorise incumbents, under the WT Act 2006, and explained how we would implement this. Whilst we have stated a preferred way forward, we are open to comments on both the options we have considered.
- 7.2 We are also keen to introduce greater flexibility for others to access this spectrum during the transitional period, to enable optimal spectrum use and support innovation, and are seeking stakeholder input on this.
- 7.3 We will continue to monitor developments in the market and within the EU, to support the development of our future long-term authorisation proposals. To this end, we have outlined our initial thinking on the approaches we are considering in Section 6, and are seeking input from stakeholders on these.
- 7.4 The proposed extended access for incumbents would be without prejudice to our future decisions on use of this band, and would not provide any guarantee of continued access beyond the end of the authorisation period.
- 7.5 We welcome comments on the proposals set out in this consultation by **5pm on 18 August 2026**.
- 7.6 We plan to publish an update, setting out our decisions on the short-term authorisation and next steps, later this year.

# A2. Legal Framework

## Ofcom's Statutory Duties

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A2.1 Ofcom has a number of duties under the Communications Act 2003 (“the 2003 Act”) and the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 (“the WT Act”) that govern how we manage radio spectrum.

### Communications Act 2003

A2.2 Our principal duty is to further the interests of citizens in relation to communications matters and to further the interests of consumers in relevant markets, where appropriate by promoting competition.<sup>59</sup> In relation to spectrum, Ofcom is required to secure the optimal use for wireless telegraphy of the electro-magnetic spectrum and the availability of a wide range of electronic communications services throughout the United Kingdom.<sup>60</sup>

A2.3 In performing its duties, Ofcom also has to have regard to a number of factors as it appears relevant in the circumstances, including the desirability of promoting competition and encouraging investment and innovation in relevant markets and the interests of everyone who may wish to use the spectrum for wireless telegraphy.<sup>61</sup> The Act further provides that Ofcom must in all cases have regard to the principles of transparency, accountability, proportionality, and consistency, as well as ensuring that its actions are targeted only at cases in which action is needed.<sup>62</sup>

### Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006

A2.4 In carrying out our spectrum functions, we have a duty under the WTA to have regard, in particular, to the extent to which the spectrum is available for use (or further use) for wireless telegraphy, the demand for use (or further use) of that spectrum for wireless telegraphy and the demand that is likely to arise in future for the use (or further use) for wireless telegraphy.<sup>63</sup>

A2.5 We also have a duty to have regard, in particular, to the desirability of promoting the efficient management and use of the spectrum for wireless telegraphy, the economic and other benefits that may arise from the use of wireless telegraphy, the development of innovative services, and competition in the provision of electronic communications services.<sup>64</sup>

A2.6 We permit the use of the radio spectrum by granting wireless telegraphy licences under the WT Act. It is unlawful and an offence to install or use wireless telegraphy apparatus without holding a licence granted by Ofcom, unless the use of such equipment is exempted. Ofcom can exempt the establishment, installation and use of wireless telegraphy equipment by regulation<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> Section 3(1) of the 2003 Act.

<sup>60</sup> Section 3(2) of the 2003 Act.

<sup>61</sup> Section 3(4) of the 2003 Act.

<sup>62</sup> Section 3(3) of the 2003 Act.

<sup>63</sup> Section 3(1) WT Act 2006.

<sup>64</sup> Section 3(2) WT Act 2006.

<sup>65</sup> Section 8(3) of the WT Act 2006

## The Growth Duty

A2.7 We are required to have regard to the desirability of promoting economic growth, when exercising our regulatory functions<sup>66</sup> ('the growth duty'). In performing this duty, we must consider the importance of the promotion of economic growth, for the wider UK economy, alongside our other statutory duties. We also must ensure that any regulatory action we take is necessary and proportionate. In accordance with Section 110(3) Deregulation Act 2015 we must have regard to the Growth Duty Statutory Guidance.

## UK Government's Statement of Strategic Priorities

A2.8 Under Section 2B(2) of the 2003 Act, when exercising our functions relating to the management of radio spectrum, we are required to have regard to the UK Government's Statement of Strategic Priorities (SSP) that has been designated by the Secretary of State under Section 2A(1). The current SSP was designated on 28 April 2026.<sup>67</sup> Amongst other things, it recognises the value of the space sector to UK GDP in supporting the growth across key sectors, including satellite communications. It calls on Ofcom to apply a spectrum management approach which supports innovation and investment.

## Ofcom's authorisation regime

A2.9 It is unlawful to establish or use a wireless telegraphy station or to install or use wireless telegraphy apparatus, unless under and in accordance with a licence granted by Ofcom<sup>68</sup> (also known as a 'wireless telegraphy licence')<sup>69</sup>, unless Ofcom has made regulations which exempt the establishment, installation or use of wireless telegraphy stations or wireless telegraphy apparatus from the requirement of having a licence<sup>70</sup>.

## Licence exemptions

A2.10 Under Section 8(4) of the WT Act, Ofcom must make regulations to exempt equipment if its installation or use meets the conditions under Section 8(5) of the WT Act and is not likely to:

- involve undue interference with wireless telegraphy;
- have an adverse effect on technical quality of service;
- lead to inefficient use of the part of the electromagnetic spectrum available for wireless telegraphy;
- inhibit the development of effective arrangements for the sharing of frequencies;
- endanger safety of life;
- prejudice the promotion of social, regional or territorial cohesion; or
- prejudice the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity and media pluralism.

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<sup>66</sup> Section 108 of the Deregulation Act 2015, which was extended to Ofcom's regulatory functions by The Economic Growth (Regulatory Functions) (Amendment) Order 2024.

<sup>67</sup> [Statement of Strategic Priorities](#).

<sup>68</sup> This is subject to some exceptions – see Section 8(2) WT Act.

<sup>69</sup> Section 8(1) WT Act.

<sup>70</sup> Section 8(3) WT Act.

- A2.11 In accordance with the requirements of Section 8(3B) of the WT Act, the terms, provisions and limitations specified in the regulations must be:
- objectively justifiable in relation to the wireless telegraphy stations or wireless telegraphy apparatus to which they relate;
  - not such as to discriminate unduly against particular persons or against a particular description of persons;
  - proportionate to what they are intended to achieve; and
  - transparent in relation to what they are intended to achieve.
- A2.12 Before making any exemption regulations, we are required by Section 122(4) of the WT Act to give statutory notice of our proposal to do so. Under Section 122(5), such notice must state that we propose to make the regulations in question, set out their general effect, specify an address from which a copy of the proposed regulations may be obtained, and specify a time period of at least one month during which any representations with respect to the proposal must be made to us.

## **The Wireless Telegraphy (Mobile Satellite System Equipment) (Exemption) Regulations 2016**

- A2.13 The Wireless Telegraphy (Mobile Satellite System Equipment) (Exemption) Regulations 2016 (“2016 Regulations”) exempt certain MSS user terminals from requiring a WT Act licence, provided they are connected to an MSS network operated by Inmarsat or EchoStar.
- A2.14 The 2016 Regulations do not specify the frequencies to be used by each operator. Therefore, neither operator is currently restricted in operation across all frequencies in the 1980 – 2010 MHz and 2170 – 2200 MHz range.
- A2.15 The 2016 Regulations set out that the equipment must comply with the specified technical conditions, as well as a provision to “not cause or contribute undue interference to any wireless telegraphy”.

## **Licences**

- A2.16 Ofcom has a wide discretion in granting a licence, in that a wireless telegraphy licence may be granted by Ofcom subject to such terms, provisions and limitations as Ofcom thinks fit. There is discretion in the limitations that can be included.<sup>71</sup> The terms, provisions and limitations may also prescribe, for example, the strength of the signal or requirements on the transmission. It is important to note Ofcom can only impose terms, provisions or limitations if satisfied that they objectively justified, proportionate, transparent in relation to what they are trying to achieve and do not unduly discriminate.<sup>72</sup>

## **Licence Variations**

- A2.17 Further to the above, Ofcom’s powers under the WT Act 2006 include the ability to revoke or vary any wireless telegraphy licence<sup>73</sup> if:

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<sup>71</sup> Section 9 Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006.

<sup>72</sup> Section 9(7) Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006

<sup>73</sup> Paragraph 6 of Schedule 1 of the WT Act 2006.

- The terms and conditions of the licences do not curtail our ability to revoke and/or vary a wireless telegraphy licence;<sup>74</sup> and
  - The standards and procedures set out in Schedule 1 to the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 are followed.<sup>75</sup>
- A2.18 Ofcom can vary spectrum licences, either on its own instigation or as a result of a licence variation request from a licensee.
- A2.19 Ofcom has the power to vary or revoke a wireless telegraphy licence if the proposed revocation or variation is objectively justifiable.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, Ofcom is under a duty to notify the person holding the licence of its proposal and:<sup>77</sup>
- state the reasons for the proposal; and
  - provide the licensee with an opportunity to make representations about the proposal within a defined period, which (barring defined circumstances) cannot be shorter than 30 days beginning with the day after the one on which the notification was given to the licensee.<sup>78</sup>
- A2.20 Once the consultation period is expired, Ofcom has one month to decide whether or not to revoke or vary the wireless telegraphy licence and give notification of such decision to the licensee within one month.<sup>79</sup> The decision can be taken in accordance with Ofcom’s original proposal or can contain modifications in light of the representations received.<sup>80</sup> In any event, Ofcom’s decision must be given no later than one week after it has been taken and state the reasons for the decision.<sup>81</sup>

## Exclusive Licences

- A2.21 “Exclusive licence” means a wireless telegraphy licence which includes a term conferring exclusive rights on the holder to use a frequency specified in the licence (throughout the United Kingdom or in a specified part of the United Kingdom).<sup>82</sup>
- A2.22 Ofcom may not grant an exclusive licence unless a condition in Section 8B(2) is met.
- A2.23 Those conditions are—
- a) that it is necessary to grant an exclusive licence in order to protect safety of life services, or
  - b) that there are other exceptional circumstances which, in Ofcom's opinion, justify the grant of an exclusive licence in order to ensure a general interest objective.
- A2.24 The general interest objectives are—
- a) safety of life;
  - b) the promotion of social, regional or territorial cohesion;
  - c) avoidance of inefficient use of frequencies;

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<sup>74</sup> Paragraph 8 of Schedule 1 of the WT Act 2006.

<sup>75</sup> Section 10 of the WT Act 2006.

<sup>76</sup> Paragraph 6A of Schedule 1 of the WT Act 2006.

<sup>77</sup> Paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 of the WT Act 2006.

<sup>78</sup> Paragraph 8 of Schedule 1 of the WT Act 2006.

<sup>79</sup> Paragraph 10 of Schedule 1 of the WT Act 2006.

<sup>80</sup> Paragraph 10(a) of Schedule 1 of the WT Act 2006.

<sup>81</sup> Paragraph 11 of Schedule 1 of the WT Act 2006.

<sup>82</sup> Section 8B(6) of the WT Act 2006.

- d) the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity and media pluralism;
- e) fulfilment of a requirement under the ITU Radio Regulations.

A2.25 Where Ofcom proposes to grant an exclusive licence and considers that the grant of the licence would have a significant impact on a market for the use of electromagnetic spectrum for wireless telegraphy in relation to which Ofcom have functions under the enactments relating to the management of the radio spectrum, Ofcom must publish a notice of their intention before granting the licence.<sup>83</sup>

A2.26 The notice must specify:

- Ofcom's reasons for proposing to grant an exclusive licence, and
- the period within which representations may be made to OFCOM.

A2.27 The period specified under Section 8C (3)(b) may not be less than 30 days beginning with the day on which the notice is published.

A2.28 Ofcom must also conduct periodical reviews in order to determine whether the general objective continues to be met. Ofcom will determine when the reviews take place and publish the outcome of the reviews.<sup>84</sup>

## Limitations on authorised spectrum use

A2.29 Ofcom may impose limitations on the use of particular frequencies for the purpose of securing the efficient use of the electromagnetic spectrum. Ofcom must make an order imposing the limitations.<sup>85</sup>

A2.30 The limitation order may do one or both of the following<sup>86</sup>—

- specify frequencies for the use of which OFCOM will grant or make only a limited number of wireless telegraphy licences and grants of recognised spectrum access; or
- specify uses for which, on specified frequencies, OFCOM will grant or make only a limited number of wireless telegraphy licences and grants of recognised spectrum access.

A2.31 When making a limitation order, Ofcom must set out the criteria which it will apply in determining in the Order<sup>87</sup> —

- the limit on the number of wireless telegraphy licences and grants of recognised spectrum access to be granted or made for the specified frequencies or uses;
- the persons to whom licences will be granted or grants of recognised spectrum access made.

A2.32 Ofcom must satisfy themselves that any criteria set out as a result of Section 29(3) are:

- objectively justifiable in relation to the frequencies or uses to which they relate;
- not such as to discriminate unduly against particular persons or against a particular description of persons;
- proportionate to what they are intended to achieve; and

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<sup>83</sup> Section 8C of the WT Act 2006.

<sup>84</sup> Section 8B(5) of the WT Act 2006.

<sup>85</sup> Section 29(1) of the WT Act 2006.

<sup>86</sup> Section 29(2) of the WT Act 2006.

<sup>87</sup> Section 29(3) of the WT Act 2006.

- in relation to what they are intended to achieve, transparent.

A2.33 Ofcom must exercise its powers with respect to wireless telegraphy licences and grants of recognised spectrum access in accordance with the orders for the duration it is in force.

## A3. Impact assessments

- A3.1 Section 7 of the Communications Act requires us to carry out and publish an assessment of the likely impact of implementing a proposal which would be likely to have a significant impact on businesses or the general public, or when there is a major change in Ofcom's activities.
- A3.2 More generally, impact assessments form part of good policy making, and we therefore expect to carry them out in relation to a large majority of our proposals.
- A3.3 We use impact assessments to help us understand and assess the potential impact of our policy decisions before we make them. They also help us explain the policy decisions we have decided to take and why we consider those decisions best fulfil our applicable duties and objectives in the least intrusive way. Our impact assessment guidance sets out our general approach to how we assess and present the impact of our proposed decisions.<sup>88</sup>
- A3.4 The relevant duties in relation to the decisions that we have made are set out in Section 2.
- A3.5 These impact assessments relate to the proposals we have made to extend access to the spectrum for the incumbents (Viasat and EchoStar) for 3 – 5 years, in the UK. The potential long-term authorisation approaches set out in Section 6 (on which we are requesting input) are outside of the scope of these impact assessments.

### Summary of proposals

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- A3.6 We are proposing to extend access to the spectrum for the incumbents (Viasat and EchoStar) in the UK, under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006, for 3 – 5 years. We propose to do this based on the options discussed in Section 5. We are also proposing that we will introduce measures to enable others to access this spectrum to support optimal spectrum use and innovation over the proposed transitional period (the exact nature of which will be consulted on in future).
- A3.7 Therefore, we are provisionally ruling out the other two policy options set out in Section 4: clearing the band and making a long-term authorisation and clearing the band and delaying a decision on long-term authorisation until there is more certainty.
- A3.8 As also discussed in Section 5, we have considered two options for the timeframe for a short-term authorisation:
- a) Option one: A three-year fixed period.
  - b) Option two: A five-year fixed period.
- A3.9 Our current preferred timeframe is Option one – a three-year fixed period. For both options we have indicated the possibility of proposing a two-year fixed extension if this appears appropriate.
- A3.10 We are also considering two options for the CGC licence fee during the transitional period:
- a) Option A: Retain the existing fee framework.
  - b) Option B: Waive the CGC licence fee for the duration of the interim authorisation.

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<sup>88</sup> See Ofcom's [Impact Assessment Guidance](#).

## Impact assessment for the short-term authorisation

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- A3.11 Having carefully considered the impacts of a short-term extension, our view is that the expected benefits outweigh the costs and risks.
- A3.12 Our provisional view is that this would:
- a) Give the best chance to ensure that the entire band continues to be utilised and does not lie fallow, against a backdrop of significant uncertainty. There is immediate demand from the current authorised users and their customers, which can be met by extending access for the incumbents. This supports an efficient use of spectrum and given the wider uncertainty, avoids a scarce, valuable resource being unused or under-used. This also promotes the interests of UK citizens and consumers, by ensuring continued access to services provided using this spectrum and mitigates business disruption. The proposal also gives existing users of services an opportunity to assess long-term options and consider migration, where relevant, avoiding potential short-term costs and service disruption.
  - b) Sufficiently protect other spectrum users. This proposal facilitates efficient management of the spectrum, containing conditions to manage the risk of harmful interference between adjacent channel users. Specifying the frequencies that each operator can transmit in clarifies which frequencies are available to each operator and could mitigate the risk of interference between users and further ensures protection for any spectrum user.
  - c) Enable uncertainties in relation to the optimal long-term authorisation of the spectrum to be reduced or resolved. This would allow us to make more informed decisions regarding the optimal long-term use of the spectrum in future.
- A3.13 We recognise that the proposal prevents prospective alternative users of the band from having the ability to use the spectrum with longer term certainty now. To the extent that any potential users are ready to offer services using the spectrum now, our proposal could have a negative impact on these providers and deny citizens and consumers the opportunity to access these services. There is also a risk that a short-term extension limits the incentives of providers to invest in their services, compared to an alternative of receiving a long-term licence now.
- A3.14 However, there remains uncertainty over the type and scale of potential users of this spectrum, and the timelines of future service availability. Deferring a long-term decision provides these potential users with time to develop their services, meaning that they may be better placed to compete for access to the spectrum in future. We also note that satellite operators are taking steps to secure alternative frequencies (such as Amazon LEO's proposed acquisition of Globalstar), which suggests that deferring a long-term decision will not block other services from being deployed. Further, as discussed in paragraph 3.43, there are alternative frequencies available which can be used to deliver the types of services suggested for 2 GHz MSS.
- A3.15 Our proposal to grant a short-term extension also does not prejudice our decisions on a long-term authorisation, and so does not guarantee that either of the incumbents would continue to retain access to the spectrum following the end of the extension. This guards against a risk of lock-in, which could in some circumstances prevent the optimal use of spectrum in future. We consider that the benefits of the short-term extension outweigh the risk that it reduces the licence holders' incentive to invest.

- A3.16 We also propose to introduce measures to enable others to access this spectrum to support optimal spectrum use and innovation over the proposed transitional period. Proposals for the specific measures will be consulted on in future, but these could enable commercial services, for example larger scale 'beta' trial services and provide greater certainty around the interference environment. This would mitigate the risk that citizens and consumers are denied the benefits of access to new and innovative services as a result of the short-term authorisation. Further, as this would only be allowed where undue interference to existing licensees' services would not be expected, we would not anticipate downside risk to introducing such measures.

## Duration

- A3.17 We have also considered the optimal length of the short-term authorisation. Our provisional view is that a three-year authorisation period is likely to be preferable. We provisionally consider that it would provide sufficient time for migration planning for existing services, where relevant, and enable other potential users to develop their constellations and services such that they would be able to make effective use of the spectrum. Compared to an initial five-year extension period, it provides greater flexibility to respond, should greater clarity emerge in regional policy, technical standards, market demand or service readiness.
- A3.18 We also consider that this strikes the right balance between the extension being too short to allow potential services to reach greater maturity, and the risk that the extension denies prospective alternative users access to the band for too long a period.

## Fees

- A3.19 We have considered two options for the appropriate fee structure for the short-term authorisation period: (a) retaining the existing fee framework and (b) waiving fees.
- A3.20 Retaining the existing fee structure would ensure continuity for existing users and would be consistent with our broader aim of minimising changes to the current framework during a transitional period.
- A3.21 However, there have been significant market changes over time and there is currently uncertainty regarding the long-term future use of the band, such that the opportunity cost is uncertain. Given that the opportunity cost is the basis for setting fees when there is excess demand, and we expect this uncertainty to be resolved in the short to medium term, waiving fees for the interim authorisation could support a smoother transition to a long-term framework.
- A3.22 Nevertheless, waiving the fee or setting fees too low for the incumbents during this short-term extension period creates a hypothetical risk that inefficient users hold onto an authorisation when they should trade it to a more efficient user. The mitigations to this risk are: our view that the current users are the optimal users of the spectrum, at least in the short run, and that we may enable others to access some of this spectrum during the transitional period being proposed (see Section 5), including if we were to see evidence of inefficient use.
- A3.23 Therefore, the remaining risk on fees is that they are set too high under option (a), leading to possible under-use of the spectrum by the incumbents given the CGC licence fee structure. This under-use risk is mitigated by the fact we are considering enabling others to access this spectrum to support optimal spectrum use and innovation over the proposed

transitional period. Ofcom could rapidly authorise alternative uses meeting these criteria, should this risk materialise.

## Equality impact assessment

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- A3.24 We have given careful consideration to whether our proposal will have a particular impact on persons sharing protected characteristics (broadly including race, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and religion or belief in the UK and also dependents and political opinion in Northern Ireland), and in particular whether they may discriminate against such persons or impact on equality of opportunity or good relations. This assessment helps us comply with our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- A3.25 When thinking about equality we think more broadly than persons that share protected characteristics identified in equalities legislation and think about potential impacts on various groups of persons (see paragraph 4.7 of our [impact assessment guidance](#))
- A3.26 In particular, Section 3(4) of the Communications Act also requires us to have regard to the needs and interests of specific groups of persons when performing our duties, as appear to us to be relevant in the circumstances. These include:
- a) the vulnerability of children and of others whose circumstances appear to us to put them in need of special protection;
  - b) the needs of persons with disabilities, older persons and persons on low incomes; and
  - c) the different interests of persons in the different parts of the UK, of the different ethnic communities within the UK and of persons living in rural and in urban areas.
- A3.27 We examine the potential impact our policy is likely to have on people, depending on their personal circumstances. This also assists us in making sure that we are meeting our principal duty of furthering the interests of citizens and consumers, regardless of their background and identity.
- A3.28 We do not consider that our proposals will affect any specific groups of persons (including persons that share protected characteristics under the 2010 Act or the 1998 Act) differently to the general population. Our proposals will support any end user who makes use of the incumbents' services equally.

## Welsh language assessment

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- A3.29 Ofcom is required to take Welsh language considerations into account when formulating, reviewing or revising policies which are relevant to Wales (including proposals which are not targeted at Wales specifically but are of interest across the UK).
- A3.30 We do not consider that our proposals have any impact on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language or treat the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. We also do not think there are ways in which our proposals could be formulated so as to have, or increase, a positive impact, or not have adverse effects or decrease any adverse effects. This is because our proposals relate to spectrum access across the UK.
- A3.31 We note that Ofcom's current practice is to offer to produce spectrum licences in Welsh, and when requested does provide licences in Welsh, in accordance with its obligations set

by the Welsh Language Commissioner. This will apply to licences discussed in this document.

**Question 12:** Do you have any comments on the impact assessments set out above?

# A4. ITU satellite filings framework considerations

- A4.1 The Articles of the Radio Regulations contain procedures<sup>89</sup> by which a satellite network's frequency assignments can be registered, through its national administration, with the ITU to obtain international recognition. This means that all administrations are informed of the use of the assignments and that they are taken into account in any future planning conducted at the national, regional, or international level.
- A4.2 Bands allocated for use by Mobile Satellite Services (MSS) are typically accessible on a "first-come-first-served" basis, based on the principle that rights are acquired through negotiations with other affected administrations<sup>90</sup> (coordination agreements). Successful coordination will lead to the international recognition of the assignments of the networks.
- A4.3 For effecting coordination, the frequency assignments which are to be taken into account in the coordination process are those:
- a) In the same frequency band as that of the proposed assignment
  - b) Which belong to the same service or another service to which that band is allocated with equal rights or with a higher category allocation;
  - c) Which are in conformity with the Radio Regulations; and
  - d) Which are either already recorded in the Master Register or coordinated under the provisions of the Radio Regulations or are themselves under coordination but have regulatory precedence over the proposed assignments.
- A4.4 This means that, at a national level, administrations can authorise operators that sit lower on the 'priority' list (i.e., on a first-come, first-served basis, those with more senior filings have a level of priority over those with newer filings). However, it also means that coordination with those who hold senior filings is needed at that administration's border to mitigate the potential of harmful interference into the senior filing's operations.
- A4.5 The coordination requirements in the Radio Regulations mean that a UK-authorized operator in 2 GHz MSS must coordinate in accordance with the ITU Radio Regulations at the UK's borders. In practice, this would mean coordinating with all filings that meet the criteria set out in paragraphs A3.3 a-d.
- A4.6 Whilst the responsibility for coordinating typically sits with national administrations, we recognise that operators can resolve coordination issues through commercial agreements. We also understand that the satellite industry is particularly dynamic and there is currently an active market for obtaining senior filings through mergers and acquisitions. However, it is important to note that both of these approaches to resolving coordination issues can be costly for operators and may not be available to all.
- A4.7 Satellite filing information is available on the ITU Space Explorer Website, [here](#).

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<sup>89</sup> More detail on the procedures for the management of satellite filings can be found on the [Ofcom website](#).

<sup>90</sup> Coordination, as described in Section 2 of Article 9 of the Radio Regulations, is a formal regulatory obligation both for an administration seeking a frequency assignment for its network and for an administration whose existing or planned services may be affected by that assignment.

# A5. Responding to this consultation

## How to respond

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- A5.1 Ofcom would like to receive views and comments on the issues raised in this document, by 5pm on **18 August 2026**.
- A5.2 You can download a response form from [here](#). You can return this by email or post to the address provided in the response form.
- A5.3 If your response is a large file, or has supporting charts, tables or other data, please email it to [2ghzmss@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:2ghzmss@ofcom.org.uk), as an attachment in Microsoft Word format, together with the cover sheet. This email address is for this consultation only and will not be valid after **18 August 2026**.
- A5.4 We welcome responses in formats other than print, for example an audio recording or a British Sign Language video. To respond in BSL:
- > send us a recording of you signing your response. This should be no longer than 5 minutes. Suitable file formats are DVDs, wmv or QuickTime files; or
  - > upload a video of you signing your response directly to YouTube (or another hosting site) and send us the link.
- A5.5 We will publish a transcript of any audio or video responses we receive (unless your response is confidential)
- A5.6 We do not need a paper copy of your response as well as an electronic version. We will acknowledge receipt of a response submitted to us by email.
- A5.7 You do not have to answer all the questions in the consultation if you do not have a view; a short response on just one point is fine. We also welcome joint responses.
- A5.8 It would be helpful if your response could include direct answers to the questions asked in the consultation document. The questions are listed at Annex 7. It would also help if you could explain why you hold your views, and what you think the effect of Ofcom's proposals would be.
- A5.9 If you want to discuss the issues and questions raised in this consultation, please contact the team by email at [2ghzmss@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:2ghzmss@ofcom.org.uk).

## Confidentiality

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- A5.10 Consultations are more effective if we publish the responses before the consultation period closes. This can help people and organisations with limited resources or familiarity with the issues to respond in a more informed way. So, in the interests of transparency and good regulatory practice, and because we believe it is important that everyone who is interested in an issue can see other respondents' views, we usually publish responses on the Ofcom website at regular intervals during and after the consultation period.
- A5.11 If you think your response should be kept confidential, please specify which part(s) this applies to and explain why. Please send any confidential sections as a separate annex. If

you want your name, address, other contact details or job title to remain confidential, please provide them only in the cover sheet, so that we don't have to edit your response.

- A5.12 If someone asks us to keep all or part of a response confidential, we will treat this request seriously and try to respect it. It is however for Ofcom to decide whether or not information is confidential. Sometimes we may consider it necessary to publish all or part of a response, including those that are marked as confidential (for example, so we can explain our decisions and people can understand our reasoning or in order to meet legal obligations).

Where this is the case (and the relevant information is not already in the public domain), we will normally first explain our intention to publish information from your response and give you the opportunity to raise concerns about the proposed publication. We will generally try to resolve any objections you may have through constructive dialogue. If we remain of the view that we need to publish all or part of your response and you continue to object, we will give you advance warning prior to publication.

- A5.13 To fulfil our pre-disclosure duty, we may share a copy of your response with the relevant government department before we publish it on our website.
- A5.14 Please also note that copyright and all other intellectual property in responses will be assumed to be licensed to Ofcom to use. Ofcom's intellectual property rights are explained further in our Terms of Use.

## Next steps

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- A5.15 Following this consultation period, Ofcom plans to publish a statement by March 2027.
- A5.16 If you wish, you can register to receive mail updates alerting you to new Ofcom publications.

## Ofcom's consultation processes

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- A5.17 Ofcom aims to make responding to a consultation as easy as possible. For more information, please see our consultation principles in Annex 5.
- A5.18 If you have any comments or suggestions on how we manage our consultations, please email us at [consult@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:consult@ofcom.org.uk). We particularly welcome ideas on how Ofcom could more effectively seek the views of groups or individuals, such as small businesses and residential consumers, who are less likely to give their opinions through a formal consultation.
- A5.19 If you would like to discuss these issues, or Ofcom's consultation processes more generally, please contact the corporation secretary:

Corporation Secretary  
Ofcom  
Riverside House  
2a Southwark Bridge Road  
London SE1 9HA  
Email: [corporationsecretary@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:corporationsecretary@ofcom.org.uk)

# A6. Ofcom's consultation principles

Ofcom has seven principles that it follows for every public written consultation:

## Before the consultation

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1. Wherever possible, we will hold informal talks with people and organisations before announcing a big consultation, to find out whether we are thinking along the right lines. If we do not have enough time to do this, we will hold an open meeting to explain our proposals, shortly after announcing the consultation.

## During the consultation

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2. We will be clear about whom we are consulting, why, on what questions and for how long.
3. We will make the consultation document as short and simple as possible, with an overview of no more than two pages. We will try to make it as easy as possible for people to give us a written response.
4. When setting the length of the consultation period, we will consider the nature of our proposals and their potential impact. We will always make clear the closing date for responses.
5. A person within Ofcom will be in charge of making sure we follow our own guidelines and aim to reach the largest possible number of people and organisations who may be interested in the outcome of our decisions. Ofcom's Consultation Champion is the main person to contact if you have views on the way we run our consultations.
6. If we are not able to follow any of these principles, we will explain why.

## After the consultation

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7. We think it is important that everyone who is interested in an issue can see other people's views, so we usually publish the responses on our website at regular intervals during and after the consultation period. After the consultation we will make our decisions and publish a statement explaining what we are going to do, and why, showing how respondents' views helped to shape these decisions.

# A7. Consultation coversheet

## Basic details

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Consultation title:

To (Ofcom contact):

Name of respondent:

Representing (self or organisation/s):

Address (if not received by email):

## Confidentiality

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Please tick below what part of your response you consider is confidential, giving your reasons why

- > Nothing
- > Name/contact details/job title
- > Whole response
- > Organisation
- > Part of the response

If you selected 'Part of the response', please specify which parts:

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If you want part of your response, your name or your organisation not to be published, can Ofcom still publish a reference to the contents of your response (including, for any confidential parts, a general summary that does not disclose the specific information or enable you to be identified)?

Yes       No

## Declaration

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I confirm that the correspondence supplied with this cover sheet is a formal consultation response that Ofcom can publish. However, in supplying this response, I understand that Ofcom may need to publish all responses, including those which are marked as confidential, in order to meet legal obligations. If I have sent my response by email, Ofcom can disregard any standard e-mail text about not disclosing email contents and attachments.

Ofcom aims to publish responses at regular intervals during and after the consultation period. If your response is non-confidential (in whole or in part), and you would prefer us to publish your response only once the consultation has ended, please tick here.

Name

Signed (if hard copy)

# A8. Consultation questions

Please tell us how you came across this consultation.

- Email from Ofcom
- Saw it on social media
- Found it on Ofcom's website
- Found it on another website
- Heard about it on TV or radio
- Read about it in a newspaper or magazine
- Heard about it at an event
- Somebody told me or shared it with me
- Other (please specify)

## General approach

**Question 1:** Do you have any views on the options for managing the 2 GHz MSS band after 13 May 2027? Are there any options that Ofcom has overlooked?

**Question 2:** Do you agree with our proposal for a short-term transition period, which authorises Viasat and EchoStar? Please set out your reasoning.

## Proposal for interim transition period

**Question 3:** Do you agree with our preferred option for the duration of the proposed interim authorisation to be a three-year fixed period? Please set out your reasoning.

**Question 4:** Do you agree that our proposed approach to authorise continued use of the spectrum during the interim authorisation period through a CGC licence, licence exemption, and Aircraft Radio licence? If not, please set out your reasoning and alternative suggestions.

**Question 5:** Do you have any comments on the alternative approach we have considered, of licensing the satellite operators to use 2 GHz MSS during the interim authorisation period? If you have a preference for this approach, please set out your reasoning.

**Question 6:** What are your views on the approach Ofcom should take to fees for the interim authorisation period? Please set out your reasoning and provide evidence where appropriate.

**Question 7:** Do you agree with our proposals to enable additional users to access the spectrum during the interim period? If yes, do you have a preference for how we should enable other users during the short-term extension period? Please set out your reasoning.

**Question 8:** Do you have any other views on the details of our proposal to authorise Viasat and EchoStar during the interim period?

## Proposals for deciding on our longer-term approach to 2GHz MSS

**Question 9:** Do you have any comments on the technical and operational implications of the four approaches to long term authorisation we have set out?

**Question 10:** Which would you consider is the optimal approach to take for long-term authorisation? Are there any alternative approaches we have not considered? If so, please outline them.

**Question 11:** Do you have any further comments on factors we should consider when determining our approach to the longer-term UK authorisation of the 2 GHz MSS band?

**Question 12:** Do you have any comments on the Impact Assessments?