

Future Use of 2GHz MSS Consultation

Vodafone Submission

August 2026



Vodafone is a British telecommunications company serving customers across the UK, Europe and Africa. Our purpose is to connect for a better future, and our expertise, scale and technology leadership give us a unique opportunity to drive positive change for society.

Vodafone operates mobile and fixed networks in 17 markets, holds investment stakes in three additional markets and partners with mobile operators in more than 40 further countries. We serve over 370 million mobile and broadband customers and operate one of the world's largest international connectivity platforms, supported by extensive terrestrial and international network infrastructure.

Vodafone is also shaping the future of global connectivity through next-generation satellite services. Through Satellite Connect Europe, our joint venture with AST SpaceMobile, we are developing direct-to-device satellite connectivity that will enable standard smartphones to connect seamlessly beyond the reach of terrestrial networks without requiring specialised equipment. By extending coverage to underserved areas, enhancing network resilience and supporting critical emergency communications, these services will help ensure that people, businesses and communities can stay connected wherever they are. Vodafone's satellite ambitions form part of a broader vision to combine terrestrial and space-based connectivity, helping to close coverage gaps and strengthen Europe's digital infrastructure.

General approach

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?

Ofcom has identified three potential approaches for managing the 2 GHz MSS band beyond 13 May 2027. Of these Option 1 provides the most appropriate basis for the long-term management of the band if it was possible to ensure alignment with the EU framework, maintaining the benefits of a coordinated European approach to MSS spectrum. However, it would leave spectrum fallow in the short term and there is a risk of regulatory divergence from Europe. By contrast, Option 2 would not support the efficient use of spectrum and should not be pursued. Option 3 may be appropriate as a temporary and proportionate mechanism to facilitate a transition to a longer-term solution, but only where it is subject to appropriate safeguards and is not used to establish a de facto long-term authorisation framework.

Alignment with the European framework should be a central consideration in determining the future use of the 2 GHz MSS band beyond 13 May 2027. Satellite services are inherently cross-border in nature, relying on large-scale network investments and business models that operate across multiple jurisdictions. A fragmented approach to authorisation risks introducing unnecessary complexity, increasing regulatory burdens and reducing incentives for investment. Maintaining alignment with the wider European approach will help ensure that the UK remains an attractive market for satellite investment and service provision, while also supporting the efficient use of harmonised spectrum resources. Any decisions regarding the long-term authorisation framework for the band should therefore be developed with close regard to ongoing developments in the EU and with a view to preserving the benefits that regulatory harmonisation can deliver for consumers, businesses and operators.

There is also no clear public policy benefit in allowing the band to remain unused following the expiry of the current authorisations. Spectrum is a scarce national resource and should be used efficiently where services are capable of being provided. In this respect, a transition period may represent a proportionate mechanism for ensuring continuity while longer-term decisions on the future use of the band are taken. However, the justification for a transition period is limited to

Future Use of 2GhZ MSS Consultation

Vodafone Submission

August 2026



maintaining continuity for services provided for a significant amount of time prior to May 2027 in order to avoid unnecessary disruption. It should not provide a mechanism through which existing users are able to expand their activities, strengthen their commercial position or acquire advantages that would not otherwise be available under a future authorisation framework.

Ofcom is also right to conclude that allowing the spectrum to remain unused following the expiry of the current authorisations would not be an appropriate outcome. Spectrum is a finite public resource and should be used efficiently wherever possible. Allowing the band to lie fallow would undermine this objective and would not deliver benefits for consumers, businesses or the wider communications sector. It would also create unnecessary uncertainty regarding the future use of the band and potentially reduce incentives for future investment. There is therefore no clear justification for pursuing Option 2 where alternative approaches exist that can preserve continuity while allowing Ofcom sufficient flexibility to determine the most appropriate long-term framework.

A temporary transition period in advance of a long-term authorisation framework would provide regulatory continuity and avoid disruption to existing services while future arrangements are finalised. However, this is contingent on the transition being narrowly focused on the continuity of existing operations. The purpose of a transition period should be limited to avoiding disruption. It should not operate as a mechanism through which incumbent users gain additional commercial advantages including through expanding their commercial services or strengthen their competitive position ahead of future authorisation decisions. Any transition should therefore be subject to clear safeguards that preserve competition and ensure that future decisions regarding access to the band remain open and objective.

The transition period should prohibit the launch of new services or material expansion of existing services and prohibit the transfer of rights or authorisations to third parties. These safeguards are necessary to ensure that a temporary extension does not prejudice future decisions regarding the efficient long-term use of the band. Without such protections, incumbents could strengthen their market position during the transition period in a manner that would not be available to potential future users. This would risk distorting competition, influencing future market outcomes and undermining confidence that future spectrum access arrangements will be determined on a fair and transparent basis. A transition that preserves existing use while avoiding any material change in market circumstances would better support competition and long-term efficient spectrum assignment, and this would align with the transition period proposed under the EU's draft regulation.

Temporary or shared access for new commercial users should not be introduced as part of any transition period under Option 3. The proposed safeguard of avoiding "undue interference" focuses on technical coexistence but does not address the more fundamental issue that a transition period should be limited to preserving existing authorised use. Allowing new users access to the band through sharing, leasing or other arrangements would go beyond maintaining continuity and would create new spectrum access opportunities before Ofcom has determined the long-term authorisation framework, which could prejudice any long-term award process. Any transition period should therefore be restricted to existing authorised use and should prohibit arrangements that would enable new users to access the band.

Under all options, spectrum should be available for new users to undertake testing activity.

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

Future Use of 2GhZ MSS Consultation

Vodafone Submission

August 2026



The proposal for a short-term transition period for which Viasat and EchoStar may be necessary to ensure the continuity of existing services. It also recognises that the wider policy and regulatory landscape for MSS remains in a period of transition, with the European Commission currently progressing its legislative proposal for a new Union-level MSS framework. Allowing existing operations to continue on a temporary basis avoids the risk of disruption to services and avoids spectrum lying fallow, while giving Ofcom sufficient time to develop a durable long-term approach that takes account of developments in the UK and Europe.

However, any interim authorisation should be clearly transitional in nature and should not create advantages, expectations or rights that could influence the design or outcome of the future long-term authorisation regime. The purpose of the transition period should be limited to maintaining continuity of existing services and ensuring efficient use of spectrum pending implementation of a permanent framework.

To achieve this, any interim authorisation granted to Viasat and EchoStar only, should be subject to appropriate safeguards and must not allow transference of the spectrum to any third party for use during the period. In particular, the authorisations should be time-limited and not provide any expectation of renewal beyond the transition period or confer any preferential status in relation to future authorisation decisions. The authorisations should also remain subject to existing spectrum management obligations, including compliance with applicable technical conditions, coordination requirements, interference management obligations and any relevant coverage or service commitments. In addition, operators should not be permitted to materially expand the scope of their existing rights, deploy new services outside the scope of current authorisations through the transition period which could alter the competitive landscape ahead of a future award process.

It is also important that the transition arrangements preserve flexibility for Ofcom to implement the future regime once established. The long-term framework may differ materially from the current authorisation model depending on future policy decisions, market developments and international regulatory developments, including the outcome of the EU legislative process. The design of any interim authorisation should therefore avoid creating barriers that could constrain Ofcom's future options.

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.

On balance a three-year fixed period is an appropriate duration for the interim authorisation. It provides sufficient certainty for existing operators to continue providing services and making operational decisions, while recognising that the arrangement is intended to be temporary pending the development of a long-term UK MSS framework. A shorter period could create unnecessary regulatory uncertainty and would not reflect the likely timelines for European harmonisation activities to conclude, whereas a longer period could begin to blur the distinction between a transitional arrangement and a long-term authorisation framework. We note that in the event that a longer transitional period is required to the long-term framework, then it would be open to Ofcom to provide a further short extension.

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.

Nil response

Future Use of 2GHz MSS Consultation

Vodafone Submission

August 2026



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.

A licensing approach for satellite operators during the interim period is not appropriate and should not be pursued. The purpose of the transition period is simply to maintain continuity of existing services and ensure that spectrum continues to be used while a long-term UK MSS framework is developed. Introducing a new licensing regime would represent a significant change to the existing authorisation model despite the temporary nature of the arrangement, creating unnecessary complexity and regulatory burden when the priority should be stability and continuity.

A new licensing framework would also create uncertainty and risks of competitive distortion. The grant of spectrum licences, even on an interim basis, could confer commercial advantages or create expectations regarding future spectrum access ahead of any longer-term authorisation process. The transition period should not be used to introduce measures that have the potential to affect future competitive outcomes or prejudice the design of the permanent framework.

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.

The approach to fees during the interim authorisation period should reflect the transitional nature of the regime. The primary objective of the interim arrangements is to maintain continuity while Ofcom develops and consults on a longer-term licensing framework.

Where the interim authorisation is limited to a continuation of existing operations and does not permit the deployment of new services, expansion of existing rights, trading, leasing or the creation of additional commercial opportunities, there is a reasonable basis for retaining the current approach during the transition period. In those circumstances, the purpose of the authorisation is simply to avoid disruption pending the introduction of the permanent framework. Introducing a fundamentally different charging regime for what is intended to be a temporary and administrative measure would create unnecessary complexity and uncertainty.

However, if operators are permitted to launch new services, expand their activities, or otherwise derive additional commercial benefit from continued access to the band, it would not be appropriate for that access to be provided free of charge. Spectrum is a scarce public resource and Ofcom's consultation recognises that there is likely to be demand for access to the 2 GHz MSS band beyond the current licensees. The existence of competing demand demonstrates that access to the spectrum has economic value hence market pricing (Administered Incentive Pricing) must apply.

This point is particularly important given that the interim authorisation is being proposed without a competitive assignment process. Providing ongoing access to valuable spectrum at no cost, while excluding other parties from obtaining equivalent rights, risks creating an outcome that is difficult to justify from both a spectrum management and competition perspective. If operators are permitted to exploit the spectrum commercially during the interim period, fees should form part of the overall framework governing that access.

At the same time, decisions relating to interim fees should be clearly decoupled from the longer-term authorisation framework. The purpose of the interim regime is to bridge the gap between the expiry of the existing licences and the introduction of a permanent solution. It should not be used to establish precedent regarding the future valuation of the band or the charging approach



that may ultimately apply. The appropriate long-term framework will depend on a range of factors, including the authorisation model adopted, the nature of services that are permitted, the level of market demand and the wider public policy objectives that Ofcom seeks to achieve. These issues require separate consideration and should be assessed as part of the future licensing process rather than being determined indirectly through a temporary transition arrangement.

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.

Testing and trialling activities should be permitted during the interim period where they can be accommodated without affecting existing authorised use of the band. Enabling trials would support innovation, allow prospective operators to assess the feasibility of deploying services in the band and provide valuable evidence to inform Ofcom's longer-term decisions. Given the temporary nature of the interim authorisation, this represents a proportionate way of facilitating potential future use of the spectrum without fundamentally changing the existing licensing framework.

The interim regime should facilitate limited testing and trialling where appropriate, but it should not become a mechanism for creating a secondary market, enabling commercial spectrum transfers or granting new parties de facto access rights ahead of a future licensing process. For these reasons, Option 1 is preferred as it facilitates testing and trialling while preserving the integrity of the interim framework and avoiding the introduction of broader commercial rights.

For further details on the interim period see response to question 2.

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

Please see response to question 2.

More broadly, the interim framework should be implemented in a way that preserves Ofcom's flexibility to determine the long-term authorisation model and does not create expectations around future rights or access arrangements.

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

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

The long-term authorisation framework should support the most efficient use of the 2 GHz MSS band, provide regulatory certainty for investment and service deployment, and ensure that the spectrum is assigned in a manner that maximises consumer and societal value.

Option A, which centres authorisation around existing ITU filings, presents a number of challenges from both a policy and spectrum management perspective. While the existence of an ITU filing provides an established international coordination framework, ownership or control of an ITU filing does not in itself demonstrate that a particular operator is best placed to deliver services, maximise the value of the spectrum or meet UK policy objectives. An ITU filing is fundamentally an administrative and coordination mechanism rather than a competitive spectrum assignment process. Reliance on filings as the primary basis for spectrum access risks linking long-term rights to historical regulatory positions rather than future service capability,

Future Use of 2GhZ MSS Consultation

Vodafone Submission

August 2026



investment commitments or consumer outcomes. This could limit opportunities for innovation and reduce Ofcom's ability to ensure that the spectrum is ultimately used by those best placed to deliver the services and coverage that policymakers wish to promote.

Option B would also substantially reduce Ofcom's ability to shape the long-term use of the band. If spectrum rights are effectively vested in existing operators and can subsequently be transferred through commercial arrangements, Ofcom risk losing important tools that would otherwise be available through a competitive award process. This includes the ability to set licence obligations, define minimum service requirements, influence the type of services delivered, and determine the appropriate balance between commercial value and wider public policy objectives. We note that the licences were awarded with a clear expectation of being of finite duration, and any transition to being perpetual would clearly represent a windfall gain for the incumbent licensees.

In addition, Option B would reduce Ofcom's ability to capture the value associated with access to a scarce spectrum resource. The consultation recognises that there is likely to be competing demand for the band and that access rights therefore have material economic value. A framework based primarily on subsequent commercial transactions risks transferring that value to private negotiations rather than allowing it to be reflected through an assignment process designed by the regulator. It would also reduce regulatory control over who ultimately acquires access to the spectrum and whether those parties align with the broader objectives of the UK regime.

This would represent a materially different approach from the framework adopted for perpetual terrestrial mobile licences. In that context, perpetual rights were accompanied by ongoing spectrum fees and by licence obligations addressing wider public policy objectives such as coverage and network deployment. The result was that licensees continued to face costs and remained subject to obligations designed to deliver public benefits. Option B does not provide the same safeguards and could therefore result in a loss of both regulatory control and spectrum value. Further, unlike terrestrial spectrum, there is no evidence base of the value of the spectrum via benchmarking comparative spectrum awards and therefore it would be difficult for Ofcom to determine an appropriate fee.

A competitive award process is the most appropriate mechanism for determining long-term access to the band. A competitive process allows Ofcom to assess competing use cases, establish clear award criteria, attach appropriate licence conditions and ensure that spectrum is assigned in a manner consistent with policy objectives. However, the effectiveness of any competitive award will be heavily influenced by its relationship with developments in Europe. For that reason, a purely UK-specific approach under Option C raises significant practical and operational concerns.

The technical characteristics of emerging D2D services mean that the value of UK spectrum rights cannot be assessed in isolation from broader European authorisations. As demonstrated by interference and coordination assessments for D2D deployments, service performance and spectrum utility are heavily influenced by cross-border coordination requirements and operational constraints. Contrary to popular perception, the impact of these requirements are not restricted to international border areas and instead extend significantly across UK geography. Depending on the outcome of European licensing decisions, substantial mitigation measures may be required to protect neighbouring networks and services, with potentially significant impacts on the availability and utility of the spectrum within the UK. The value of UK rights is therefore intrinsically linked whether alignment with the wider European framework is achieved.

If Ofcom conducts a competitive award ahead of European decisions, bidders will face substantial uncertainty regarding the practical usability and long-term value of the spectrum. It would be

Future Use of 2GHz MSS Consultation

Vodafone Submission

August 2026



difficult for any applicant to determine the value of the rights being awarded before the broader European framework is known. This risks producing suboptimal bidding behaviour and inefficient assignment outcomes. For these reasons, a long-term framework that is aligned as closely as possible with the emerging European authorisation model would be optimal. Alignment would maximise spectrum efficiency, reduce coordination complexity, support economies of scale and provide greater certainty for investment in next-generation D2D services.

At the same time, alignment should not mean that UK interests are simply deferred to decisions taken elsewhere. There remains an important role for the UK Government and Ofcom to engage actively in the European process to ensure that the eventual framework appropriately reflects UK requirements and market priorities. The objective should therefore be a framework that is aligned with the EU approach wherever possible, while ensuring that UK operators and users are not disadvantaged and that UK participation remains possible within any future European licensing structure.

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.

Option D is the preferred approach for long-term authorisation as it provides the clearest and most durable framework for assigning spectrum rights once the current licences expire, while ensuring any decision is reached through a transparent and objective process.

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?

Long-term authorisations should be granted for sufficiently long durations, or on an indefinite basis subject to ongoing compliance with licence conditions, to provide the regulatory certainty required to support investment in satellite networks and associated ground infrastructure. Satellite systems involve significant upfront capital expenditure, long deployment cycles and investment decisions that are made over decades rather than years. A long-term licensing framework would create greater certainty for operators when making investment decisions, support the development of new services and technologies, and reduce the risk that regulatory uncertainty discourages future deployment. This would deliver benefits beyond the satellite sector alone, as MSS increasingly forms part of the wider communications ecosystem, supporting resilience, coverage extension, emergency communications, direct-to-device services and integration with terrestrial mobile networks. Ofcom should therefore place particular weight on the importance of investment certainty, service continuity and efficient long-term spectrum use when determining the future authorisation framework for the 2 GHz MSS band.

12. Do you have any comments on the Impact Assessments?

Nil