



Enabling Drone innovation and security

Additional frequency bands for drone control and drone detection radar

BT's response to Ofcom's consultation and call for input of 16 July 2026

Issue 1.0

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1 Introduction

BT welcomes Ofcom's consultation and call for inputs¹ on proposals to provide access to two additional bands for drone control, to make two further bands available for drone detection radars, and to gather information on future spectrum requirements for drones.

The global drone industry is growing rapidly, and BT welcomes Ofcom's initiative to address the regulatory and spectrum requirements needed to support its continued growth in the UK. BT has been active for several years in developing drone-related service propositions, including control and data communications capabilities and requirements, as well as drone detection methods that can support countermeasures against illegal use.

Our responses to the consultation questions are provided in section 2 below.

2 Response to consultation questions

Question 1: Do you have any comments on our impact assessments as set out in Annex 1? Please specify whether your comments relate to:

- our wider impact assessment;
- our equality impact assessment; or
- our Welsh language impact assessment.

BT agrees with Ofcom's impact assessment set out in Annex 1 of the consultation document.

Question 2: Do you agree with our assessment of the 450 MHz and 5030 – 5091 MHz bands for drone control links? Do you agree there is demand for these bands in the UK (please identify any relevant use cases and locations in your response)? Are there any other frequency bands we should consider for control links?

BT agrees that making available these additional frequency bands for drone control is a positive development that is welcomed. Even though there are significant constraints on the availability of the spectrum, there is still some worthwhile benefits from making the bands available.

We note that the availability of the 450 MHz band is significantly constrained geographically. However, we can envisage potential use for rural or offshore applications. With no long-term commitment, it poses a commercial risk for anyone looking to rely on the band for products. However, we recognise that short-term availability could be useful.

The availability of part of the 5030-5091MHz band, as currently proposed, does not give much beyond what an innovation and trial licence for testing could provide, other than the ability to use the spectrum for commercial (charged for) services. With no long-term commitment, it poses a commercial risk for anyone looking to integrate the technology in products. We nevertheless see some benefit in making it available for the short-term at least.

¹ [Consultation - Enabling drone innovation and security](#)

Question 3: Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to coordinating drones with other users of the 450 MHz band? In your response, please indicate whether it relates to co-channel or adjacent channel use, and provide evidence for any coexistence issues raised.

BT agrees with Ofcom's proposed approach.

Question 4: Do you have any comments on our proposed 450 MHz drone authorisation approach?

BT agrees with Ofcom's proposed approach.

Please provide any specific views (including technical justification where relevant) on:

- the proposed technical conditions, including operating height AGL, power, channel bandwidth, designated service area, and number of base stations;

We note that an altitude restriction of 100m is proposed for the 450 MHz drone spectrum use (and that CAA restrictions on altitude of drone flights may also apply). This seems reasonable but Ofcom should be open to reviewing this in future if necessary.

- the proposed non-technical conditions, including licence fees and term, frequency flexibility and complying with CAA rules and radio equipment standards; and

BT agrees with Ofcom's approach.

- reviewing our initial authorisation approach.

BT agrees with Ofcom's approach.

Question 5: Do you have any comments on our proposed 5030 –5091 MHz drone authorisation approach?

BT agrees with Ofcom's proposed approach.

Please provide any specific views (including technical justification where relevant) on:

- the portion of the band proposed for early release (5040 –5060 MHz);

BT is content with this portion of the band being made available initially.

- the proposed technical parameters and approach to coordinating drones and/or protecting other users of the band; and

BT has no comments on Ofcom's proposals.

- the proposal to phase out licences once there is global harmonisation, the required transition period and sunset clause.

BT has no comments on Ofcom's proposals.

Question 6: Do you have comments on our proposal to create a new drone detection radar licence for the 24 GHz band, including the proposed technical and non-technical conditions, the proposed draft licence in Annex 12, and our coexistence analysis in Annex 6? Please provide evidence for any issues raised.

BT welcomes Ofcom's proposals.

Question 7: Do you have comments on our proposal to create a new drone detection radar licence for the 16 GHz band on a case-by-case basis, including the proposed technical and non-technical conditions and proposed draft licence in Annex 12? Please provide evidence for any issues raised.

BT welcomes Ofcom's proposals.

It would be helpful if Ofcom would consider and provide its position on the following requests:

- Could the option to cover multiple predefined sites be included as an option in the 16 GHz licence? For example, could it include up to five individual sites within a single application, particularly where the same radar may be moved between those locations?
- Can Ofcom support a rapid or emergency authorisation process for responding to drone incidents at locations that are not already licensed? For example, could temporary authorisation be granted quickly in exceptional circumstances involving government, defence, police, or critical national infrastructure?

Question 8: Have you identified any other frequency bands we should consider for drone control links in the longer term?

No, BT has not identified any other frequency bands.

Question 9: Do you have any comments related to the existing satellite frequencies available for drone control links?

BT has no comments.

Question 10: What are your needs and priorities for accessing spectrum for drone safety? Do you have interest in future use of 15 GHz and/or 76 GHz, or other specific frequencies and bands for similar drone safety use?

BT has no comments.

Question 11: Do you have any interest in ground based UAT to complement the aerial component in 978 MHz licences?

BT has no comments.

Question 12: Are you interested in or do you have any plans to trial the use of ISAC for drone detection purposes?

ISAC is of potential interest for Drones detection/low altitude situational awareness. BT is following the developments in standards and regulatory discussions.

Question 13: Do you have any other comments on this consultation document?

Would Ofcom consider making available a comparable licence to the proposed 16 GHz licence for radar detection but for radar systems operating in the X-band?