

**Question 1: How should Ofcom manage the process of taking advice from users, regulators and government on efficient apportionment of AIP fees in the maritime and aeronautical sectors? Are any new institutional arrangements needed?:**

Lomond Mountain Rescue Team supports the view that voluntary and Charitable organisations set up to save or preserve life ought to be involved in the consultation process.

It is absolutely essential that the voluntary and charitable sectors are fully involved in this consultation exercise. All too often there is a misunderstanding of the potential impact of commercial decisions on these organisations particularly when the preservation of life is involved. Decisions on operational requirements based on commercial decisions can often fail to take into account operational needs which transcend purely commercial factors.

Only today (7th November 2008) a Coastguard helicopter was grounded in the Shetlands because of a European Working Time Directive issue. This helicopter service is of course sub contracted from the private sector i.e. a commercial operation. While this is not quite the same as the issue at stake here, it nevertheless highlights the difference that commercial considerations can have on the operation of business and that is of real concern where the preservation of life is concerned.

**Question 2: If you consider that our proposals for pricing ground station users for any spectrum would be likely to have a detrimental impact on safety, please let us know. In order for us to understand your assessment fully, it would be helpful if you could outline the mechanisms whereby this might happen.?:**

As a charitable organisation, to be charged to use frequencies within the UK SAR Band Plan would inflict additional expense that will seriously impact on SAR provision with the Lomond and Trossachs area. The worst case scenario being that we could not afford radio comms, putting the life of any casualty and/or team members at risk.

Communications is a vital to the safety of my team members and for those they are sent out to help.

**Question 3: Do you have any evidence which indicates that AIP charged to ground stations could have a material detrimental impact on UK competitiveness?:**

Lomond MRT supports the view of the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland to this question, i.e. The Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland does not see how allocation of what is a small part of the VHF spectrum to communication safety amongst rescue teams would harm UK competitiveness, especially when land based rescue is carried out by volunteers at very little cost to the UK government.

Given that Mountain rescue is a voluntary service, I am sure that the vast majority of

the population, whether they use the hills or not, will be supportive of the view that where life is a risk, commercial considerations should take second place.

**Question 4: Taking into account the information available in this document, including that set out in Annex 5, our initial views on VHF radiocommunications licence fees and on the reference rates for bands in other uses, and any information you have about the organisations to whom we are proposing to charge fees, please provide any evidence that you think is relevant to us in considering the financial impact of the fees we intend to propose for VHF radiocommunications, or for other uses:**

Increased charging to use the UK SAR Band Plan would require additional time and effort of volunteers to raise additional funding at the expense of training time. Additional monies for radio use would necessarily compromise funding of other vital rescue equipment.

**Question 5: Do you agree that there is little to be gained, in terms of economic efficiency, from charging AIP to WT Act licences for aircraft:**

Lomond MRT has no view.

**Question 6: Do you consider that we should discount fees for any particular user or type of user? Specifically, do you consider that there should be a discount for charities whose object is the safety of human life in an emergency:**

In addition to the view of the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland, Lomond MRT supports a 100% discount for all users of the UK SAR Band Plan. Whilst in comparison to commercial usage, our usage is negligible and thus additional revenue raised will be small, the real cost to MR teams such as Lomond, would be significant.

**Question 7: Do you agree that Ofcom should apply AIP to ground stations? use of maritime and aeronautical VHF radiocommunications channels, to help manage growing congestion in current use and to ensure that the cost of denying access to this spectrum by potential alternative applications is faced by current users?:**

Only if radiocommunication channels are being used outside of a rescue situation and that safety and preservation of life is not involved.

**Question 8: Do you agree with our initial view that it would be appropriate to apply a pricing system similar to that already existing for Business Radio licences to maritime and aeronautical VHF communications? If not, what are your reasons for proposing that we should develop a fee structure for maritime and aeronautical VHF channels which is distinct from that already established for Business Radio?:**

Voluntary and charitable organisations set up to support the Police in providing search and rescue capabilities should be exempt from any commercial considerations.

**Question 9: Are there any short term reasons specific to the sector(s) why it would be inappropriate to apply fees from April 2009?:**

Please see my response to Question 8.

**Question 10: Ofcom would welcome stakeholders' views on the factors which should be taken into account when apportioning fees between individual users of radars and racons:**

Lomond MRT has no view on this matter.

**Question 11: Do you agree with our initial view that a reference rate of £126k per 1 MHz of national spectrum for L band and S band radar spectrum would achieve an appropriate balance between providing incentives to ensure efficient use of spectrum while guarding against the risks of regulatory failure in setting the reference rate too high? If you consider a different rate would be more appropriate, please provide any evidence that you think we should take into account.:**

Lomond MRT feels that any organisation contributing to the UK Search and Rescue Framework must be exempt from any policy of charging.

**Question 12: Do you agree with our initial view that a reference rate of £25k per single MHz of national spectrum would be appropriate for deriving fees for licences to use X band radar?:**

See answer to Question 11.

**Question 13: Do you agree that, generally, spectrum used by aeronautical radionavigation aids is currently uncongested? Do you believe that this may change during the next few years and, if so, approximately when?:**

Lomond MRT has no view on this.

**Question 14: Do you agree with the basis on which Ofcom has arrived at its initial view on reference rates for aeronautical radionavigation aids?:**

Lomond MRT has no view on this.

**Comments:**

Given the vital role that voluntary Mountain Rescue Teams and others play in the UK Search & Rescue Framework, it is particularly disappointing that their work could be seriously impeded by this proposed charging to use radio frequencies. At best this will seriously affect the operational capabilities of each team; at worst, loss of the ability to communicate could jeopardise the safety of casualties and/or individual team members in wild and rough country.

I do not see why important work done by voluntary teams in the effort to save life must be treated under the same commercial rules, neither would, I suspect, those members of the public who generously donate and whose contributions we depend upon to keep MRTs operational.