

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?:

Efficiency as measured by economic terms is flawed if it purely measures how much somebody is willing to pay for that section of the radio spectrum. The true cost to society is the economic value of the spectrum minus the cost of providing an alternative to rescue services such as the RNLI and Mountain Rescue.

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.?:

It is hard to see an alternative for radio communication in the remote mountain areas of the United Kingdom. Mobile phone coverage is extremely poor and unlikely to be improved by commercial companies due to the low economic return. Any British hillwalker or mountaineer will be aware of the difficulty of obtaining mobile phone reception on the hills, and during a rescue situation it's hard to see how any curtailing of the current access to radio frequencies could not be detrimental to both rescue parties and those they seek to save.

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

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:

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:

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:

More than a discount. These charities receive no financial support from the state whose services they replace - maintaining the status quo ensures that the state has adequate coverage with no direct cost to the taxpayer. As stated above, whilst these

areas of the spectrum could be auctioned off, the true value would be the monies paid for access minus the cost of providing a viable alternative for rescue charities. The current process appears to only consider the monies that would be paid - I would submit that from a taxpayer perspective this is a false economy.

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?:

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?:

Business and safety at sea and in the air are two entirely different matters. Just as the building of lighthouses makes navigation around the coast safer and so reduces the risk of trading with the UK, so does the access to rescue services who may be deeply compromised by this move.

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

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:

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.:

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?:

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?:

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

Comments:

I am resolutely against any proposal that would risk the current operations of MRT and RNLI through financial penalties. The current pricing regime was created to ensure efficient use of the current spectrum by penalising organisations that used more spectrum than was required. However applying this in a simplistic way essentially guarantees the spectrum for whoever pays most privileges the commercial over the functional to the detriment of society as a whole. A proper analysis of the current situation would show that the wider value of ringfencing this spectrum is greater than the purely commercial, in terms of the benefit to shipping and leisure across the UK.