

Statement of reasons for renewing the Wireless Telegraphy Act licences held by the British Broadcasting Corporation (“BBC”)

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1. It is Ofcom’s role, as the communications regulator in the UK, to manage the use of the radio spectrum and to issue licences under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 for the purposes of authorising bodies and individuals to make use of certain frequencies. The British Broadcasting Corporation (“BBC”) currently holds a number of these licences for the purposes of transmitting its radio and television broadcast services across the UK. The BBC has, for the last ten years, provided these services in accordance with a Royal Charter which was put in place by the Government in 2006, and with a Framework Agreement which was entered into in the same year between the BBC and the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The Royal Charter is due to expire on 31 December 2016. Similarly, the licences issued by Ofcom to the BBC under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 are also currently due to expire on 31 December 2016.
2. On 15 December 2016, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published a new Royal Charter and a new Framework Agreement which it has entered into with the BBC. Together, these documents set out the arrangements by which the BBC will continue to provide its broadcast services in the UK, and the regulatory regime which shall apply. The new Royal Charter is due to continue in force until 31 December 2027.
3. In order for the BBC to be able to comply with its obligations under the new Royal Charter and Framework Agreement and to continue transmitting its services on the current radio frequencies, the duration of its Wireless Telegraphy Act licences need to be extended. On 31 October 2016, Ofcom put to the BBC its proposals for varying the duration of its licences, to which the BBC provided its consent on 11 November 2016. Ofcom has, on that basis, decided to vary the licences issued to the BBC under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 so that these licences may, like the new Royal Charter, continue to operate until 31 December 2027.