JRC Response to initial consultation on Independent Audit of Spectrum Holdings Conducted by Professor Martin Cave March 2005

1. JRC welcomes the opportunity to comment on this consultation. The audit is a positive contribution to the development of a more innovative and responsive spectrum management regime in the UK.

2. The Audit follows a long a series of Reviews on use of radio spectrum in the UK. The review team may find it helpful to consider previous work in this area, and the extent to which previous endeavours to achieve similar objectives have succeeded, and if not, why not. This includes (excluding Professor Cave's own work in this area):

- Report of the Independent Review of the Radio Spectrum (30-960 MHz), chaired by Dr J H H Merriman, published in 1983
- Report of the Independent Review of Defence Radio Spectrum (470-3400 MHz), chaired by Sir Kenneth Corfield, published in June 1988.
- Report of the Radio Spectrum Review Committee, Stage 2: 3400 MHz to 30 GHz, chaired by Sir Kenneth Corfield, published in May 1991.
- Report of the Radio Spectrum Review Committee, Stage 3: 28-470 MHz, chaired by Sir Colin Fielding, published in January 1994.

3. Notwithstanding the conclusions of previous work in this area and general public perceptions of defence use of spectrum, JRC Ltd, and its predecessor, the Joint Radio Committee of the Fuel and Power Industries, have always had a positive relationship with the Ministry of Defence in relation to use of the radio spectrum.

4. As in the case of defence sharing spectrum with mobile phone usage in the early days of the "ETACS" bands, and the 380-400 MHz Tetra band, the Ministry of Defence appears to have found it easier to share spectrum with civil users where there is a coherent management structure for the civil user with whom defence users can co-operate with confidence.

Background

A. JRC Ltd is a wholly owned joint venture between the UK electricity and gas industries specifically created to manage the radio spectrum allocations for these industries used to support emergency and safety critical operations. JRC also represents gas and electricity interests to government on radio issues.

B. JRC manages approximately 4 MHz of spectrum for PMR applications and telemetry & telecontrol services. JRC created and manages a national cellular plan for co-ordinating frequency assignments for these substantial networks which support the UK's strategic national infrastructure.

C. JRC manages VHF and UHF allocations. The networks provide comprehensive geographical coverage to support the installation, maintenance and repair of plant in all weather conditions on a 24 hour/365 days per year basis.

D. The Scanning Telemetry Band is used by radio based System Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) networks which control and monitor safety critical gas and electricity industry plant and equipment throughout the country. These networks provide reliable communications to unmanned sites and plant in remote locations.

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