



~~Prime Minister:~~

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X is particularly sensitive,
especially if some people are
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

deprived of
a broadcast
service.

19. October 1982

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Dear Patrick

As you know, the team under the chairmanship of Dr Merriman which is examining the use of spectrum in the range 30 - 960 MHz has submitted its interim report on the future use of TV Bands I and III. We now have to decide what to do about the recommendations of this report which was published on 22 September as Cmnd 8666.

I propose to accept the main recommendation that these bands should be used for a combination of land mobile radio services and broadcasting ancillary services used for operational control and programme production, with priority where necessary going to land mobiles. The broadcasters, whom we have consulted, are naturally disappointed that the bands are to be lost for new broadcasting use but they clearly recognise that the decision is likely to go against them. This means that the provisional allocation of 30 MHz of spectrum for radiotelephones which I announced on 15 June can now be confirmed. There is some pressure to increase this allocation and we can consider this further when a decision has been taken about the licensing of radiotelephone services under the British Telecommunications Act 1981. On a point of detail the band 41 - 47 MHz is likely to be reserved primarily for military mobile use although some sharing with low power civil applications may be possible.

X | I am urgently considering, in consultation with the BBC and IBA, the subsidiary recommendation of the Merriman team that the present programme of closure of the TV 405 line transmitters should be completed by the end of 1984 instead of in 1986. While I am sympathetic to this proposal, we need before deciding on it to be clear on the implications, in terms of the number of people in various parts of the United Kingdom who might be expected to be still dependent on the 405 line service by the end of 1984. There are also some implications here for possible interference with reception on cable systems which use Band I and III frequencies to distribute 625 line programmes, and on which many viewers rely.

... If you and other colleagues agree I think we should now announce our acceptance of the main recommendation and would propose to arrange for a PQ to be answered early in the new Session on the lines of the attached draft. If you have any comments perhaps you could let me know by 3 November.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, our colleagues on E Committee, the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours sincerely
Billie

The Rt. Hon. Patrick Jenkin, MP.

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION ON THE FUTURE USE OF TV BANDS I AND III

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the recently published report of the Independent Review of the Radio Spectrum under the chairmanship of Dr Merriman about the future use of television Bands I and III.

DRAFT REPLY

I am indebted to Dr Merriman and his colleagues for producing so quickly their careful and thorough analysis of the issues involved.

The Report recommends that TV Bands I and III should be used for a combination of land mobile radio services and broadcasting ancillary services used for operational control and programme production, with priority where necessary going to land mobiles. The Report also recommends that the closure of the obsolete 405 line transmitters, at present scheduled for completion in 1986, should be accelerated to allow those changes to take effect from the beginning of 1985.

The Government accepts the recommendation as to the future use of these bands, and work will begin as soon as possible on the detailed planning of the bands for mobile radio use and on the development of a frequency allocation plan for the broadcast ancillary services. The possibility of giving the radio amateur service an appropriate allocation in the 50-54 MHz band will be examined in the course of the detailed planning of Band I as Dr Merriman and his colleagues have suggested. The implications of accelerating the programme of closures of the 425 line transmitters are being urgently studied and a further statement

will be made as soon as possible.

In the light of this decision the provisional allocation of frequencies for radiotelephones, which I announced on 15 June 1982, can be confirmed. This spectrum will be made progressively available in accordance with the notes issued by my Rt hon Friend the Secretary of State for Industry for the guidance of companies applying for licences to run a national radiotelephone system.

Review of Spectra . Broodectry