Scottish Government Response to Ofcom's Call for Input: Future demand for mobile broadband spectrum and consideration of potential candidate bands

Scotland's Digital Future: Infrastructure Action Plan [1] outlines the Scottish Government's commitment to a future-proofed infrastructure that will deliver world-class digital connectivity across the whole of Scotland by 2020. This underpins an ambition for Scotland to become a world-class digital nation and requires that people living, working and visiting Scotland can communicate and connect instantly using any device, anywhere, anytime. We view future spectrum bands as having significant potential opportunity for Scotland to realise this vision, and therefore we welcome the opportunity to provide a high level response to this call for inputs.

Spectrum requirements forecast (Questions 1 -7)

The Scottish Government notes that this is a long-term exercise (2015-2030), and that there currently exists very little data to support it. We acknowledge that there exists a few publicly available reports/forecasts – mentioned in the call to input – but the majority do not cover beyond 2016. The Scottish Government does not hold any supporting evidence of its own which could add value to this section, therefore we have not provided any comments. We acknowledge that Ofcom has commissioned a new study on this issue in parallel to this consultation and we would be interested to have sight of the outcomes of this piece of work.

Frequency ranges under discussion (Questions 8-10)

The Scottish Government offers the following views in response to Question 8; these spectrum bands also represent our view of what bands represent priorities for future mobile broadband.

Question 8: What are your views about the pros and cons of the frequency ranges in Table A6.1 in Annex 6 for mobile broadband and for existing applications using this spectrum? Do you have views on other bands that are not in Table A6.1?

Question 10: What are your views on bands which should be a priority for consideration for mobile broadband?

- 470-694 MHz – This band is useful for extensive coverage and complement the 700 & 800 MHz bands. Currently occupied by Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT), future use of this band must be negotiated on the basis of productivity gains and other factors.

- 2700-2900 MHz – This band presents the potential prospect of almost continuous 400 MHz of spectrum, together with the 2.6 GHz band, currently an identified International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT) spectrum band and already licenced in the UK.

[1] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/01/1487/0

Spectrum within this band is included in the UK Government's programme to release 500 MHz of public sector spectrum.

- 3400-3800 MHz – This frequency range has the advantage of defined profiles on 3GGP release 10 (operating bands 42 and 43) and the potential to provide 400 MHz of spectrum for mobile broadband use. Disadvantages are the lower range being MOD-managed spectrum, although included in the UK Government's programme to release 500 MHz of public sector spectrum and upper range being used by the FSS (Fixed Satellite Services) although lower usage in Europe.