Met Office Response to London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Draft Spectrum Plan

The Met Office has the following comments in response to the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games consultation:

WLANs operating in the 5.600 - 5.650GHz meteorological radar band can potentially cause serious interference to the weather radars operated by the Met Office. This can compromise the Met Office's ability to predict and monitor severe weather events that threaten the safety of life and preservation of property. The Met Office provides UK Government Agencies, Emergency Services and the public with critical information in the periods before, during and after severe weather events, and some other events including the monitoring of the deposition and dispersal of airborne hazardous substances. The serious flooding that occurred during the summer of 2007 caused over £3 billion of damage to property, caused significant disruption to transport and threatened water and power supplies.

The meteorological radars will therefore have an important safety role during the London Olympics as well as providing information on weather conditions that could have significant implications for the organisers and for those attending the Games. Reference is made in the consultation document at para 4.16 to a requirement that all wireless equipment should comply with the relevant ETSI standards. It is particularly important that RLAN devices operating in the 5.600 - 5.650 GHz band conform to the latest standard EN 301 893 (currently v1.5.1) as the earlier versions of this standard do not provide sufficient protection to meteorological radars. There have already been a number of instances of serious interference to meteorological radars from RLAN in various European countries and elsewhere.

The recent changes to the ETSI standard should provide a greater level of protection to meteorological radars from RLAN devices that conform to it. It will be important that the use of RLAN devices that do not conform to the latest ETSI standard should be prohibited. Also, concerns remain as to how effective DFS will be when large numbers of RLANs are deployed in relatively small areas. This effect is also referred to at para 13.13 of the consultation document. Furthermore, when interference has

occurred it has taken Ofcom a significant amount of time, up to a month, to detect and eliminate the sources. Clearly, more effective measures will be needed during the Games.

For the above reasons the Met Office requests:
i) That all RLAN devices to be used for the Games be registered, despite their licence-exempt status. Registration should include a declaration that the devices conform to the latest ETSI standard.
ii) That the density of deployment of RLANs be limited in particular venues
iii) That a rapid response capability should be provided to track down and eliminate RLANs that cause interference to radar.

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