

Dear Sirs,

I responded to the original consultation 'Wireless Telegraphy Act Licence Fee Proposals for encouraging internet licensing'. In short, my comments were:

- a) Broadly in favour of the proposal;
- b) Concerned about alienation of the elderly with limited skills and/or internet access; and
- c) Concerned about the possible alienation of disabled people who have limited ability or do not have the relevant equipment or software to enable them to access the internet.

In the response to the consultation, Ofcom has clearly noted the first and second comments, which were well made by others who responded as well. However, no note appears to have been taken of the third point. That is to say, the third point appears to have not been considered, rather than having been considered and rejected.

I wish to reiterate that, web site accessibility issues notwithstanding, it may be discriminatory to (more or less) single out disabled people who may be forced to use a postal process because they either cannot afford the relevant web browser accessibility tools (such as screen readers and so on) or whose carers or assistants are unable to make adequate use of the internet.

Although many web sites are now quite accessible to those who have particular difficulties, it is not clear to me, at least, that the equipment (hardware and/or software) required to make use of such web sites is available at a reasonable cost to those who may be perhaps least able to afford it.

Whilst I note that Ofcom has, for the time being at least, shelved plans to charge for postal renewals for certain sectors, I feel that it should consider making a special case for those who have limited ability to use the internet. There would, in my view, then be four classes of user: Those under 21, those over 75, handicapped or disabled users and the remainder of the user population. I should like to see Ofcom recognise that separate factors may be required to be considered before establishing a charge for postal licensing by those who have disabilities. These factors might include, but are not limited to, the affordability, relative to other internet access systems, of the special equipment required to enable these users to gain access to the licensing facility and the effectiveness, following tests, of the Ofcom licensing web facility when used with these tools.

I am sure that the relevant support agencies and charitable bodies can provide proper advice to Ofcom on the entry criteria for this class (which may be more stringent than being simply registered as disabled) and the factors to be considered before a determination that such users are sufficiently able to access the web facility that charging for postal service would not be discriminatory.

Finally, I note that (for my browser at least) my original response has been garbled (truncated) on the Ofcom web site. I should be happy to provide full text of it again should that be required.

Yours faithfully

Ian Beeby
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