

Communications Authority press release

The following is issued on behalf of the Communications Authority:

This press release summarises the decisions of the Communications Authority (CA) following its 106th meeting held in April 2021:

CA grants approval-in-principle (AIP) for Fantastic Television Limited (Fantastic TV)'s application for using spectrum as an additional transmission means

Pursuant to Conditions 10.2 and 30 of the domestic free television programme (free TV) service licence of Fantastic TV, the CA today (April 29) granted an AIP to Fantastic TV in respect of its application for using spectrum, on top of fixed network, as an additional means of transmission for the delivery of its free TV service.

"In May 2020, Fantastic TV applied to the CA for the assignment of a digital terrestrial television (DTT) frequency channel (i.e. the 478-486 MHz band), on top of fixed network, to deliver its licensed free TV service," said a spokesman of the CA. "The above-mentioned band to be vacated upon the completion of migration of relevant DTT frequency channels by December 1, 2021 will be reserved for Fantastic TV's use."

The use of spectrum in the requested band for TV broadcast will provide an additional means of transmission, and Fantastic TV has committed to providing a new digital TV programme channel on top of its existing two integrated channels. The CA considers that it would be in the viewers' interest for the CA to grant an AIP for using spectrum to Fantastic TV. "The decision made today can provide viewers with more programming choices by enabling households currently beyond the reach of Fantastic TV's fixed network to receive its free TV service and facilitating the launch of an additional TV programme channel to viewers within 12 months and 18 months respectively from the grant of the AIP," added the spokesman.

The grant of the AIP would enable Fantastic TV to proceed with the preparatory work for the spectrum use and transmission network planning as per its proposed timeline pending vacation of the relevant DTT frequency channel by December 1, 2021.

In granting the AIP, the CA is satisfied that Fantastic TV has demonstrated its commitment to comply with the additional conditions that the CA imposes, which are pertinent to spectrum assignment (note) to ensure that Fantastic TV would operate on a level playing field as the spectrum-based incumbent free TV licensees.

The CA will monitor Fantastic TV's progress in honouring its commitments and compliance with the terms and conditions of the AIP before granting a formal approval of its application.

In May 2016, the Government granted a free TV licence to Fantastic TV for the provision of free TV service in Hong Kong by using a fixed network as its transmission means.

Updated investment plan of Metro Broadcast Corporation Limited (Metro)

Upon an application by Metro, a sound broadcasting licensee, the CA approved Metro's updated six-year investment plan for 2016 to 2022. Under the updated investment plan, the total investment by Metro for the period will be adjusted from around \$685 million to around \$617 million, comprising around \$22 million for capital investment and around \$594 million for programming investment.

In approving the application, the CA noted that Metro's original plan was formulated back in 2014 and that its business has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the economic downturn. Under its updated investment plan, Metro pledged to maintain the standard and quality of the sound broadcasting service and to continue to comply with all applicable statutory requirements and licence conditions.

Broadcast complaint

The CA considered a complaint case concerning three editions of the television programme "Property Outlook" broadcast on October 10, 17 and 24, 2020, on the Finance Info Channel of Hong Kong Cable Television Limited (HKCTV). The CA decided that HKCTV should be advised to observe more closely the relevant provisions of the Generic Code of Practice on Television Advertising Standards. Details of the case are at www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/en/content_713/appx_20210429.pdf.

Note: Including additional programme requirements, an updated investment plan, and a set of new performance bonds tied to the launch of a new TV programme channel, the service coverage specific to its spectrum-based transmission and the investment expenditure.