

Public consultation on assignment arrangements of additional spectrum in 4.9 GHz band launched

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (SCED) and the Communications Authority (CA) today (July 22) jointly launched a public consultation on the arrangements for assignment of an additional 80 MHz of spectrum in the 4.9 GHz band (4.80 – 4.96 GHz) and the spectrum utilisation fee (SUF) for the provision of public mobile services.

"Following the launch of 5G services in April 2020, it is part of our continued efforts to supply additional 5G spectrum to the market, signifying our strong commitment to supporting long-term 5G development in Hong Kong," a spokesman for the CA said.

"The 4.9 GHz band, with good radio propagation characteristics, is suitable for providing wide area coverage. It can also be deployed at all indoor and outdoor locations in Hong Kong," the spokesman added.

As there are likely to be competing demands for the additional spectrum, the CA proposes to assign the spectrum by way of auction.

As for the related SUF, similar to other spectrum assigned for public mobile services where there are competing demands, it is proposed that the use of the additional spectrum should be subject to an SUF that reflects the full market value. The SUF should be determined by auction with the auction reserve price to be set by the SCED nearer the time.

A spokesman for the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) said, "The auctioning of spectrum will ensure that such a scarce public resource can be put into the hands of the operators who value it most and will consequently put it to the most efficient use for the benefit of the public at large."

Views and comments from the industry and other interested parties are welcome on or before August 18, 2020. After taking into account the views and comments received, the SCED and the CA target to make their decisions in the first quarter of 2021.

The consultation paper can be downloaded from the websites of the CEDB (www.cedb.gov.hk/ccib/eng/paper/pdf/cp20200722_e.pdf) and the CA (www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/en/content_711/cp20200722.pdf).

In 2019, the CA already made available 380 MHz of mid-band spectrum and 4 100 MHz of high-band spectrum for the provision of 5G services, including an earlier batch of 80 MHz of spectrum in the 4.9 GHz band.