

Public consultations on assignment of spectrum in 600/700 MHz bands and re-assignment of spectrum in 850 MHz band launched

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (SCED) and the Communications Authority (CA) today (August 19) jointly launched two public consultation exercises on arrangements for the assignment of spectrum in the 600 MHz and 700 MHz bands and the re-assignment of spectrum in the 850 MHz band as well as the associated spectrum utilisation fee (SUF). The spectrum will be used for the provision of public mobile services.

A spokesman for the CA said that a total of 155 MHz of spectrum in the sub-1 GHz band is proposed to be made available to the industry. It includes 70 MHz of spectrum in each of the 600 MHz and 700 MHz bands made possible after the switching off of analogue television services on November 30, 2020 and the subsequent migration of digital television channels as well as 15 MHz of spectrum in the 850 MHz band due for re-assignment in November 2023.

The 85 MHz of spectrum in the 700 MHz and the 850 MHz bands can be deployed in both indoor and outdoor locations for the provision of public mobile services; while the 70 MHz of spectrum in the 600 MHz band is designated for indoor use to enhance the mobile services provided at indoor hotspots, such as shopping malls and confined areas like premises inside the Mass Transit Railway.

"The superb radio propagation characteristics of the sub-1 GHz band spectrum enable operators to enhance mobile coverage in both indoor and outdoor areas in a very cost-effective manner and also underpin the Internet of Things and other 5G applications," the spokesman said.

As there are likely to be competing demands for the spectrum, the CA proposes to assign it by way of auction. Prospective spectrum assignees may deploy the acquired spectrum in a technology neutral manner, including for the provision of 5G services.

As for the related SUF, similar to other spectrum assigned for public mobile services where there are competing demands, it is proposed that it should reflect the full market value. The SUF will be determined through auction, with the auction reserve prices to be set by the SCED nearer the time.

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

Views and comments from the industry and other interested parties are welcome on or before September 15, 2020. After taking into account the views and comments received, the SCED and the CA target to make their respective decisions in the first quarter of 2021.

The respective consultation papers on the 600 MHz and 700 MHz bands and on the 850 MHz band can be downloaded from the websites of the CEDB (www.cedb.gov.hk/ccib/eng/paper/pdf/cp20200819_01_e.pdf and www.cedb.gov.hk/ccib/eng/paper/pdf/cp20200819_02_e.pdf) and the CA (www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/en/content_711/cp20200819_1.pdf and www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/en/content_711/cp20200819_2.pdf).