

Response to the consultation to make a market investigation reference by the CMA on the mobile radio network for the police and emergency services

- The CMA's proposal to make a market investigation reference in respect of the mobile radio network for the police and emergency services should be strongly supported and implemented as a first step in learning what mistakes have been made which have resulted in the current situation and the unsatisfactory market situation which has existed for many years as well as making recommendations or interventions to improve the situation in the short term and establish improved institutional arrangements for the next generation of technology.
- Public international standards such as 5G from 3GPP represent an opportunity to enable widespread competition for the procurement of interoperable system elements from different suppliers allowing regional replacements for the national Airwave system with different contract end dates, but with full roaming between regions for system users.
- Where 3GPP has placed insufficient emphasis on interface standards for the various system elements a national and even international standards body should work to produce specifications to enable the reliable delivery of the services needed by different emergency services, consistent interoperability between different network operators and terminal equipment and stable interfaces with other systems used by users and which rely on the network for communication.
- Just as the standard setting bodies like 3GPP have a rolling and public programme for the development of new technologies, the Government should have a rolling programme of planned requirements, standards, specifications, trials and procurements for all the various system elements to encourage suppliers and network operators to compete on a rolling basis, instead of being dependent on very difficult procurement situations every time the national contract runs out.
- Providing very different service levels and functionality required by emergency services, utilities and transportation systems over public commercial radio networks presents very real and difficult challenges. A full, detailed and published evaluation of this proposal by a fully qualified and independent body should be a requirement before any recommendation is made by the CMA, to avoid the risk of any recommendation for the future of this market including an element which would not work in practice.

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