NEWS RELEASE

The Dynamic Spectrum Alliance welcomes Ofcom's plans to open two more 80 MHz channels in the 5 GHz band to increase Wi-Fi speeds in the UK

Official response and comment from the Dynamic Spectrum Alliance

London, United Kingdom, 26 July 2016: The Dynamic Spectrum Alliance (DSA) welcomes the decision by Ofcom, the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries, to consult on a proposal to increase the amount of spectrum available to Wi-Fi in the 5 GHz band.

Ofcom is proposing to open up an additional 'sub-band', focusing on the 5725-5850 MHz range, within the 5 GHz frequency range for Wi-Fi. The extra sub-band would increase the number of 80 MHz channels available for Wi-Fi from four to six, to accommodate data-hungry applications. The DSA welcomes all these proposals, and this decision would pave the way for larger amounts of data to be carried at faster download speeds in the UK.

"Given almost all new routers and consumer client devices on the market can now use both the 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz bands, this is eminently sensible," said Professor H Nwana, Executive Director of the Dynamic Spectrum Alliance. "Creating two additional 80 MHz channels will be key to relieving the pressure that is currently put on airwaves carrying Wi-Fi signals in the UK, particularly with new and larger bandwidth Wi-Fi standards like 802.11ac."

Following the recent decision by Ofcom to implement TV white space (TVWS) regulations, enabling access to the unused parts of radio spectrum in the 470 to 790 MHz frequency band in the UK, the DSA, which champions spectrum sharing, believes that the next best alternative to license-exempting devices for access and shared spectrum is dynamic spectrum management. Dynamic spectrum management would allow for innovative sharing with different services across the sub-bands, ushering in considerable innovation. The DSA believes the existing static models used for allocating spectrum are inherently inefficient. Exclusive utilisation of spectrum bands when it could be shared in most cases exacerbates the inefficiency even further.

"The DSA is all about promoting and enabling spectrum sharing of all guises. This means we prefer balancing more shared spectrum utilisation over exclusive utilisation, balancing static allocation with more dynamic allocation and balancing licensed regulations with more unlicensed regulation. So naturally, we support plans worldwide to open up more spectrum to unlicensed access from devices and unlicensed sharing," added Nwana.

A core DSA position rests on introducing dynamic spectrum sharing and management in pertinent bands. This would enable access to spectrum to be coordinated in real time (or near-real time), and the amount of spectrum adjusted depending on the service demand at any given moment, whilst taking into account geographic characteristics. In its response to Ofcom, the DSA proposes that such dynamic spectrum thinking would allow for innovative sharing with different services across the sub-bands, ushering in considerable innovation, even in some of 5GHz sub-bands that already has other services operating in them, e.g. Wi-Fi sharing radars in 5725-5850 MHz.

“We believe that Ofcom should continue to take a strong leading position in promoting spectrum sharing. Ofcom should clearly state that where licence-exempt usage is not feasible, sharing should become the default way to access spectrum,” Nwana concluded.

The Ofcom decision to consult on this proposal follows its 2014 Mobile Data Strategy which set the objective of opening additional spectrum for Wi-Fi in the 5 GHz band. The most commonly used spectrum band for Wi-Fi in the UK currently is 2400-2483 MHz but the demand in 5 GHz is rapidly catching up as new equipment standards are developed. The aim is to help ease current and future capacity constraints for Wi-Fi. The 5735-5850 MHz spectrum band is already used for Wi-Fi in a number of other countries, including the US, but is not currently utilised for Wi-Fi in Europe.

The DSA also welcomes Ofcom’s exploration of outdoor restrictions on Wi-Fi access to the 5150-5350 MHz range and encourages its intention to retain a longer term objective to release spectrum in the 5350-5470 MHz and 5850-5925 MHz ranges during the consultation.

“As broadband delivery to the home gets faster, consumers are increasingly expecting their Wi-Fi to keep up with the demand of video streaming, video calls, gaming and remote working simultaneously on one network,” commented Rich Kennedy, Board Director, Dynamic Spectrum Alliance, Chair, IEEE 802.18 Radio Regulatory Technical Advisory Group and Director, Global Spectrum Strategy, HP Enterprise. “To keep up with this consumer demand for high speed Wi-Fi, more spectrum must be made available in the 5 GHz band. Ofcom’s decision to look into opening up two more 80 MHz channels in the 5 GHz band is a great step forward in providing the Wi-Fi coverage UK consumers expect.”

For further information about the Dynamic Spectrum Alliance, please visit www.dynamicspectrumalliance.org/, or follow @dynamicspectrum on Twitter. Alternatively joins the Alliance on Facebook or LinkedIn.

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About the Dynamic Spectrum Alliance

The Dynamic Spectrum Alliance is a global organization advocating for laws and regulations that will lead to more efficient and effective spectrum utilization. The DSA’s membership spans multinationals, small- and medium-sized enterprises, and academic, research, and other organizations from around the world, all working to create innovative solutions that will increase the amount of available spectrum to the benefit of consumers and businesses alike.

For more information, visit: http://www.dynamicspectrumalliance.org/.

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