

5G Spectrum Award Consultation: Frequently Asked Questions

The Jersey Competition Regulatory Authority (the Authority) is responsible for the economic regulation of the telecoms, ports, and postal sectors, and for promoting competition in the supply of goods and services in Jersey.

As part of its work on telecoms, the Authority is consulting on its plans to restart the process of licensing the radio spectrum used to provide 5G services. This restart follows a 2020 decision to put the process on hold, in view of the Covid-19 pandemic and uncertainty over increased network security requirements.

This document contains information on why this consultation is taking place, its approach, focus and potential outcomes.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 5G?

Since first becoming available in the 1970s, mobile phones and the cellular telephony networks they use have evolved to offer increasingly sophisticated services. Underpinning this development path has been a series of common international mobile standards, broadly termed First Generation, or 1G, Second Generation, or 2G, and so on. The most recent is Fifth Generation, or 5G.

What is 5G spectrum?

Mobile devices connect to telecoms networks using invisible radio waves, or spectrum, which allows users to make and receive calls, send messages, connect to the internet, and use other services. 5G spectrum is the portion designated by international standards bodies to support the latest generation of mobile phones and services.

What is the Authority's role in local 5G spectrum?

Spectrum is a limited resource, needing careful management to make sure it is used efficiently and without interference between different users. The UK communications regulator Ofcom manages Jersey's spectrum, issuing licences to operators wanting to use it. The Authority's role is to assess demand for 5G spectrum and make recommendations to Ofcom for issuing any local licences.

Why is the Authority restarting the 5G spectrum award process?

The process to award local 5G licences started in 2018, following the issue of a government telecommunications strategy. The Authority progressed the initiative through 2019 and into 2020 at which point the process was placed on hold due to the developing Covid-19 pandemic and uncertainty over associated network security requirements. At the start of 2022, the Authority judged these factors had become less concerning and that the 5G spectrum award process could restart.

Why has the Authority issued a consultation?

The original 5G spectrum award process involved extensive engagement with local stakeholders and provided considerable and valuable information and feedback, which the Authority intends using within the restarted process wherever relevant. Given time passed since the original process, however, the Authority wants to reassess whether interest in 5G services and demand for 5G spectrum has changed in the intervening period.

What does the consultation contain?

The consultation explains background to the 5G spectrum award process, sets out plans for the restarted process and identifies several key influencing factors the Authority will be considering within any revised approach to assessing applications for 5G spectrum. Taking these factors, and potentially others, into account it invites comments from interested parties on how their interest in 5G and demand for 5G spectrum may have changed since the original process.

How long will the consultation take and what will be the outcome?

The consultation period opens in February 2022 and runs to April 2022. Subject to time needed to assess and understand points raised by contributors, the Authority expects to publish a Revised 5G Spectrum: Statement of Intent as soon as possible after.

Who will carry out the consultation?

An Authority case officer will project manage the consultation, with the support of independent technical, legal or other specialised expertise if necessary.

Where is more information available?

The Authority's website at www.jcra.je contains information on this consultation and previous ones carried out. Background information on the Authority's approach to telecoms regulation can be found at www.jcra.je/competition-and-regulation/telecoms.