

**Draft Core Receiver Requirements Consultation
Intellect Response
September 2006**

Background

Intellect is the UK trade association for the IT, telecoms and electronics industries. Our members account for 80% of these markets and include blue-chip multinationals as well as early stage technology companies. These industries together generate around 10% of UK GDP and 15% of UK trade.

Within its membership, Intellect represents 15 Consumer Electronics companies (see annex 1) who manufacture and market a range of digital television receiver equipment. Intellect has consulted its members from this community and has drawn together a number of industry views relating to the project of the core receiver requirements.

Intellect's response is focussed on the requirements for the Targeted Help Scheme (THS) and the Supply Chain Group will also be responding from a wider, vulnerable groups perspective.

Administration of the THS

Fundamental to the success of the THS will be the efficient management and communication of the scheme. Communication of the scheme to those who could benefit from it will be vital as if this is not handled correctly and sensitively there is potential to confuse consumers and disrupt the market. Intellect believes that given its role in planning and communicating switchover, Digital UK is best place to effectively communicate the THS and administer the scheme.

Benefits of a market-delivery approach

Intellect members felt that the building and supplying of a special very highly specified box is not necessarily the best way to obtain products for the vulnerable sector. There are a number of reasons for this:

- A more moderately specified box closer to that available from the commercial market could provide a better method of obtaining products that are the most modern in design at a competitive price. Other advantages could be gained by not artificially separating the markets and seeking to migrate some traditional 'access' features into mainstream products.
- The market is moving towards the inclusion of some of the access features like 'audio description' and recorded 'closed subtitles' anyway and working closely with manufacturers within the switchover programme can help to move this forward.
- For really special needs, the requirements could be best fulfilled with special remote control handsets that could be programmed to operate with a range of receivers. This could include handsets with larger or very few buttons, buttons with special textures or colours and remotes that give an audio confirmation of the button pressed. A separate independent commercial market could exist for these products that could be subsidised in certain circumstances.
- Specifying a product in 2006 may not take account or advantage of evolving technology that will undoubtedly take place over the switchover years.

THS commercial issues

Intellect believes that the core requirements list forms a profile of a product that does not presently exist in the commercial market and should it be introduced, would not find enough customers to make it a commercially viable product. Some members also feel that it may also not be in the best interests of the THS to have a “one products fits all” approach but rather look at a range of equipment to achieve best value. However, broadly speaking and subject to some reservations outlined below, the requirements could be met within currently available technology.

Given this situation, manufacturers would require a suitable ‘contract of supply’ for a product to be designed and built as specified. For this to be viable manufacturers would understandably require a firm commitment from the purchaser specifying numbers to be supplied and delivery dates. This however could be challenging as our understanding is that the THS will in effect only be “mopping up” those consumers who fall within the specified groups and have not already converted, making the commitment to numbers difficult.

As yet, manufacturers also have no indication of the budget for the scheme. As a number of the features outlined in the specification have a cost attached it is important that this is factored in to a realistic budget and that manufacturers are able to plan ahead with knowledge of the likely cost per unit.

Companies interested in this type of arrangement may make contact with Government directly to develop this idea.

Consultation questions

Q. Does the requirement list / cover the need of the vulnerable user?

More than adequately.

Q. Do the core requirements list allow for flexibility for future proofing?

No because they are too prescriptive.

Q. Will products be available during 2007 that will meet the requirements?

The quality and choice of product introductions planned for delivery into the market over the next 9 months, which will include IDTVs and integrated recording devices, will play a major role in widening the range of features and benefits available to retailers. Some features that have a general market appeal, like audio description, will appear in high end products in 2007 but 2008 would be a more realistic introduction date for the broader set of features. This could be the case for most of the features specified whether the option was taken to commission a special product or just to look for a more modestly revised product.

The specific list of requirements fall in to a number of categories:

- a) Reasonable core requirements, eg
 - Audio description in its most basic form
 - Recorded (closed) subtitles
 - Energy efficient to the level of the EU code of Conduct
- b) Nice to have features, already provided in some well designed products, eg
 - SFN operation
 - All widescreen formats
 - Buttons on the front of products

- c) Features that would not easily be specified but could only be judged by comparison and form “best in class”, eg
 - Easily used menus
 - Clearly marked handsets
 - Well spaced buttons
 - Well drafted user guides
- d) Features that would require broadcast changes, eg
 - Automatic retuning
- e) Features that currently do not appear in products but would benefit all users and so will be introduced as the market matures away from the present price dominated phase, e.g.
 - Signal quality displays
 - Easily followed re-tuning instructions
 - Easily installed products
 - Duplicate services algorithms

Comments on other specific sections of consultation
(Intellect comment bulleted)

Full EPG content information shall be presented to the user in appropriate form inc. availability of subtitles and AD (item 3)

- This is broadcast dependant.

Items in pop-up menus shall be numbered and directly selectable using numeric keys

- This could mean a possible impact on software.

The User Interface (UI) shall provide explicit and distinguishable user feedback for actions initiated by the user (eg. to acknowledge a highlighted choice, a keystroke, an activated command etc.). This should be both visual and audible although audible feedback may be capable of being disabled via the UI. [See also section B2.3]

- Not practical or cost effective.

The receiver should provide a mechanism to support speech output of text displayed on screen (viz. on-screen text related to menu selection and receiver status message – eg “no signal”- and the enunciation of channel names, programme names, presence of subtitles/AD and now/next event names). NB: the receiver is not expected to interpret Dtext pages or eTV applications verbally.

- Too expensive to implement.

Access to the remote’s battery compartment should be straightforward but proof against small children

- Normal remote battery compartment would be acceptable without adding to the cost

External connections should be easily accessible and clearly marked (eg with colour coding) to match the appropriate connectors with each supplied lead.

- Scart lead and RF cable can't get cross connected as they are different plugs and sockets in their entirety

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Annex 1

Intellect consumer electronics members:

Alba PLC Group
Beko plc
Hitachi Europe Ltd
Humax Electronics Ltd
JVC UK Ltd
Panasonic UK Ltd
Pioneer GB Ltd
Philips UK Ltd
Sagem Communication UK Ltd
Samsung Electronics UK Ltd
Sanyo Europe Ltd
Sharp Electronics UK Ltd
Sony UK Ltd
Thomson Broadband UK Ltd
Toshiba Information Systems