



TO BE EMAILED TO RECIPIENTS

Catherine Smadja
DCMS
2 – 4 Cockspur Street
London SW1Y 5DH

Monday, 07 January 2002

Dear Ms Smadja

Consultation: The Principles for Spectrum Planning (Digital Television)

Equity is the trade union representing 37,000 actors, singers, dancers, directors, designers and other performers working in the UK. The decision to switch off the analogue terrestrial television signal is a significant development in broadcasting and we welcome the opportunity to express our views on what should be done with the analogue spectrum once analogue transmissions cease.

As a union, we are deeply sceptical about the 2006 – 2010 target for analogue switch off. We do not believe that the majority of consumers are convinced of the merits of digital television. Too many questions concerning costs for the consumer, viability of equipment and the benefits of switching remain. Equity would therefore warn against rushing into switching off analogue spectrum. The pressure to set a date for switch off no longer exists owing to a change in the broadcasting environment.

Additionally, instead of concentrating on what methods of interactivity will be offered by DTT, Equity considers more thought should be given to providing high quality, original programming that will naturally draw viewers to switch to digital. This in part, should be achieved by ensuring public service broadcasters above all others have sufficient spectrum to act effectively without exploiting their market position. For that reason, we would not recommend that all the current free to air PSBs are placed on a single multiplex as we believe that would create unnecessary restrictions on those broadcasters.

Yours sincerely

Ian McGarry
General Secretary

CC: Jane Humphreys, DTI