



GCRA SPECTRUM LICENSING FRAMEWORK

DEPLOYMENT OF 5G AND SUCCESSIVE TECHNOLOGIES



GCRA Spectrum Framework

1. Purpose

To enable the fair, efficient, and future-proof allocation of radio spectrum for 5G and successive technologies in Guernsey, in line with government policy and the evolving telecommunications landscape.

The GCRA framework seeks to establish a process that is clear, fair, and consistent with the States' strategic objectives, the States Direction to the GCRA, and stakeholder feedback. The Guidelines confirm that applicants must engage with Ofcom to reissue their existing licences on a technology-neutral basis and submit comprehensive deployment plans demonstrating their readiness and capability to deliver services in a timely manner. Environmental and public health considerations are included within the framework, requiring operators to comply with international emission standards and to minimise the visual and environmental impact of their network infrastructure wherever feasible.

2. Spectrum Demand and Allocation Assumptions

The GCRA is proceeding on the assumption that demand for spectrum during the initial licensing phase will not exceed the available supply, particularly within the key 700 MHz and 3.6 GHz bands. This assumption is informed by current operator intentions, existing market structure, and the significant investments already underway by incumbent licensees to deliver 5G-ready infrastructure.

Fast-Track, Low-Burden Application Process

To reflect this expected non-contentious demand profile, the GCRA will implement a fast-track spectrum application process designed to reduce unnecessary red tape and promote the efficient roll-out of services. This approach will:

- Prioritise timely turnaround of applications with simplified documentation requirements;
- Provide early engagement opportunities through pre-application consultations;
- Allow for rolling application submissions, rather than fixed-window competitive tenders;
- Avoid unnecessary procedural complexity in cases where spectrum is clearly available and applications are aligned with policy objectives.

This framework is intended to enable rapid commercial deployment of 5G and successive technologies while ensuring fair access and minimal administrative friction.

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3. Guiding Policy Principles

This framework implements the eight principles endorsed in the States' Policy Letter (P.2024/115):

- Grant licences to facilitate licensees' delivery of world-class and seamless connectivity to all, maintaining competitiveness.
- Work with Ofcom to manage the efficient and optimal use of spectrum.
- Plan for future needs.
- Promote innovation, research and development.
- Deliver and promote economic growth and sustainability.
- Protect the environment and public health.
- Drive cost efficiencies.
- Adopt best practice governance

4. Core Framework Components

4.1. Technology-Neutral Licensing

All new and re-issued spectrum licences will be granted on a technology-neutral basis, enabling flexible deployment of 5G and future technologies. This aligns with Ofcom and GSMA best practice and ensures licence holders can reform existing holdings as needed.

4.2. Licensing Process Overview

i. Pre-application - Engage with GCRA to discuss formal documentation requirements, and deployment intentions. Contact Ofcom to reissue existing licences.

ii. Formal application - Submit detailed documentation (coverage, timeline, resilience, network security, etc.).

iii. GCRA Review - Evaluate technical readiness, consumer benefits, and policy compliance.

iv. Test Subscription and issue appropriate legal decision.

v. Ofcom Coordination - GCRA recommends licence to Ofcom, who issues it if satisfied.

v. Issuance & Monitoring - Licence awarded; deployment monitored; unused spectrum subject to a form of use it or lose it condition.

4.3. Spectrum Allocation Bands

The Initial licensing will prioritise:

- 700 MHz paired spectrum (20–30 MHz cap), out of the 85MHz available.
- 3.6 GHz band (100 MHz cap), out of the 390 MHz available.

Any caps will be subject to further consultation and may be revised based on evolving demand and usage.

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4.4. Evaluation Criteria

The framework requires operators to where feasible; minimise and mitigate the environmental impact.

Applications must address the following core requirements:

- Deployment and resilience plans;
- Network security measures;
- Financial soundness indicators.

Applications will also be evaluated on:

- Deployment readiness;
- Service quality;
- Infrastructure strategy;
- Sustainability;
- Specific commitments and timelines.

4.5. Preventing Spectrum Hoarding

- Licences will include "use it or lose it" clauses.
- GCRA reserves the right to revoke or reallocate underused spectrum after a set evaluation period, to be agreed with each applicant.

4.6. In the event of over subscription

Applications will not be awarded solely on a first-come basis and if multiple operators apply for overlapping frequencies:

- GCRA may move to a formal competitive process and may consult Ofcom as needed (see 4.7 for further information).

4.7 Operator performance

While the GCRA does not impose formal performance targets, licensees are expected to design and operate their networks in a manner that enables the full capabilities of 5G technology and does not impose artificial constraints on the performance experienced by end users. The GCRA reserves the right to introduce additional measures or obligations retrospectively if it becomes evident that service quality is being unduly limited or spectrum is not being used consistent with the basis on which the awards were made.

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Contingency in the Event of Over-subscription

While over-subscription is not anticipated, the GCRA recognises the importance of preparedness. Accordingly, an internal mechanism will be established to manage any unforeseen scenario in which multiple applicants request overlapping or excessive allocations of the same spectrum bands.

In such cases:

- The GCRA will consult on an assessment process based on objective evaluation criteria, including:
 - Deployment readiness;
 - Proposed consumer and economic benefits;
 - Efficient spectrum use;
 - Contribution to innovation and competition.
- This contingency process will not be publicly triggered unless required maintaining regulatory certainty and market confidence for applicants.
- Where appropriate, the GCRA will consult with Ofcom to ensure any resolution aligns with UK-wide spectrum coordination requirements and international best practice.

5. Environmental & Public Health Protection

Deployment must comply with:

- ICNIRP guidelines
- Planning law and mast audit requirements Operators must submit environmental impact mitigation plans as part of their applications.

6. Transitional Arrangements

- Existing licence holders may continue current services but must engage with the GCRA to transition to new licence terms or a new licence.
- Reissuance of licences as tech-neutral by Ofcom is an administrative formality; licensees are expected to initiate this request.

7. Implementation Timeline

- February 2025 – June 2025: Consultation with licensees.
- Q3 2025: Publication of finalised framework and begin accepting formal applications for 5G spectrum.
- Q3 & Q4: Awarding of spectrum licences.

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GUERNSEY COMPETITION
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