

On the 14th July The Radio Authority the body which regulates broadcasting frequencies for all transmission services in the UK; announced the introduction of a low power freely radiating Am broadcasting system for all hospitals/radios outside the M25 corridor.

It is expected by the Autumn of 1998 the Radio Authority will be in a position to start issuing licences.

Test sites around the UK Stoke Manderville, Radio Tyneside have proved that a low power transmitter will adequately cover the hospital site without the need for the installation of expensive cable listening systems.

All cable radio systems including inductive loop systems are constantly generating financial burdens for their hospitals because of ageing cable networks, construction work and changing developments.

Over the last 20 odd years the National association of hospital radio services has been pursuing the issue of a broadcasting frequency for which hospital radios could use.

We already use the am inductive loop system to reach most patient areas which uses a limited signal on 999Khz Am. This at present relies on 4 cable networks and 30 aerials around the site, all of which have to be maintained (maintenance costs bi-yearly £450 paid by League of friends).

The am inductive loop licence we require for this, is £250 a year the same cost as the new freely radiating licence due to be introduced. The Am inductive loop licence(sponsored by Victoria hall fund) which lasts five years comes up for renewal at the end of the year.

The inductive loop service has been in operation for just over 10 years. This service is supported by 279 personal radios which have been issued since 1990.

What if Radio Heatherwood were to Change to the new Service ?.

Radio Heatherwood is in a good position to take advantage of the new system. We have the loan radio service in place and working well. The station has implemented all the criteria for professional broadcasting and all training adheres to the current Radio Authority guidelines.

The new service would require the installation of one transmitter mast and include a maintenance contract.

A move to the new service would mean everywhere on the hospital would freely be able to listen to the hospital radio service including all residences. Any future building work or changes made to the site would automatically receive the am service without the need for installation of aerials and expensive cable networks. (*The EMI unit would we hope receive a quality service*).

Any future work carried out to wards/depts would not interfere with the broadcasting system causing any UN-necessary damage.



To be taken into account before any change:-

1976 -2016

1976 -2016

The cost of the change of our installation Inc new equipment. £?

PRS/MCPS costs would be applicable £?

Prs = Performing Rights.

Mcps = Mechanical Copyrights e.g. use of records,tapes,cd's

There would be a change of broadcasting frequency 999kHz at present. ?

(All advertising would be affected by any change of frequency)

Questions to be asked ?

What do we do about the inductive loop service ?

What do we do about the old bed-head system ?

What is the quality of the service (especially evenings/night time) ?

What will be the hospital trusts position if we decide to opt for the change ?

What other restrictions are applicable ?

What permissions will we need to obtain (i.e. planning permission for a transmission mast)?.

Summary

A change to the new style service has obvious advantages providing a fault free service on an ever changing site without the need for continued new installation/maintenance costs. The service would we hope offer availability to the EMI unit, residences and areas of the site where no service exists at present.

Consideration would however need to be given to existing means of transmission.

.....

This is just a brief outline of what this change could mean to us. Lots of questions would be raised by this proposed move. If Radio Heatherwood is to take advantage of the Am freely radiating service we have got to make some very important decisions which will fundamentally decide the future for radio services on the hospital site for years to come.

We will be monitoring the news from the National Association/Radio Authority over the coming weeks. In the meantime our first course of action will be to inform the trust and try and secure a letter of support from the hospital before we move forward and try and resolve any of the other issues which might be raised should we change.

We will be able to clarify the path the hospital radio service intends to take. In the near future.

.....

Peter Davidson-Smith
Secretary/Engineer
Radio Heatherwood.

