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Your Ref:

15 December 2008

Dr Bob Spink MP
House of Commons
London
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ED RICHARDS
Chief Executive

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Dear Bob,

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, what steps Ofcom is taking to remove radio interference which is harmful to short wave users, with particular reference to that caused by (a) general powerline adaptors and (b) powerline adaptors provided by BT as part of their Vision system; and if he will make a statement. [242363]

I am writing in response to your question (above) to the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform tabled on 8 December 2008. It has been forwarded to Ofcom for a reply as the independent regulator for the UK communications industry.

Powerline adaptors or Power Line Technology (PLT) is a technology that can carry data on a conventional electrical power system using a radio frequency carrier signal. PLT equipment can be used to interconnect computers with other devices in the home. It is not considered radio equipment for the purposes of equipment regulation.

As with all electrical and electronic products sold in the UK, PLT equipment is required to meet the relevant regulations before it can be placed on the market. In particular, it must comply with the Electromagnetic Compatibility Regulations 2006 (the EMC Regulations) which are based on a European Directive. The person who places products on the market (usually the manufacturer or the importer) must ensure that the products comply and apply the 'CE' mark.

The UK Government Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) is responsible for overseeing the EMC Regulations. Enforcement powers are delegated to local Trading Standards offices and to Ofcom where there is a radio spectrum protection or management issue.

We estimate there are around 500,000 pieces of PLT equipment in use in the UK. We have received a number of individual complaints of interference attributed to PLT equipment and all of these complaints are in the process of being investigated or have been successfully resolved.

It is often the case that electrical equipment that is used in the home has to comply with the EMC regulations. Some of this equipment has the capacity to cause

interference to other radiocommunications equipment in certain circumstances; this can be due to the manner in which it is installed or operated. Ofcom will provide advice and assistance to those who complain of interference with radiocommunications equipment and any individual who wishes to report specific cases of interference that may be caused by PLT apparatus, or any other source, should contact Ofcom's Advisory Team on 0300 123 3333 for further assistance.

We continue to liaise with BERR and other interested stakeholders in respect of PLT interference and will provide further updates on any significant developments.

Yours sincerely
Ed Richards.

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