

Executive Council decision on VSAT Select Committee recommendations

At an extraordinary meeting of Executive Council on 28 February, Members discussed a paper on proposals for consideration following the recommendations of the Select Committee in relation to VSAT Licensing. The resolutions made by Executive Council include:

- a) That Executive Council is minded to approve a revised policy rationale for the issuing of VSAT licences and setting of fee levels, pending a public consultation to be carried out by FIG on these principles before Executive Council considers their final adoption.
- b) That Executive Council is minded to approve a revised fee level for VSAT users of £180 a year, to be levied as per the Select Committee recommendations.
- c) That the Director of Development and Commercial Services is authorised to engage Sure in discussion around ongoing provision of all telecommunications services, the results of these discussions to be returned to Executive Council for further decision-making as necessary.

These actions stem directly from careful consideration and policy work following the adoption of the Select Committee's recommendations by the Legislative Assembly.

The intention of the new policy rationale and suggested fee level is to widen accessibility to VSAT licences.

The intention of discussions with Sure is to give assurances to the community of the ongoing availability of telecommunications services provided by Sure. This includes mobile and fixed-line telephones, mobile data, streaming of MiPlayer services, and emergency radio services, as well as broadband services.

The next step will be a public consultation on the specific amendments being proposed to the current policy rationale which underpins the process of applying for an individual VSAT licence. This consultation period was recommended by the Select Committee to ensure that the public is given a voice on the exact form of the new policy.

Engagement with Starlink

The decision of Executive Council was accompanied by a request to the Regulator that she should continue her existing engagement with Starlink by formally inviting them to apply for an operating licence for the Falkland Islands. There is no guarantee that an application will be made, or that it will be approved, as the Regulator must be satisfied that Starlink is willing and able to meet the necessary regulatory requirements. These simply reflect the fact that the Falkland Islands Government remains committed to a consistent and coherent regulatory framework for all telecommunications services operating in our Islands. FIG will take all appropriate steps to support timely decision-making, but are dependent on Starlink for the initial step of submitting an application.

Timeline

10th March	Public consultation will launch online, with paper versions and an emailed editable PDF also available. Details of how to access and complete the survey will be distributed throughout the community.
11th April	Public consultation will close.
14th April– 2nd May	FIG officers will review all responses, consolidate and update the policy draft, and prepare relevant papers for Executive Council.
Early May	Executive Council will consider the results of the consultation and other relevant inputs. If approved, the change in policy rationale and fee level will come into effect if agreed by Executive Council

MLAs and FIG Officers would like to thank the public for their patience so far whilst this work is completed.

ENDS