

The New Dawn of Time

UK's time signal on the move for the first time after 80 years in Rugby

London, **date** 2006: The time signal used to set Britain's clocks with extreme accuracy is on the move from Rugby, where it has been transmitted since 1927, to a new home in Anthorn on the west coast of Cumbria. The signal, often referred to as 'The time from Rugby', will in future be known as 'The Time from NPL'.

The National Physical Laboratory (NPL), which has been responsible for the accurate time signal from Rugby since 1950 will make the switch in April 2007 following the award of a new contract to VT Communications.

The switchover will take place following a three-month test period at the beginning of next year with the final transfer from Rugby to Anthorn taking place at the end of March 2007. NPL has reassured most users that they need take no action to continue receiving the signal.

NPL managing director, Steve McQuillan, said: "Maintaining accurate time is essential to keeping the modern world working. Most people only need time to be accurate to within a few seconds or even minutes, but global navigation systems, the internet, email, television, power industry, transport, and financial systems are just some of the industries that depend on very accurate time to operate.

"We are delighted to be working with VT Communications on the transfer of the time signal to Anthorn. While most users check their time against the signal periodically, a small number of people and organisations use the signal constantly in their work. We regularly notify those we know who may be affected by our testing and we'll be happy to add any other users to our email list if they get in touch. However the vast majority of time signal users will not experience any disruption during the testing and switchover."

Doug Umbers, Managing Director of VT Communications, said: "We are very proud to be working in partnership with NPL on a programme of national significance. We are excited to be implementing a highly resilient solution, which will provide tangible benefits to all stakeholders".

The time signal is accurate to within one millisecond (one thousandth of a second) of Universal Time and supports a wide range of services. These include emergency 999 communications, train companies, cash machines, mobile phone billing systems. These users will not be affected by the change.

The signal's transmission is linked to NPL's atomic clocks at Teddington in South West London. NPL is home to the nation's atomic time and one of only five laboratories worldwide using the latest caesium fountain to contribute to the world time standard Coordinated Universal Time (UTC).

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Notes to editors:

The National Physical Laboratory (NPL) MSF 60 kHz National Time and Frequency signal has been broadcast from the BT Radio Station at Rugby for over 50 years; it is a prestigious service, for which the Time and Frequency user community has come to depend on as a reliable source of Time and Frequency on a free to air service.

The current MSF signal is broadcast 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with a very high level of availability. BT has an international reputation in the delivery of complex broadcast radio systems; our depth of knowledge in the field of radio design, delivery and operations spans the radio spectrum from VLF to satellite communications. Our customers find that built into every BT solution is reliability, dependability and quality of service second to none.

The established NPL/BT relationship has delivered substantial benefits throughout the years, including a critical level of service availability, minimal NPL management expense and trusted service delivery.

About NPL, the United Kingdom's national measurement institute

NPL is the United Kingdom's national measurement institute – a world-leading centre of excellence in developing and applying the most accurate measurement standards, science and technology available to man.

For more than a century, NPL has developed and maintained the nation's primary measurement standards. These standards support an infrastructure of traceable measurement through the UK and the world that ensures accuracy and consistency, affecting many aspects of life.

NPL's services range from free technical advice, joint projects, training, secondments, problem solving, consultancy and contract research to highly accurate UKAS accredited measurement services.

The National Physical Laboratory is operated on behalf of the DTI by NPL Management Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Serco Group plc. For more information, visit www.npl.co.uk.

About VT Communications

VT Communications, part of VT Group plc is a leading specialist communications services company, providing innovative technical solutions and systems integration across the RF spectrum from VLF to SHF from 29 locations around the world. The company designs, builds, operates, maintains and supports mission critical infrastructure for some of the most demanding organisations among them defence organisations, national governments, NGO's, broadcasters and space agencies.

VT Communications has extensive expertise in developing everything from principal infrastructure to delivering unique customised technical solutions. Its' core capabilities include Radio Frequency Engineering, ICT, Specialist Vehicle & Container Engineering and Power Generation & Distribution, providing all technical support services, communications facilities management and project management. The company currently provides such services for a broad range of customers including the UK Ministry of Defence, the Swedish Navy, European Space Agency and global relief organisations.