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Rt Hon Estelle Morris MP

The Rt. Hon. Eric Forth MP
House of Commons
London
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RECEIVED

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Dear Eric,

Thank you for your letter of 23 October enclosing correspondence from your constituent [REDACTED], in which he raises further concerns about the application of patents.

My Department is aware of the patents that are held in respect of attendance (and other data) recording by radio link. We know that [REDACTED] Bromcom Computers PLC, is in discussion with a number of institutions and education authorities on the application of the patents, including the selling of licences to use wireless systems.

As you will know, patents are not awarded lightly and issues arising from them can be very complex, often requiring the parties involved to obtain specialist legal advice. Circumstances will differ in each case and it would be inappropriate for my Department to try to provide general advice that might be open to misinterpretation or used to suggest that my Department is backing one view or another.

There is no doubt that [REDACTED] Bromcom and other companies have every right to implement and protect their patents. It is, however, a commercial matter between the parties involved, and each company is responsible for promoting its business interests. My Department does not promote any particular company and it is important that we should not do this, even inadvertently.

On the few occasions where the issue has been raised with my Department, this is the line that has been taken. The only safe additional advice is that the organisation concerned should be clear about Bromcom's position as it affects them and should seek independent specialist legal advice as necessary. Local authorities do, of course, have their own legal services to call upon in the first instance.

Be L W r h e s

Estelle Morris

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