

**REFERENCE RELATING TO THE ACQUISITION
BY BRITISH SALT LIMITED OF NEW CHESHIRE SALT WORKS LIMITED**

**Notice of provisional findings made under Rule 10.3
of the Competition Commission Rules of Procedure**

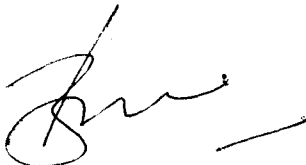
1. On 26 May 2005, the Office of Fair Trading, in exercise of its duty under section 22 of the Enterprise Act 2002 (the Act) and its power under section 35(6) of the Act, referred to the Competition Commission (CC) the completed acquisition by British Salt Limited (British Salt) of New Cheshire Salt Works Limited.

Provisional findings

2. The CC inquiry group (the Group) appointed to consider this reference has made the following provisional findings on the statutory questions it has to decide pursuant to section 35(1) of the Act (the statutory questions):
 - (a) a relevant merger situation has been created; and
 - (b) the creation of that situation may be expected to result in a substantial lessening of competition within the market for the supply of pure dried vacuum salt and compacted salt in Great Britain or the UK and the Republic of Ireland.
3. The Group's reasons are set out in full in the provisional findings report, which is attached to this notice, and are summarized in the executive summary of the provisional findings report (see note (i) below).

The next steps

4. British Salt and other interested parties are now invited to provide the Group with their reasons in writing (see note (ii) below) as to why these provisional findings should not become final (or, as the case may be, should be varied).
5. These reasons should be received by the Group no later than 27 September 2005.
6. The Group will have regard to any such reasons in making its final decisions on the statutory questions and actions.
7. The Group will shortly send to British Salt and publish a notice of the actions which it considers might be taken by the CC to remedy the adverse effects provisionally identified.



John Baillie
Group Chairman
2 September 2005

Notes:

(i) A copy of this notice and the provisional findings report will be placed on the CC web site on 6 September 2005. The published version of the provisional findings report will not contain any information which the Group considers should be excluded from the report, having regard to the three considerations set out in section 244 of the Act.

(ii) Comments should be made in writing to:
Edwin James, Inquiry Secretary, British Salt/ New Cheshire Salt Works
Competition Commission
Victoria House
Southampton Row
London
WC1B 4AD

Or by email to: edwin.james@competition-commission.gsi.gov.uk