

Dear Mr Stock,

I was recently reading your website, and in particular the strategies that Ofcom are looking to implement now they have become the new regulator.

I would welcome most of them were these to become legislation, however I do have some reservations on the strategy that Ofcom is looking to develop.

I don't quite see how licensing more FM frequencies will push digital take up, since for one the FM waveband is already supposed to be overcrowded with little space left. I would have thought that more cross promotion within existing FM and AM stations, pushing digital which is surely in the interests of the stations concerned also. Increasing the number of FM stations would surely only encourage people to stay with what they have.

I welcome the fact you are maintaining the RSL licenses, and proposing to maintain the 87-88 waveband, my only criticism of this waveband is that it does give the impression that RSLs are being shunted into the backyard of the radio spectrum.

Your proposals on Community Radio however, well I am somewhat suspicious since good intentions towards this form of radio do not always go according to plan. Does Ofcom intend to put any "blockers" in place to prevent licenses that were intended for use by community groups from being snatched up by the big groups? I feel that we do need something, anything or else the signal jamming menace that are certain pirate radio stations will surely never go away. Should not there be a separate category of license that is commercially un-attractive to the big groups?

Here in Bristol, we have seen it before under the former Radio Authority. The city gets added to the working list, community groups get excited, build up their application and then - whoosh, the license goes to a mindless, credibility-lacking commercial station with no local relevance whatsoever. How do Ofcom propose to prevent this happening. Whilst pirate radio may be wrong, and I don't necessarily condone it, it will very much continue for as long as they feel pushed out of the legal side of the radio spectrum.

I was interested to note that you have plans for further licenses in the South West. Would this be a license stretching from Bristol to Cornwall, or several smaller licenses. Furthermore, you have described as "metropolitan", the upcoming license that you intend to create in Bristol. Is this to be a license that thus encourages use by community broadcasters, in a quote "frequency that could not be used by commercial services".

The main problem that Ofcom should in my view address first and foremost is one of credibility within the commercial radio sector. The industry, as I see it is handing a virtual monopoly to the BBC. I have nothing against the BBC, but when it comes to the commercial sector why does the BBC lead whilst commercial radio follows, trailing in the gutter like a little kid.

Local radio should, funnily enough mean local radio and not a joke of a news service, with pointlessly inane presenters jamming out computer programmed playlists inbetween adverts for the local estate agents!! I would suggest a 40% quota being levied, per day on all local stations, of which 30% had to be speech based, 10% could be music (but local music). It would, I suspect probably go down like a lead balloon in commercial radio stations throughout the land, but that said, if they want a local license... then they should provide a local service.

Regional radio should surely be able to turn away from local issues and find something else to do, and greater balance should be placed on a ratio between music and speech. I'm not quite so sure that it was a good idea for the old Radio Authority to effectively create what has become a Quasi-national station with Galaxy. Perhaps a limit needs to be applied on the number of regional licenses one company can own, separate to the limit of FM stations generally.

National commercial radio should, surely be a national beacon that defines what the UK is, and what we have is Virgin that sounds much like a typical local station, Talk Sport which struggles with even the most basic of output and Classic Fm which just seems to become blander by the day, though that is perhaps more an issue of personal taste than radio excellence.

In my view, Ofcom should seek to legislate more towards encouraging local stations to provide locally relevant programmes, regional radio to provide a greater emphasis of music to speech and national radio can be left to create a service that defines what the UK is and, does a better job at reducing the BBCs monopoly.

I thank you for acknowledging this email, and I wish Ofcom much luck in it's role as the regulator.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Bush.