

Dear Neil

Having read the consultation document I felt it important that I, as a 'radio consumer' should give you my views relating to the future of radio in my area. I think that while you are thinking about issuing new licences in areas that have already got one or more regional licences you should also consider those regions that have none at all;

Such as my region. Milton Keynes is in a region of the country that has not seemed to be recognised by the Radio Authority during the rapid increase in new licences in the 1990's. A region popularly defined and lumped together as "Herts, Beds and Bucks" by the BBC local radio service, yet served by Anglia Television, and BBC East TV. Although some also call it the 'South East Midlands'. We have no regional commercial radio licence which covers us, and indeed none can be received from surrounding areas. We are too far West to get the East of England Regional (Vibe FM), too far South to receive any of the many East or West Midlands Regional licences and too far North to receive the London and South East services (Heart etc)

Milton Keynes is the UK's fastest growing city. Geographically the borough covers an area the size of Birmingham. We have a population of almost 250,000 and the city is expected to double in size over the next 20 years as part of the governments huge house building programme. There is also the huge shopping centre which attracts shoppers across the region, it is well known for this and described as a regional shopping centre.

Locally, there is only one local commercial station serving us here (FM 103 Horizon). There is no local DAB multiplex for Milton Keynes or any surrounding towns, and the closest one is London, which has a relay at Luton, but this is too weak to be received here and would be irrelevant to the area anyway. One could even state that we have no real BBC local service because instead of there being a separate BBC station for each county, the existing BBC Three Counties Radio tries to cover a huge area at once and is not relevant enough, as somebody listening to local radio in Milton Keynes does not really want to know what is happening 40 miles away in Stevenage.

I think it is unbalanced and unfair that other areas such as the West Midlands, has got three regional services, while I am living in an area which still has no regional services at all. There is a lot of unused frequency space here that could be allocated for a regional station here, the band is very clear between 106.6 - 108 MHz and with sharing of frequencies using appropriate power levels and directional transmitting patterns (as has been done on 103.3 FM with Horizon) , other parts of the spectrum, especially 105 - 106.6 could also be used for local community radio.

The lack of choice here is also apparent in the other major towns roughly within 20 miles of Milton Keynes, such as Bedford and Northampton. Plus all the villages in between. Equally the spectrum is just as unused over there as here, so a new service could be addressed easily. I would like to see a new regional service here and at least one more ILR to give an alternative to Horizon, plus as many community stations as you deem possible. I would say that this area must be the most underserved part of the country with the highest population.

I hope this is useful to you and I look forward to the results. I would be interested in your views, if anything else is required please let me know.

Regards

Martin Wall