



Ofcom Consultation on the Future of Radio

Response from Henry Badenhorst, Managing Director, GaydarRadio

GaydarRadio represents UK digital radio at its best. A commercial radio station serving a niche community, expanding listener choice and offering a service not available from either the BBC or larger commercial groups.

What a pity then that GaydarRadio and its listeners are so badly let down by the quality of sound currently offered by DAB and in particular the London III transmitter which is operated by DRg.

We have had various discussions with DRg and Ofcom to express our concerns since listeners to GaydarRadio within the London area are unable to pick up the station at all, or else encounter extreme poor or intermittent reception of the broadcast. DRg has yet to demonstrate or indicate any positive steps they will take to resolve the problems.

GaydarRadio is being placed at the centre of the arguments as to who should be doing something about the quality of the DAB service. Ofcom suggested that remedial action be taken by DRg, while they propose a move to an alternative frequency.

Our problems however are compounded by the fact that because the DAB system is so badly organised, whilst we definitely don't need to broadcast to either Worthing or Reading, on the current London multiplex, we cannot be heard in central London! This is because the DAB transmitters within our TSA (London and the Sussex coast) are badly organised, leading to key pockets with no coverage.

The organisation of DAB signals and systems clearly needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. In our view, Ofcom is not doing enough to ensure that DAB is as robust a technology as new emerging technologies. Indeed we find it bizarre that Ofcom is looking at other technologies when the one it originally pushed so hard clearly still does not work.

The lack of any commitment from Ofcom or the Multiplex owners have a detrimental effect on the attractiveness of London III broadcasters to advertisers and opportunities to generate advertising revenue have been lost as a result. In deciding to serve a particular community of interest, the costs to us are also significantly larger than those of service providers who are chasing the same mainstream majority in the interest of their shareholders.

The current standard of transmission on the multiplex is plainly deficient, unacceptable and cannot continue.

We therefore recommend the following:

- A set of minimum standards to ensure that communities of interest can listen once they have invested in a DAB set.
- A guarantee that multiplex owners will act more responsibly to paying service providers
- A guarantee that multiplex owners will have to deliver high quality sound to both listeners and service providers

Without these conditions, the UK will continue to have the worst DAB quality in the world.