

The Office of Communication in its Consultation document, 'Radio – Licensing Policy for VHF Band III, Sub-band 3', published on 19th October 2005, sought responses to the following question:

Ofcom proposes to allocate three blocks of spectrum in VHF Band III, sub-band 3 for local radio multiplexes under the licensing process set out in the Broadcasting Act 1996, with the aim of covering geographical areas that do not presently have local radio multiplexes. Ofcom also proposes to allocate one block of spectrum in the same sub-band for a national radio multiplex under the licensing process set out in the Broadcasting Act 1996.

UBC Media Group plc very much welcomes the proposal to allocate three blocks of spectrum in VHF Band III for DAB-compatible use to fill the gaps in existing local coverage, and welcome the proposal that these multiplexes should be licensed under the terms of the Broadcasting Act. We believe that wherever possible spectrum should be allocated to allow for existing and future local analogue services to have the opportunity to migrate to a digital platform in areas with no current coverage.

UBC also warmly supports the proposal to advertise a new national multiplex under the Broadcasting Act. We believe the addition of a new national multiplex will add further momentum to the uptake of digital radio; contribute to competition and create an opportunity for new innovative audio, video and data services that will extend consumer choice and diversity.

UBC welcomes the opportunity that will result from the award of a new national multiplex to extend the range of services to be carried on national DAB. UBC would be interested to acquire national capacity for DAB services and in partnering with other parties to operate the new national multiplex.

As was stated in our response to the consultation document, 'Radio – Preparing for the Future', UBC would support the removal of the 20% cap on the amount of spectrum that can be allocated for non-programme related data. UBC believes that the model for data applications will be more economically compelling than those for audio services, and we expect that such innovative data applications will be better funded, and will have the added benefit of further driving take-up of digital sets, and extending consumer choice.

Information on UBC Media Group plc

UBC is a broadly based radio business engaged in the ownership and operation of digital and analogue commercial radio stations, radio programming and the provision of audio and data services to the radio industry.

UBC's subsidiary undertaking, Classic Gold Digital Limited, owns the Classic Gold Digital network of radio stations, which broadcast on both analogue and digital platforms and ranks amongst the largest formats on digital radio. In addition, UBC in partnership with Channel 4 Television owns Oneworld Radio, the only national commercial digital radio station dedicated to the spoken word. UBC is also a member of the MXR consortium, which operates five regional digital radio multiplexes throughout England and Wales.

UBC's programme production businesses rank as the largest independent producer of radio programmes in the UK, supplying both commissioned programmes to the BBC and syndicated programmes to the commercial radio sector.

UBC is also engaged in providing data services to the radio sector, including the development of software for the management and delivery of data services to both the analogue and digital radio sectors, and the ownership of data spectrum.