



# **EXTENDING DAB SERVICES IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

Request to extend coverage area of national radio  
multiplex service

**Consultation**

**Publication date:** 14 February 2013

**Closing date for responses:** 14 March 2013

Request to extend coverage area of national radio multiplex

# Contents

Section		Page
1	Executive summary	1
2	Details and background information	2
Annex		Page
1	Responding to this consultation	4
2	Ofcom's consultation principles	6
3	Consultation response cover sheet	7
4	Consultation questions	9
5	Application from Digital One	10

## Section 1

# Executive summary

- 1.1 Digital One Limited, which holds a national radio multiplex licence for coverage of England, Scotland and Wales, has applied to extend the coverage area of the licence so that it also includes Northern Ireland. It is entitled to do this under statutory provisions introduced in the Digital Economy Act 2010.
- 1.2 Digital One proposes to provide coverage of Northern Ireland using six transmitters, at each of Divis, Carnmoney Hill, Londonderry, Brougher Mountain, Strabane and Limavady. It says that it will launch all of these transmitters within six months of Ofcom granting its request.
- 1.3 Before deciding whether to agree to Digital One's request, Ofcom is legally required to seek representations on the request from any interested parties. This consultation represents that opportunity. The closing-date for representations to be made is 14 March 2013; any submissions received after this date may not be considered.
- 1.4 Provided that the request meets the terms of the statute, the decision whether or not to agree to the request is at Ofcom's discretion. Our general policy is to grant requests from radio multiplex licensees to extend their coverage provided we are satisfied that:
  - doing so would be calculated to maintain or promote the development of digital sound broadcasting in the UK otherwise than by satellite;
  - the licensees' proposed coverage plans are satisfactory;
  - the licensees have the ability to maintain the licensed service; and
  - there are sufficient safeguards in place to protect the rights and interests of stations carried on the multiplexes and the rights and interests of other multiplex operators (and the stations they carry).
- 1.5 Our initial view is that Digital One's proposal would be calculated to maintain or promote the development of digital sound broadcasting in the UK, as it would provide listeners in Northern Ireland with the same range of national DAB services already available in large parts of the rest of the UK, while its proposed technical plan should ensure that this extension of choice is available in all the main population centres in Northern Ireland.
- 1.6 We seek views on the extent to which the request from Digital One satisfies any or all of these policy criteria.

## Section 2

# Details and background information

- 2.1 National radio multiplex licences are granted by Ofcom to enable the provision of radio stations and other types of service (e.g. data) on the DAB (Digital Audio Broadcasting) platform. The holder of a national radio multiplex licence is responsible for, among other things, delivering coverage to as much of the UK as their licence allows them to cover, and facilitating the provision of a range of radio services designed to appeal to a variety of tastes and interests.
- 2.2 A national radio multiplex licence was awarded in October 1998 to Digital One Limited. The licence commenced when the multiplex service was launched just over a year later, in November 1999, and is for a radio multiplex service designed to cover as much of England, Scotland and Wales as is technically feasible. This area is known as the 'licensed area'. The licence does not currently allow for coverage of Northern Ireland as at the time that the licence was originally advertised there was only one suitable frequency available which allowed for coverage of Northern Ireland, and the then regulator the Radio Authority decided to use this frequency for a local radio multiplex service rather than to enable the national radio multiplex service to cover the whole UK.
- 2.3 A frequency (DAB Channel 11D) has now become available which would facilitate an extension of the licensed area of the national radio multiplex service to Northern Ireland; this frequency is the same as that used by Digital One to cover England and Wales and, due to the interference that would result, would not be useable for a second local radio multiplex service for the whole of Northern Ireland.
- 2.4 Digital One currently provides indoor coverage<sup>1</sup> to 87.5% of households in England, Scotland and Wales, and covers 72% of the road network in the same area, using 137 transmitters.
- 2.5 Digital One has submitted an application to extend the 'licensed area' of its national radio multiplex licence so that it also includes Northern Ireland. The application from Digital One is at Annex 5.
- 2.6 Digital One proposes to provide coverage of Northern Ireland using six transmitters, at each of Divis, Carnmoney Hill, Londonderry, Brougher Mountain, Strabane and Limavady. It says that it will launch all of these transmitters within six months of Ofcom granting its request.
- 2.7 According to Digital One, these transmitters would provide indoor coverage to 74% of households, and 70% of the road network, in Northern Ireland. The addition of this coverage would result in the national radio multiplex service providing coverage of 89.5% of the households in the United Kingdom, and 75% of the UK's road network.
- 2.8 Digital One is entitled to apply for such an extension of its licensed area under section 54A of the Broadcasting Act 1996, which was inserted by the Digital Economy Act 2010. These statutory provisions set out the process a radio multiplex licensee must follow when applying to extend its licensed area.

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<sup>1</sup> By which we mean that a robust signal can be received by a portable radio receiver inside a house.

- 2.9 Section 54A(5) states that before deciding whether to agree to a coverage extension request, Ofcom must seek representations on the request from any interested parties. This consultation represents that opportunity. The closing-date for representations to be made is **14 March 2013**; any submissions received after this date may not be considered.
- 2.10 Unlike the case in respect of local radio multiplex licences, the statute does not specify any particular criterion that must be satisfied in order for Ofcom to be able to approve a request to extend the licensed area of a national radio multiplex service. In both cases, however, the legislation still gives Ofcom the discretion as to whether or not to agree to such requests.
- 2.11 We have previously set out (in our *Statement on commercial radio localness regulation*<sup>2</sup>) how we will exercise this discretion in relation to requests from the holders of local radio multiplex licences to extend their coverage into new areas. Our general policy is to grant such requests provided we are satisfied that:
- doing so would be calculated to maintain or promote the development of digital sound broadcasting in the UK otherwise than by satellite;
  - the licensees' proposed coverage plans are satisfactory;
  - the licensees have the ability to maintain the licensed service; and
  - there are sufficient safeguards in place to protect the rights and interests of stations carried on the multiplexes and the rights and interests of other multiplex operators (and the stations they carry).
- 2.12 We consider that these criteria are equally relevant to a coverage extension request from the holder of a national radio multiplex licence, and therefore we seek views on the extent to which the request from Digital One satisfies any or all of these policy criteria (see Annex 4 for a list of specific questions).
- 2.13 Our initial view is that Digital One's proposal would be calculated to maintain or promote the development of digital sound broadcasting in the UK, as it would provide listeners in Northern Ireland with the same range of national DAB services already available in large parts of the rest of the UK, while its proposed technical plan should ensure that this extension of choice is available in all the main population centres in Northern Ireland. It would also bring Northern Ireland into line with most of the rest of the UK, where local DAB services are available alongside national services. Digital One tell us that they have confirmation from all of the services they carry that they are content for the national multiplex to be extended to Northern Ireland.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/radio/statement/Localness\\_statement.pdf](http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/radio/statement/Localness_statement.pdf)

## Annex 1

# Responding to this consultation

## How to respond

- A1.1 Ofcom invites written views and comments on the issues raised in this document, to be made **by 5pm on 14 March 2013**.
- A1.2 Ofcom strongly prefers to receive responses using the online web form at <https://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/extending-dab-services-NI/howtorespond/form>, as this helps us to process the responses quickly and efficiently. We would also be grateful if you could assist us by completing a response cover sheet (see Annex 3), to indicate whether or not there are confidentiality issues. This response coversheet is incorporated into the online web form questionnaire.
- A1.3 For larger consultation responses – particularly those with supporting charts, tables or other data – please email: [neil.stock@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:neil.stock@ofcom.org.uk), attaching your response in Microsoft Word format, together with a consultation response coversheet.
- A1.4 Responses may alternatively be posted or faxed to the address below:
- Northern Ireland DAB consultation  
F.A.O. Neil Stock  
Ofcom  
Riverside House  
2A Southwark Bridge Road  
London SE1 9HA
- Fax: 020 7981 3850
- A1.5 Note that we do not need a hard copy in addition to an electronic version. Ofcom will acknowledge receipt of responses if they are submitted using the online web form but not otherwise.
- A1.6 It would be helpful if your response could include direct answers to the questions asked in this document, at Annex 4. It would also help if you can explain why you hold your views and how the proposals would impact on you.

## Further information

- A1.7 If you want to discuss the issues and questions raised in this consultation, or need advice on the appropriate form of response, please contact Ofcom on 020 7981 3000.

## Confidentiality

- A1.8 We believe it is important for everyone interested in an issue to see the views expressed by consultation respondents. We will therefore usually publish all responses on our website, [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk), ideally on receipt. If you think your response should be kept confidential, can you please specify what part or whether

all of your response should be kept confidential, and specify why. Please also place such parts in a separate annex.

- A1.9 If someone asks us to keep part or all of a response confidential, we will treat this request seriously and will try to respect this. But sometimes we will need to publish all responses, including those that are marked as confidential, in order to meet legal obligations.
- A1.10 Please also note that copyright and all other intellectual property in responses will be assumed to be licensed to Ofcom to use. Ofcom's approach on intellectual property rights is explained further on its website at <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/about/accoun/disclaimer/>

## Next steps

- A1.11 Following the end of the consultation period, Ofcom intends to publish a statement.
- A1.12 Please note that you can register to receive free mail Updates alerting you to the publications of relevant Ofcom documents. For more details please see: [http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/subscribe/select\\_list.htm](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/subscribe/select_list.htm)

## Ofcom's consultation processes

- A1.13 Ofcom seeks to ensure that responding to a consultation is as easy as possible. For more information please see our consultation principles in Annex 2.
- A1.14 If you have any comments or suggestions on how Ofcom conducts its consultations, please call our consultation helpdesk on 020 7981 3003 or e-mail us at [consult@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:consult@ofcom.org.uk) . We would particularly welcome thoughts on how Ofcom could more effectively seek the views of those groups or individuals, such as small businesses or particular types of residential consumers, who are less likely to give their opinions through a formal consultation.
- A1.15 If you would like to discuss these issues or Ofcom's consultation processes more generally you can alternatively contact Graham Howell, Secretary to the Corporation, who is Ofcom's consultation champion:

Graham Howell  
Ofcom  
Riverside House  
2a Southwark Bridge Road  
London SE1 9HA

Tel: 020 7981 3601

Email [Graham.Howell@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:Graham.Howell@ofcom.org.uk)



## Annex 2

# Ofcom's consultation principles

A2.1 Ofcom has published the following seven principles that it will follow for each public written consultation:

### Before the consultation

A2.2 Where possible, we will hold informal talks with people and organisations before announcing a big consultation to find out whether we are thinking in the right direction. If we do not have enough time to do this, we will hold an open meeting to explain our proposals shortly after announcing the consultation.

### During the consultation

A2.3 We will be clear about who we are consulting, why, on what questions and for how long.

A2.4 We will make the consultation document as short and simple as possible with a summary of no more than two pages. We will try to make it as easy as possible to give us a written response. If the consultation is complicated, we may provide a shortened Plain English Guide for smaller organisations or individuals who would otherwise not be able to spare the time to share their views.

A2.5 We will consult for up to 10 weeks depending on the potential impact of our proposals.

A2.6 A person within Ofcom will be in charge of making sure we follow our own guidelines and reach out to the largest number of people and organisations interested in the outcome of our decisions. Ofcom's 'Consultation Champion' will also be the main person to contact with views on the way we run our consultations.

A2.7 If we are not able to follow one of these principles, we will explain why.

### After the consultation

A2.8 We think it is important for everyone interested in an issue to see the views of others during a consultation. We would usually publish all the responses we have received on our website. In our statement, we will give reasons for our decisions and will give an account of how the views of those concerned helped shape those decisions.

## Annex 3

# Consultation response cover sheet

- A3.1 In the interests of transparency and good regulatory practice, we will publish all consultation responses in full on our website, [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk).
- A3.2 We have produced a coversheet for responses (see below) and would be very grateful if you could send one with your response (this is incorporated into the online web form if you respond in this way). This will speed up our processing of responses, and help to maintain confidentiality where appropriate.
- A3.3 The quality of consultation can be enhanced by publishing responses before the consultation period closes. In particular, this can help those individuals and organisations with limited resources or familiarity with the issues to respond in a more informed way. Therefore Ofcom would encourage respondents to complete their coversheet in a way that allows Ofcom to publish their responses upon receipt, rather than waiting until the consultation period has ended.
- A3.4 We strongly prefer to receive responses via the online web form which incorporates the coversheet. If you are responding via email, post or fax you can download an electronic copy of this coversheet in Word or RTF format from the 'Consultations' section of our website at [www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/).
- A3.5 Please put any parts of your response you consider should be kept confidential in a separate annex to your response and include your reasons why this part of your response should not be published. This can include information such as your personal background and experience. If you want your name, address, other contact details, or job title to remain confidential, please provide them in your cover sheet only, so that we don't have to edit your response.

## Cover sheet for response to an Ofcom consultation

### BASIC DETAILS

Consultation title: Northern Ireland DAB consultation

To (Ofcom contact): Neil Stock

Name of respondent:

Representing (self or organisation/s):

Address (if not received by email):

### CONFIDENTIALITY

Please tick below what part of your response you consider is confidential, giving your reasons why

Nothing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Name/contact details/job title	<input type="checkbox"/>
Whole response	<input type="checkbox"/>	Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part of the response	<input type="checkbox"/>	If there is no separate annex, which parts?	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you want part of your response, your name or your organisation not to be published, can Ofcom still publish a reference to the contents of your response (including, for any confidential parts, a general summary that does not disclose the specific information or enable you to be identified)?

### DECLARATION

I confirm that the correspondence supplied with this cover sheet is a formal consultation response that Ofcom can publish. However, in supplying this response, I understand that Ofcom may need to publish all responses, including those which are marked as confidential, in order to meet legal obligations. If I have sent my response by email, Ofcom can disregard any standard e-mail text about not disclosing email contents and attachments.

Ofcom seeks to publish responses on receipt. If your response is non-confidential (in whole or in part), and you would prefer us to publish your response only once the consultation has ended, please tick here.

Name

Signed (if hard copy)

## Annex 4

# Consultation questions

*Q1. Do you think that allowing Digital One to extend the coverage area of its national radio multiplex licence to include Northern Ireland would be calculated to maintain or promote the development of digital sound broadcasting in the UK otherwise than by satellite? Please explain the reasons for your view.*

*Q2. Do you think that Digital One's proposals for providing coverage of Northern Ireland are satisfactory? Please explain the reasons for your view.*

*Q3. Do you consider that Digital One has the ability to maintain its national radio multiplex service if its request is granted? Please explain the reasons for your view.*

*Q4. (For programme service providers on the national radio multiplex, and the holder of the Northern Ireland local radio multiplex licence and its service providers only) Do you consider that there are sufficient safeguards in place to protect your rights and interests in the event that Digital One is permitted to extend coverage to include Northern Ireland?*

*Q5. Do you consider that there any other grounds on which Ofcom should approve, or not approve, the request from Digital One? Please explain the reasons for your view.*

## Annex 5

# Application from Digital One

**digital one**

Crawley Court, Winchester SO21 2QA

tel: +44 (0)1962 823495 web: www.ukdigitalradio.com

Neil Stock  
Ofcom  
Riverside House  
2A Southwark Bridge Road  
London  
SE1 9HA

1<sup>st</sup> February 2013

### Request to extend DLA of the Digital One multiplex to include Northern Ireland

Dear Neil,

Digital One is making a request to Ofcom to extend the DLA of the Digital One national DAB multiplex (DM01) to additionally serve the province of Northern Ireland which is not currently within the Digital Licensed Area (DLA).

In accordance with Section 54A of the Broadcasting Act 1996 (as amended by the Digital Economy Act 2010), Digital One asks that Ofcom consider this request against the following statutory criterion:

*The application must include a technical plan detailing the proposed coverage area, estimated timetable and the technical means by which it would be achieved;*

Digital One submitted a full technical plan to Ofcom on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2012 detailing the proposed coverage area and the technical means by which it would be achieved. In summary, Digital One proposes six new transmitters which would be brought into operation within six months of Ofcom granting consent to our request. These transmitters will be collocated with transmitters used to provide the BBC's National DAB service and will operate at the same effective radiated power (erp). The proposed extension will operate on the same channel as the Digital One service in England and Wales (block 11D).

Ofcom has also asked that Digital One address the following further policy criteria:

*The extension would be calculated to maintain or promote the development of digital sound broadcasting otherwise than by satellite;*

By granting Digital One an extension to the current Digital One DLA, we will be able to establish a stable national DAB service in Northern Ireland for the first time. Although several of the services currently carried on the Digital One multiplex in England, Wales and Scotland are already broadcast on the Score Digital local DAB platform in Northern Ireland, this proposed extension will allow a number of new services to be broadcast there for the first time. With the current line-up of services on Digital One, these new services include Planet Rock, Premier Christian Radio, BFBS, Absolute Radio, Absolute 80's, Absolute 90's, Jazz FM, Smooth Radio UK and Smooth 70's.



*the licensees have the ability to maintain the licensed service;*

Digital One is an established multiplex operator that has successfully operated the national commercial DAB multiplex since November 1999. Digital One is owned by Arqiva who also operate 20 local DAB licences and has announced plans to launch digital radio services in three further areas in 2013. The new transmitters will be built and operated by Arqiva alongside the networks they already provide for the BBC National and Score Digital local services.

*there are sufficient safeguards in place to protect the rights and interests of stations carried on the multiplexes and the rights and interests of other multiplex operators (and the stations they carry).*

We propose to significantly increase the range of services available to listeners in Northern Ireland by building a well designed and cost-effective network of six transmitters in the province. We have consulted with the radio stations carried on our national DAB service and have their support for this application. The new transmitters will have a small effect on the effective coverage of the co-frequency regional DAB service provided by Switchdigital in Central Scotland. We have discussed this with Switchdigital and agreed a package of measures including increased power for that service from the Darvel and Braid Hills transmitters in order to combat the effect of the new Digital One transmitters in Northern Ireland.

Coverage maps, transmission characteristics and predicted coverage figures are shown at the end of this letter.

If there is any further information we can provide, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,



Paul Eaton  
On behalf of Digital One Limited

The proposed transmission characteristics are:-

Transmitter	NGR extended UK Grid	Site Ht mAOD	Antenna Ht mAGL	ERP kW	Antenna
Divis	NW 411 302	369	115	10	BBC National
Cammoney Hill	NW 467 383	203	53	1	BBC National
Londonderry	NV 568 808	175	122	6.3	BBC National
Brougher Mountain	NV 458 166	309	46	3.2	BBC National
Strabane	NV 537 581	274	231	1.6	BBC National
Limavady	NV 884 902	341	29	6.3	BBC National

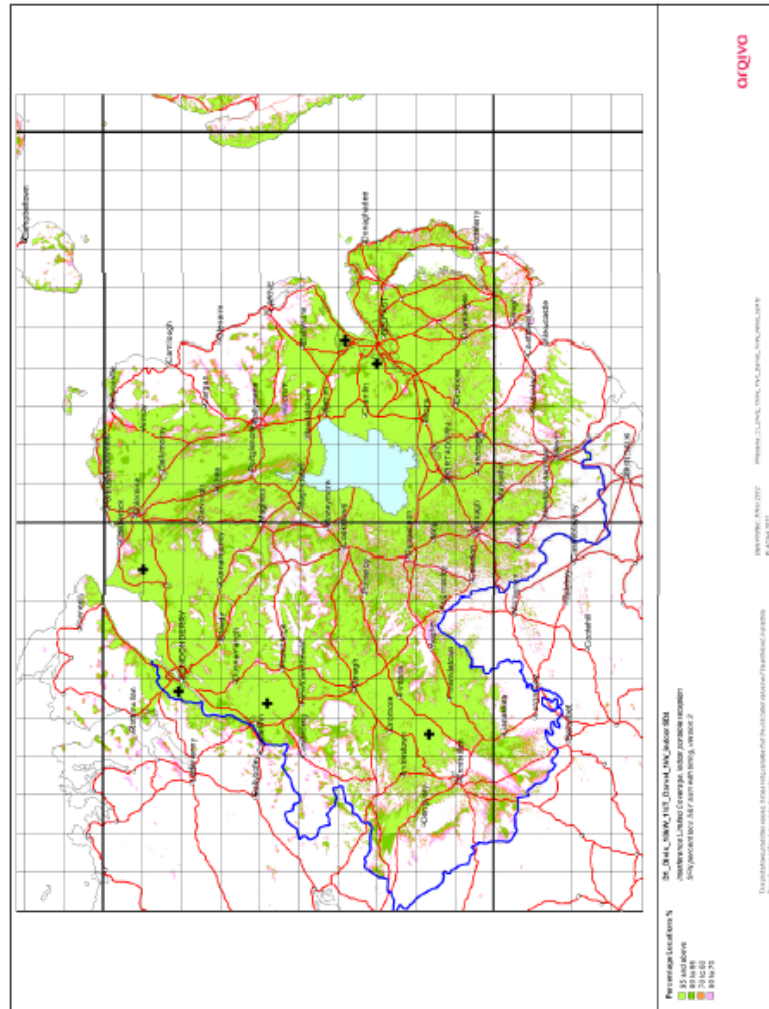


Figure 1: Digital One (11D) Indoor Coverage – 1%T interference (extended UK Grid)



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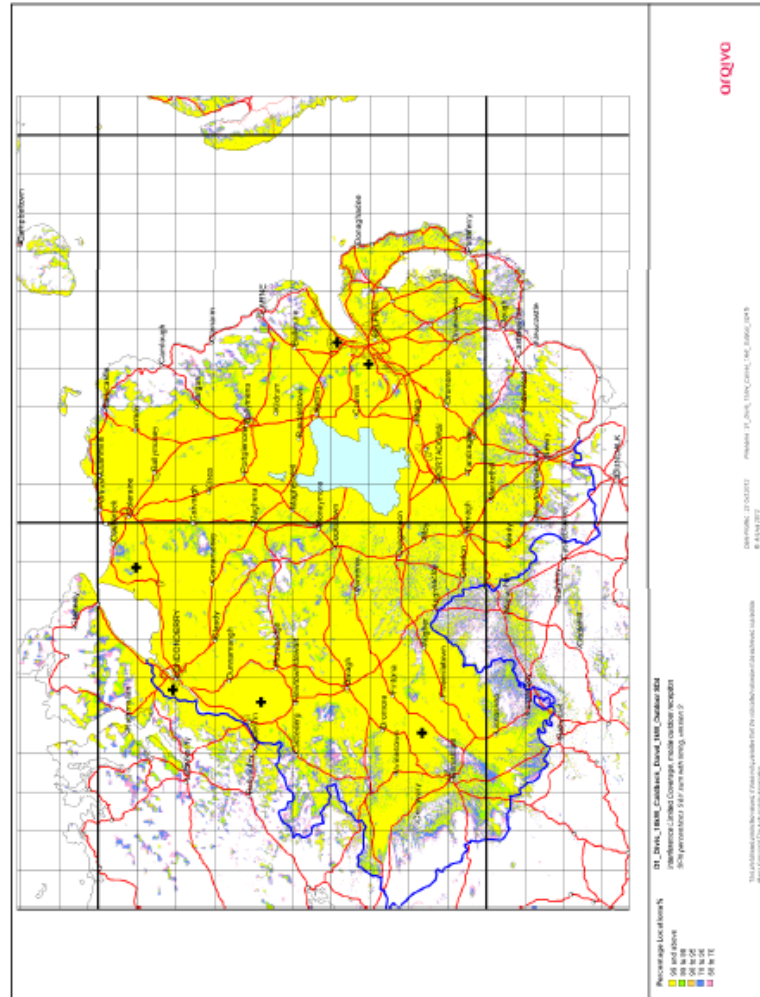


Figure 2: Digital One (11D) Outdoor/Mobile Coverage – 1%T interference (extended UK Grid)

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**Population Coverage tables**

Population coverage: Indoor is proportional 80-95% Locations, 1% Time interference  
Outdoor is 99% Locations, 1% Time interference

Within N Ireland, currently there is no significant existing coverage into the province

	Indoor Proportional 80-95%L (Households)	Outdoor/Mobile 99%L (km)
D1-N Ireland (11D) Proposed	588,238 (73.83%)	1,649.7 (69.71%)

Within UK - England & Wales plus Ireland (11D), and Scotland (12A)

Scenario	Indoor Proportional 80-95%L (Households)	Outdoor/Mobile 99%L (km)
D1-UK (11D+12A) On Air	24,793,270 (87.46%)	38,065.4 (71.97%)
D1-UK (11D+12A) Proposed	25,376,389 (89.51%)	39,729.2 (75.12%)
Gains	583,119 (+2.05%)	1,663.8 (+3.15%)