

talkSPORT Medium wave transmitter reduction request – further information

Many thanks for your correspondence in relation to the above request. We set out the further information you have requested as follows:

- 1. Please could you provide us with further information on the plans you have in place in coordinating with other national AM service providers for these services to come off air by mid-2020s and the substance of any discussions which have taken place so far which would be relevant in the context of your proposal?***

Following the publication of the DCMS Audio Review recommendations, we have consulted with senior colleagues in the BBC and Bauer regarding the future of our AM networks. Following initial discussions we agreed to each undertake detailed desk-based research of RAJAR data to gain a detailed picture of listening trends both at the macro level and on a site-by-site basis.

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talkSPORT has now commissioned MediaCell/IPSOS to run a further bespoke survey of platform listening data. Watermarking encoders required to run the research have now been delivered by IPSOS and are being installed into the talkSPORT AM transmission chain so that the survey can commence in line with the RAJAR Q1 2023 survey period on 2 January 2023. This survey will run for 13 weeks and the data will be available to talkSPORT in early April.

Once we have this data, we will be able to verify the levels of AM listening to talkSPORT as reported by RAJAR. In turn we expect to be able to progress our discussions with the BBC and Bauer. Our request to Ofcom is an important prerequisite in being able to take timely action based on these discussions and further research.

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- 2. We would like to understand whether you have considered any subsequent impact your proposal may have on any other AM broadcasters who share any of the transmission sites you have sought to remove.***

We have not yet been able to consider the impact of our proposals on other AM sites sharers, as we are unable to undertake any such assessment as this would require access to the contractual arrangements each such sharers have with their transmission services provider.

Our limited discussions with the BBC and Bauer on this topic have indicated that there may be material differences in the arrangements each broadcaster has in the area of network access charges, not least given the historical legacies of these arrangements that stretch back decades. However, in terms of the extent of site overlap with local radio services, this is minimal with a small number of mainly Global and Bauer owned local AM services sharing a handful of sites with the national AM broadcasters. Given the limited site overlap, we would expect any impact to be similarly limited.

- 3. In addition to this, we note that in your proposal you stated that you were working with RAJAR to refine your understanding of platform listening data. As such, we were wondering if you had drawn any conclusions from the RAJAR data that was published in October?***

The analysis talkSPORT has undertaken to-date of the available RAJAR data has been off 12-month weighted data, as at a postcode district level the sample sizes need to be robust to derive meaningful analysis. As a result, the latest Q3 2022 data has not altered our overall analysis in any material way. We are still seeing long-term decline in AM listening; and the picture at the specific transmission sites we are modelling has not materially changed, and sites we have identified as closure priorities remain closure priorities on the back of the latest data.

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