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# Renewal procedure for local radio multiplex licences

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# 1. Overview

- 1.1 This document explains how the holder of a licence to provide a local radio multiplex service can apply for a renewal of their licence so that it expires on 31 December 2030.
- 1.2 A local radio multiplex service is the means by which DAB digital radio stations are broadcast to a defined area or region of the UK.
- 1.3 There are currently 55 local radio multiplex services, and three more were licensed by Ofcom in late 2019. Together, these local radio multiplex services are licensed to provide DAB digital radio stations in almost all parts of the UK and the Channel Islands.
- 1.4 This document sets out which licences are eligible to be renewed, and what a licensee needs to do to apply for renewal.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Section 58 of the Broadcasting Act 1996 (“the Act”) sets out the framework for the renewal of national and local radio multiplex licences.
- 2.2 There are currently 55 local radio multiplex licences and two national radio multiplex licences in issue. A further three local radio multiplex licences (for each of the Channel Islands, Morecambe Bay, and North and West Cumbria) were awarded in late 2019, but none of these multiplexes are yet operating at time of writing.
- 2.3 On 6 April 2015, the [Broadcasting Act 1996 \(Renewal of Local Radio Multiplex Licences\) Regulations 2015](#) (“the regulations”) came into force. These regulations amended section 58 of the Act, and inserted a new section 58ZA into the Act. The new section sets out the procedure by which, and conditions under which, a renewal of a local radio multiplex licence may be granted.
- 2.4 In particular, these statutory provisions allow for the holder of a local radio multiplex licence to apply to Ofcom for a renewal of its licence so that it expires on 31 December 2030, but only once that licensee has “...completed the works necessary to ensure that, as a minimum, coverage of the multiplex service in the area or locality in which the licence is granted complies with the coverage plan for that area or locality.”<sup>1</sup>
- 2.5 The ‘coverage plan’ is defined in the legislation as “a plan produced by OFCOM which sets out the coverage on local Digital Audio Broadcasting (‘DAB’) which OFCOM have assessed is broadly equivalent to relevant existing FM local commercial radio coverage in that area or locality.”<sup>2</sup>
- 2.6 The regulations do not provide for a renewal of a national radio multiplex licence. In addition, as the three new local radio multiplex licences awarded in late 2019 will each be granted for a twelve-year period starting no earlier than December 2020 (i.e. they will not expire before December 2032), the renewal process set out in this document will not apply to them either.

### Coverage plans

- 2.7 Ofcom has published a coverage plan for each existing local radio multiplex service which as required sets out the local DAB coverage which is broadly equivalent to relevant existing FM local commercial radio coverage.
- 2.8 The vast majority of these coverage plans were first developed (and published) by Ofcom in early 2015, in connection with the Local DAB Expansion Plan. The Local DAB Expansion Plan was an agreement between the UK Government, the BBC, transmission services company Arqiva and the holders of local radio multiplex licences to expand local DAB coverage so that it would be broadly equivalent to relevant existing FM local commercial

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<sup>1</sup> Section 58ZA(1) of the Act.

<sup>2</sup> Section 58ZA(8) of the Act.

radio coverage. It entailed the switching on of 182 new transmitters, and modifications to 49 existing transmitters, and was completed in March 2018.

2.9 The following table includes the name of each local radio multiplex service, which links to the coverage plan for that local radio multiplex service.

Local radio multiplex service
<a href="#">Aberdeen</a>
<a href="#">Ayr</a>
<a href="#">Berkshire &amp; North Hampshire</a>
<a href="#">Birmingham</a>
<a href="#">Bournemouth</a>
<a href="#">Bradford &amp; Huddersfield</a>
<a href="#">Bristol &amp; Bath</a>
<a href="#">Cambridge</a>
<a href="#">Central Scotland</a>
<a href="#">Coventry</a>
<a href="#">Derbyshire</a>
<a href="#">Edinburgh</a>
<a href="#">Essex</a>
<a href="#">Exeter &amp; Torbay/North Devon</a>
<a href="#">Glasgow</a>
<a href="#">Gloucestershire</a>
<a href="#">Herefordshire &amp; Worcestershire</a>
<a href="#">Herts, Beds and Bucks</a>
<a href="#">Humberside</a>
<a href="#">Inverness</a>
<a href="#">Kent</a>
<a href="#">Lancashire</a>
<a href="#">Leeds</a>
<a href="#">Leicestershire</a>
<a href="#">Lincolnshire</a>
<a href="#">Liverpool</a>
<a href="#">London I</a>

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[London II](#)

[London III](#)

[Manchester](#)

[Mid & West Wales](#)

[Northeast Wales & West Cheshire](#)

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[South Yorkshire](#)

[Stoke-on-Trent](#)

[Suffolk](#)

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[Sussex](#)

[Swansea](#)

[Swindon/West & South Wiltshire](#)

[Tayside](#)

[Teesside](#)

[Tyne & Wear](#)

[Wolverhampton & Shropshire](#)

## Eligibility to apply for renewal

- 2.10 For the purposes of determining whether the holder of a local radio multiplex licence has “completed the works necessary to ensure that, as a minimum, coverage of the multiplex service in the area or locality in which the licence is granted complies with the coverage plan for that area or locality”, the licensee must confirm to Ofcom that it is providing the necessary level of coverage, as shown in the relevant coverage plan.
- 2.11 Further details of the renewal application process are set out in Section 3 of this document.
- 2.12 In addition, Ofcom will verify that the technical information included in each local radio multiplex licence is appropriate to ensure that the required level of coverage is provided.

## 3. The licence renewal procedure

- 3.1 Once the holder of a local radio multiplex licence has completed the build-out of its local radio multiplex broadcast transmission system to Ofcom's satisfaction in accordance with its relevant coverage plan, as set out in Section 2 of this document<sup>3</sup>, Ofcom will consider a renewal application made by the licence holder under section 58ZA of the Act.
- 3.2 Under the statutory provisions, Ofcom may refuse the renewal application if the applicant has failed to comply with any licence conditions, or if it is not satisfied that the applicant would be likely to provide a service complying with the conditions to be included in the renewed licence.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.3 The statutory provisions also state that the licence as renewed must include a condition that the licensee must, for the duration of the licence period, maintain as a minimum the coverage of the multiplex service at the time the application for renewal of the licence was made.<sup>5</sup>
- 3.4 If the application is successful, the licence will include details of the completed build-out, and an obligation to ensure that the transmission system which provides such a network will be maintained for the duration of the licence.
- 3.5 An application for renewal of a local radio multiplex licence under section 58ZA of the Act should be submitted to Ofcom in writing. It should be signed and dated, and in the following format:

*"I, [insert name], on behalf of [insert name of licensee], hereby confirm that [insert name of licensee] wishes to apply for a renewal of the local radio multiplex licence for [insert area covered by licence][insert licence number](the "Licence") to 31 December 2030 in accordance with section 58ZA of the Broadcasting Act 1996 ("the Act").*

*I confirm that coverage of the [insert area covered by licence] local radio multiplex service complies with the coverage plan for [insert area covered by licence][as amended by agreement with Ofcom – delete as appropriate].*

*I also confirm that to date, [insert name of licensee] has complied with the conditions in the Licence, and that [insert name of licensee] will be able to comply with the conditions in the renewed Licence, if the renewal application is successful, for the duration of the Licence.*

*In particular, [insert name of licensee] will continue to provide as a minimum the level of coverage set out in the coverage plan for [insert area covered by licence][as amended by agreement with Ofcom – delete as appropriate] throughout the period of the renewed Licence."*

- 3.6 In accordance with section 58ZA(4) of the Act, it is possible that Ofcom could, at any time before determining the application for renewal, require the applicant to provide technical

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<sup>3</sup> Or as varied by agreement with Ofcom.

<sup>4</sup> Section 58ZA(5) of the Act.

<sup>5</sup> Section 58ZA(7)(a) of the Act.



details which supplement those included in the technical plan (if any) submitted under sections 50 and 58 of the Act. Ofcom may also consider inserting conditions in the renewed licence as appear to Ofcom to be appropriate for securing the implementation of any such supplementary technical plan required to be submitted.<sup>6</sup>

- 3.7 In accordance with section 58ZA of the Act, where Ofcom approves an application for renewal, it will formally renew the licence from the date on which it approves the application. The renewed licence will run until 31 December 2030.
- 3.8 As set out in the regulations, the latest a licensee can apply for licence renewal is three months before the 'relevant date'<sup>7</sup>.
- 3.9 The 'relevant date' is defined in the Act as the date by which, if the licence was not renewed, Ofcom would need to publish a notice inviting applications for the licence to enable a fresh licence to be granted from the expiry date of the current one.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the 'relevant date' is designed to ensure that there is continuity of service for listeners in the event that there is a change of licensee.
- 3.10 For all licences, the 'relevant date' will be one year prior to the expiry date of the licence.

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<sup>6</sup> Section 58ZA(7)(b) of the Act.

<sup>7</sup> Section 58ZA(3) of the Act.

<sup>8</sup> Section 58ZA(8) of the Act.