

Revocation of the Inverclyde small-scale radio multiplex licence award

Background

Under section 51(6) of the Broadcasting Act 1996 (as modified by the Small-scale Radio Multiplex and Community Digital Radio Order 2019), Ofcom may revoke the award of a small-scale radio multiplex licence where the licence itself has not yet been granted and Ofcom has reasonable grounds for believing that the person to whom the licence was awarded will not provide the service within 18 months of the date of the award.

Decision

After careful consideration, Ofcom has taken the decision to revoke the licence award we made on 11 March 2021 to UK DAB Networks Limited (now known as Nation DAB Networks Limited ('Nation')) for the Inverclyde small-scale radio multiplex service.

This is on the basis that the statutory conditions for revocation as set out above have been met. Firstly, the awarded licence has not yet been granted. Secondly, we have reasonable grounds to believe the service will not be provided within 18 months of award (i.e. by 30th September 2022) as an acceptable final technical plan has not been received, and Nation has informed us that it will not be submitting a further plan. In the absence of an acceptable final plan, Ofcom is not in a position to grant a licence and the service cannot be provided.

Nation proposed a final revised technical plan for this licence that, in our view, represents a substantial and unacceptable reduction of the coverage that the applicant proposed in the application originally submitted to and accepted by Ofcom. According to Ofcom's calculations, the revised technical plan submitted by Nation would reduce the adult population coverage of the Inverclyde multiplex from 87.3% based on Ofcom's assessment of the technical plan in the application, to 30.6% of the advertised coverage area (or 265,575 adults down to 44,918 adults). In addition, areas that were originally expected to be served, such as Greenock, Helensburgh, Gourrock and Dunoon, would not be served. As noted above, Nation has made clear it does not intend to submit a further revised technical plan and, on that basis, Ofcom has concluded the service will not be provided within the 18-month period set out in the legislation.

Ofcom will consider re-advertising this multiplex licence, for which UKDAB Networks Limited was the sole applicant, should we receive any expressions of interest following today's announcement.