

Dear Ms Jackson,

With regard to the proposed extension the regional South Devon DAB / Digital radio service to North Devon and Torrington, I would like to raise the following concerns.

I note that coverage for the North Devon area is likely to fall well short of the 90% national average that has been touted as being the standard for DAB, a likelihood that causes considerable issues. We already have problems with TV reception in this area, due to the topography of the landscape, and now it seems we are once more to receive a second rate service, despite paying the same licence fee as the rest of the country.

Moreover, this a rural area, often with poor transport links, frequent hills and a plethora of small country lanes. In severe weather conditions, which seem to be coming more common, it is essential that we have the widest possible access to good quality, local radio. It is absolutely no use to me, or anyone else in the area, to receive reports on the snowfall, or lack of it, in Plymouth or Exeter, only to head out of my driveway onto an ice rink or ski slope and thus put myself and the rescue services I may well now need, at risk. In severe weather conditions, local must mean local and must be available to all!

Also, simply on the level of enjoyment, I find it irritating to listen to adverts for businesses that I cannot use, services I cannot access and events that are too distant to attend, and I know I am not alone in this. It is no use Heart pretending they are local to North Devon, as little of their content has any relevance to this area. Indeed, you could be anywhere in the country. I travel extensively in the UK and have done for the last 35 years, and I have always used local radio to keep abreast of local conditions. However, I now find myself unable to distinguish one region from another: just as our high streets are turning into facsimiles of each other, so today's local radio has little or no region flavour. I hear the same music, news and adverts wherever I am in the country.

I implore you to please reject the expansion of DAB at the expense of truly local radio. David Cameron has stated that he wants to localise government and build a "Big Society"; truly local radio, as seen, or rather heard, at Voicefm, is a step in this direction, and a step in keeping local identities and local communities alive, and in increasing social cohesion.

Yours sincerely