

Your response

Question	Your response
<p>Question 1: Do you agree that Ofcom should give its consent to the reductions in AM (medium wave) transmitter coverage proposed by talkSPORT? If you do not agree, please give reasons.</p>	<p>For some decades now talkSPORT has been a valuable player in the sports/talk segment of the UK radio industry. Its strategy, progress and success in challenging more established national and even international sports broadcasters give it credit.</p> <p>The real reasons behind the intention to reduce its AM coverage is not clear to us and we can only assume that the cost of maintaining AM on air, while other platforms are being developed and rights become ever more expensive, might be one of them. In percentage terms this is a small reduction and Ofcom's "provisional view is that the impact will be marginal given the decline in analogue listening and the number of listeners likely to be affected by the proposed changes."</p> <p>However, closing down 7 transmitters, affecting 1.3 million listeners especially in regions of the UK where connectivity and other digital platforms are not as ubiquitous as in the south, is no small matter. Besides, if you keep closing down transmitters, there is no surprise when the audience figures go down.</p> <p>First Absolut Radio, now talkSPORT, tomorrow other stations might go the same way.</p> <p>AM analogue broadcasting is still flourishing in some parts of the world (see India and other Asian countries) but not in Europe. While analogue medium wave is certainly on the wane, there is a well-tested and rolled out solution that can transform analogue AM into a new and comprehensive platform, Digital Radio Mondiale DRM. (www.drm.org)</p> <p>Digitising AM (medium wave) with DRM offers immediate and clear advantages: excellent sound, more content and choice on one single current frequency (up to three channels/services and one data channel), reduced energy costs of up to 80% for super-efficient transmitters, no need for third-party multiplex operators.</p>

Reducing analogue AM in small bites (or hardly noticeable percentages) can be a good strategy, if doubled by measure of future-proofing radio and bringing it into the digital age.

Instead of just closing down facilities, maybe Ofcom, as a forward thinking and technology neutral regulator, could suggest digitising AM and safeguarding frequencies that, when left to go fallow, will never be recovered and will be perhaps snapped up by other technologies. Receivers are the issue always raised with any new radio technology or solution. Even DAB is slowly being replaced by DAB+ in cars or standalone receivers. Thankfully, the situation is different from 20 years ago, now there are multi-standard chipsets (like DRM and DAB/DAB+) and software defined solutions that are making the multi-standard receivers at reasonable prices no longer such an insurmountable challenge.

In India, in less than two years, the number of cars with analogue/DRM (medium wave) receivers grew from nothing to about 2 million. There are many solutions currently and, particularly, the automotive industry is geared for multi-standard receivers. The only thing is that the signal has now to come, in the UK, too, from the regulator.

While it seems that Ofcom has almost decided in the case of talkSPORT, the DRM Consortium would like to suggest that before more AM transmitters are closed, a proper demo/trial of DRM in mediumwave is conducted in the UK, especially for areas like northern Scotland, Northern Ireland, parts of Wales. This would demonstrate to stations looking for savings but keen to maintain reach and coverage that there are other ways to achieve your strategy than closing down facilities. DRM is digital radio that will leave no-one behind.

We in the Consortium are ready to support Ofcom and any interested party in such a valuable undertaking.

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<https://www.radioworld.com/columns-and-views/solving-the-medium-wave-problem?u>