



Your response

Question	Your response
Question 1: Do you have any comments on Ofcom's proposed Work Plan for 2026/27?	Confidential? – N

Submission by Soar Sound to Ofcom's Plan of Work 2026–27 Consultation

Soar Sound is a licensed community radio service serving Leicester and surrounding neighbourhoods. We are submitting this response to express serious concern about Ofcom's current application of the 40% capacity rule on the Leicester small-scale DAB multiplex, and the material harm this is causing to listeners and communities within the Greater Leicester Urban Area.

Ofcom's interpretation of the 40% rule in Leicester is unfair, overly proscriptive, and detached from the lived reality of coverage and reception. As applied, it is preventing residents in Syston, Blaby, Oadby, and other neighbourhoods within the Greater Leicester Urban Area from receiving community radio services that they reasonably expect to access. These are not marginal or peripheral locations. They are integral parts of Leicester's functional urban area, with shared social, economic, and civic ties to the city.

As a result of Ofcom's current position, Soar Sound is unable to provide an adequate and reliable service to significant sections of its intended audience. This is not due to technical incapacity or lack of demand, but because Ofcom has chosen to apply the 40% rule in a rigid and defensive manner that prioritises protection of the commercial interests of the local multiplex over the listening rights and interests of residents.

We reject the assumption that the 40% rule must be treated as immovable in circumstances where its application is clearly undermining access, plurality, and public value. In Leicester, the rule is being used to justify constrained coverage that does not reflect how people live, travel, or identify with place. The consequence is that community radio is being held back, while commercial and incumbent interests are effectively shielded from proportionate scrutiny.

Soar Sound sees no reasonable justification for Ofcom failing to act in this specific case. Ofcom has the discretion to vary or reinterpret the 40% rule where it is producing perverse outcomes. There is no technical, legal, or public-interest barrier preventing Ofcom from moving immediately to vary the rule in Leicester in order to restore fair access to broadcast radio services for residents in Syston, Blaby, Oadby, and neighbouring areas.

We therefore expect Ofcom to do two things as a matter of urgency. First, to take immediate steps to vary the application of the 40% rule in Leicester so that community services such as Soar Sound can serve the wider urban area they exist to support. Second, to publish clear and explicit public statements explaining why, at present, Ofcom is denying residents in these areas access to broadcast radio services that they wish to hear, and setting out the decision-making logic behind this position.

If Ofcom continues to rely on opaque or procedural explanations, this will further undermine confidence in the regulator's commitment to citizens, plurality, and local public value. Access to radio is not an abstract regulatory concern. It is a practical, everyday matter for listeners. Soar Sound expects Ofcom's 2026–27 Plan of Work to address this issue directly, transparently, and without further delay.

Please complete this form in full and return to planofwork@ofcom.org.uk