



UK Community Radio Network

Represent, Support, and Develop
Ofcom Licenced Community Radio
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The UK Community Radio Network is the national organisation that represents, supports, and develops Ofcom-licensed Community Radio stations across the UK

We wish to thank Ofcom for the continued working relationship we have as a sector body, and all their hard work supporting the Community Radio sector. We would welcome further and additional opportunities to meet and work with Ofcom for sector representation and would invite Ofcom to meet directly with stations more often, where resources allow, and these meetings or a tour are something we would love to support.

In regard to the plan of work 2026/2027, we have the following comments for the representation of the sector.

Community Radio Broadcasting Licensing

You are proposing to; *“We will continue to issue, manage, and maintain licences for all national and local commercial TV, digital commercial and digital community radio services and restricted analogue radio services. We will remain responsive to stakeholder requests to make changes to their licences where appropriate.”*

We feel there is a significant omission here in regard to Community Radio, as ‘digital community radio services’ are listed but not analogue. This could be interpreted that Ofcom will no longer manage OR maintain analogue community radio licences. We believe that the sector still needs to be managed and maintained by the regulator and would strongly advocate for this to be amended to reflect that the hundreds of Community Radio stations across the UK still have a significant purpose for the communities that they serve.

In regard to issuing new licences for analogue Community Radio, this is a strong position for us and an item we have lobbied for since our foundation. While we

welcomed Ofcom's statement of what comes next for radio post SSDAB, and we look forward to the consultation, we feel strongly that there is significant enough demand and justification for Ofcom to commit to issuing new analogue Community Radio licences. In particular, serving those communities that have seen a licence handed back OR cease broadcasting since the last full-scale round (and especially in areas where this happened against the wishes of the community), in those areas which are currently underserved by SSDAB or will never be served by SSDAB, and in those areas that no longer have any local radio service following the decline in local provision by the BBC and the homogenisation of the original local 'commercial' stations into national brands.



In the past few years we've had over 50 organisations and communities engage with us via our consultations or directly trying to advocate for new analogue (mainly FM) licences to serve their areas. They report a lack of or inadequate coverage from SSDAB in their area, the handing back or ceasing of broadcasting Community Radio licences against the will of their community (and often the volunteer presenter groups).

These stations are already serving audiences via online or limited SSDAB coverage, but can serve a much greater audience and deliver more local content and social gain if given the opportunity of an analogue licence.

Analogue Community Radio can quite often support communities that are impacted by poverty or other socioeconomic barriers to digital inclusion and migration to digital radio, and also those who do not engage (from choice, digital literacy or other reasons) with smartphones, smart speakers, or other digital technology.

Ofcom also has a statutory duty to best maximise spectrum to service audiences, and so should commit to the licencing of new analogue Community Radio services in this plan of work period.

Regulation of radio selection services (voice assistants)

We look forward to engaging with Ofcom on the development of the regulation of radio selection services, and make sure that Community Radio is well represented. As a sector these services are vital for access to a growing digital market of services in home and in car. The UK Community Radio Network has already made representations on this area during the development of The Media Act, providing written and face-to-face testimony to the DCMS Select Committee and then meeting with representatives of the two biggest radio aggregators TuneIn and Radioplayer.