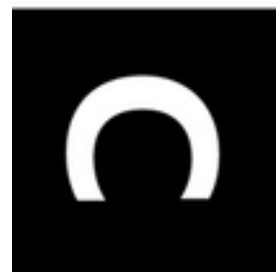
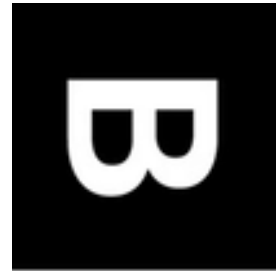


Your response



**BBC response to Ofcom Consultation:
Enabling drone innovation and security**

29 September 2026

Consultation: Enabling drone innovation and security

Additional frequency bands for drone control and drone detection radar

BBC Response

The BBC welcomes the opportunity to respond to Ofcom's consultation on enabling drone innovation and security.

The BBC supports Ofcom's objective of enabling safe and beneficial drone innovation, including potential inspection, resilience and other public-interest applications.

New drone authorisations should protect verified existing users through proportionate technical conditions, coordination, compliance monitoring and timely interference-resolution processes. This is particularly important for authorised services requiring reliable or short-notice spectrum access, including relevant broadcasting, PMSE, newsgathering and outside-broadcast operations where these are technically affected by a proposed authorisation.

Nothing in the BBC's response to this consultation is confidential.

Question 1: Do you have any comments on our impact assessments as set out in Annex 1? Please specify whether your comments relate to

- ***our wider impact assessment;***
- ***our equality impact assessment; or***
- ***our Welsh language impact assessment.***

In relation to the wider impact assessment, the BBC supports Ofcom's objective of enabling safe and beneficial drone operations. The conclusion that impacts on existing users will be limited should remain subject to effective coordination, compliance monitoring and timely interference-resolution arrangements, particularly for authorised services requiring reliable or short-notice spectrum access.

Question 2: Do you agree with our assessment of the 450 MHz and 5030-5091 MHz bands for drone control links? Do you agree there is demand for these bands in the UK (please identify any relevant use cases and locations in your response)? Are there any other frequency bands we should consider for control links?

The BBC believes that the introduction of drone control links should not be permitted within the PMSE ranges of the 450 MHz band to maintain the existing operation and flexibility of vital production communications.

Question 3: Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to coordinating drones with other users of the 450 MHz band? In your response, please indicate whether it relates to co-channel or adjacent channel use, and provide evidence for any coexistence issues raised.

The proposed introduction of drones within the '450 MHz band' is fundamentally not compatible with the band's long-established use by Programme Making and Special Events (PMSE) within the ranges set out in IR2038. Assumptions in the proposals and the co-ordination methodology rely upon business radio assumptions and technical parameters which are inappropriate and substantially different to PMSE deployments. Drone assignments and their protection zones, licensed for three year periods, are liable to impact on spectrum availability for PMSE users.

The consultation notes 42,000 PMSE assignments in 2025 within the 450 MHz band which remains crucial to the continued operations of the TV and film production industry. These UHF assignments remain the most reliable and flexible means of production communications from news gathering and small outside broadcasts to golf coverage over a wide area and for major national events. Most of these assignments are short term, just a few days, and are applied for at short notice, facilitated through Ofcom's online application process. The PMSE ranges within the 450 MHz band support standard sets of compatible duplex assignment pairs to which the industry routinely aligns and operates its equipment according to production requirements. Only in this way can these uncontended PMSE ranges in the 450 MHz band routinely accommodate the high assignment count for complex productions in close proximity with a swift turnaround.

The proposal to introduce individual drone assignments into PMSE ranges upsets this ecosystem of mutually compatible assignments upon which the PMSE industry relies. It can be contrasted with enduring business radio deployments which can be planned and optimised over a longer period, better able to accommodate exceptional requirements such as drones.

The case for introducing drone assignments into other parts of the 450 MHz band, particularly business radio, is apparent but not within PMSE ranges for the reasons set out.

Question 4: Do you have any comments on our proposed 450 MHz drone authorisation approach? Please provide any specific views (including technical justification where relevant) on:

- ***the proposed technical conditions, including operating height AGL, power, channel bandwidth, designated service area, and number of base stations;***
- ***the proposed non-technical conditions, including licence fees and term, frequency flexibility and complying with CAA rules and radio equipment standards; and***
- ***reviewing our initial authorisation approach.***

The BBC supports a time-limited, coordinated and reviewable 450 MHz authorisation provided drone assignments fall outside PMSE ranges.

The BBC does not have technical evidence on which to propose alternative limits for operating height, power, bandwidth, service area or numbers of base stations. It also has no evidence on which to propose alternative licence fees, licence terms, frequency-flexibility conditions or equipment-compliance requirements.

Ofcom should retain conditions necessary to support coexistence and should establish clear compliance and interference-remediation procedures.

Based on the operational information available to those preparing this response, the BBC has no current requirement for a 450 MHz drone licence. Any longer-term approach should be informed by evidence of demand, utilisation and coexistence gathered during the initial licence period.

Question 5: Do you have any comments on our proposed 5030-5091 MHz drone authorisation approach? Please provide any specific views (including technical justification where relevant) on:

- ***the portion of the band proposed for early release (5040-5060 MHz)***
- ***the proposed technical parameters and approach to coordinating drones and/or protecting other users of the band; and***
- ***the proposal to phase out licences once there is global harmonisation, the required transition period and sunset clause.***

The BBC supports an interim, coordinated release within 5030–5091 MHz and has no evidence requiring an alternative to Ofcom’s proposed 5040–5060 MHz initial segment.

The BBC does not have technical evidence on which to propose alternative operating or coordination parameters. Based on the operational information available to those preparing this response, the BBC has no current requirement for access to 5030–5091 MHz.

The authorisation should preserve a clear transition to internationally harmonised arrangements and include a defined review and sunset mechanism. Any extension beyond 2032 should require a further evidence-based review and should not result in an indefinite interim arrangement.

Question 6: Do you have comments on our proposal to create a new drone detection radar licence for the 24 GHz band, including the proposed technical and non-technical conditions, the proposed draft licence in Annex 12, and our coexistence analysis in Annex 6? Please provide evidence for any issues raised.

The BBC supports Ofcom’s proposal for a controlled 24 GHz drone-detection radar licence, including appropriate technical limits, radio-astronomy safeguards, maintenance of accurate deployment information and clear interference-resolution procedures.

The BBC notes that the proposed radar frequencies are 24.0675–24.2325 GHz and that the 24.25–24.5 GHz PMSE allocation is adjacent to, rather than within, the proposed radar frequencies.

Based on the operational information available to those preparing this response, the BBC has no current requirement for 24 GHz drone-detection radar.

Ofcom should keep its coexistence assumptions, technical conditions and interference-resolution arrangements under review as practical deployment evidence becomes available.

Question 7: Do you have comments on our proposal to create a new drone detection radar licence for the 16 GHz band on a case-by-case basis, including the proposed technical and non-technical conditions and proposed draft licence in Annex 12? Please provide evidence for any issues raised.

The BBC supports case-by-case, area-defined licensing of drone-detection radar in 15.7–16.4 GHz, subject to coordination with the Ministry of Defence, compliance with applicable radio-astronomy protection criteria and clear interference-resolution arrangements.

Based on the operational information available to those preparing this response, the BBC has no current requirement for 16 GHz drone-detection radar.

Ofcom should review its coordination process and technical conditions in light of practical deployment and coexistence experience.

Question 8: Have you identified any other frequency bands we should consider for drone control links in the longer term?

The BBC has no current requirement for additional drone control-link spectrum or another band to recommend.

The BBC supports continued evidence-led study, prioritising internationally harmonised solutions and evidence obtained through UK trials. Any future authorisation should be based on demonstrated demand, appropriate compatibility analysis and protection of verified existing users.

Question 9: Do you have any comments related to the existing satellite frequencies available for drone control links?

The BBC has no current requirement for additional satellite frequencies for drone control links.

The BBC does not have evidence on whether the existing satellite authorisations meet the wider drone sector's requirements and therefore does not propose an expansion of the currently authorised frequencies.

Any future expansion should be subject to appropriate compatibility analysis and protection of verified fixed, satellite and other authorised services.

Question 10: What are your needs and priorities for accessing spectrum for drone safety? Do you have interest in future use of 15 GHz and/or 76 GHz, or other specific frequencies and bands for similar drone safety use?

The BBC has no current requirement for access to 15 GHz, 76 GHz or another specific band for drone-safety systems.

Potential future use of drones for inspection, resilience or other public-interest applications should not be interpreted as a confirmed BBC spectrum requirement.

The BBC supports continued international technical and standards work. Any wider authorisation should be informed by evidence of demand and appropriate compatibility analysis to protect verified existing users.

Question 11: Do you have any interest in ground based UAT to complement the aerial component in 978 MHz licences?

The BBC has no current interest in operating ground-based UAT infrastructure at 978 MHz.

Any future authorisation should continue to be developed jointly with the CAA and should use the established process for addressing changes affecting authorised aeronautical, PMSE and other relevant spectrum use.

This response does not indicate a BBC operational requirement for ground-based UAT.

Question 12: Are you interested in or do you have any plans to trial the use of ISAC for drone detection purposes?

The BBC has no confirmed plans to trial ISAC for drone detection.

The BBC supports continued technical and standards work on ISAC, including assessment of coexistence and interference implications for existing authorised services.

Any possible future interest should not be interpreted as a current trial commitment or operational spectrum requirement.

Question 13: Do you have any other comments on this consultation document?

The BBC supports Ofcom's objective of enabling safe and beneficial drone innovation, including potential inspection, resilience and other public-interest applications.

New drone authorisations should protect verified existing users through proportionate technical conditions, coordination, compliance monitoring and timely interference-resolution processes. This is particularly important for authorised services requiring reliable or short-notice spectrum access, including relevant broadcasting, PMSE, newsgathering and outside-broadcast operations where these are technically affected by a proposed authorisation.

For 450 MHz, the BBC supports coordinated, time-limited access and review based on evidence of demand, utilisation and coexistence.

For 5030–5091 MHz, interim arrangements should retain a clear route to internationally harmonised authorisation. Any extension beyond the proposed 2032 sunset should require a further evidence-based review and should not become indefinite by default.

For drone-detection radar at 16 GHz and 24 GHz, coordination and compatibility assessment should be based on the technical characteristics of each proposed deployment and each verified potentially affected system. Ofcom should keep its technical assumptions and licence conditions under review as practical deployment evidence becomes available.

Future spectrum planning should continue to consider verified public-service media and broadcast-engineering requirements alongside drone innovation.