

Your response

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Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed broadcast licensing priorities for the short to medium term? Please give reasons for your answer.	Confidential? – N I welcome OFCOM's new, more flexible and community-responsive approach to licencing - new FM community stations are crucial to delivering this new approach. No new FM licences have been granted since July 2020, and this gap has been especially felt in rural areas such as Rutland, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, where mobile connectivity and SSDAB coverage remain more challenging to achieve. For the last few years, every Minister for Media I've had surgeries with has agreed with me that some areas, notably Rutland and Wales, desperately need FM licences to adequately reach communities. Yet on each occasion, OFCOM has informed the Minister that no new FM Licences could be moved forward at that time. Our communities have waited long enough.
Question 2: Do you consider that the proposed broadcast licensing priorities for the short to medium term will provide sufficient provision for audiences? Please give reasons for your answer.	Confidential? – N Further licencing of new community stations on FM can only be of benefit to listeners - in the case of Rutland & Stamford Sound, they have a loyal online listener base who listen in their thousands, along with SSDAB, but they know there are areas of the service area where FM would at least fill in the gaps, and also provide an alternative way of listening, particularly in older cars and in more rural parts where SSDAB can't viably reach. Additionally, I am concerned by the approach and actions of some SSDAB providers which I believe take a cavalier approach with the radio companies forced to operate with them due to the lack of FM provision.
Question 3: For post-launch SSDAB multiplex coverage improvement or extension requests only, do you agree with our proposed change in approach to our application of the rule which restricts overlap with local muxes to 40% of the population already covered by the local mux (the "40% ceiling")? Please give reasons for your answer.	Confidential? – N Some flexibility in the 40% rule for overlap between SSDAB and local DAB would be beneficial — the Leicester SSDAB is a good example of this in practice, where the large centre of population pushes it over the threshold and prevents it from serving the whole city and surrounding suburbs.

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Question 4: Do you agree with Ofcom's analysis in section 3 and at Annex A1 of the existing broadcast licence types? Please give reasons for your answer.	Confidential? – N I believe OFCOM classifying different licence types in the way it has is helpful, but FM is still proportionately more useful in rural areas, where the DAB footprint is less complete, and this should be reflected in licensing priorities. The existing approach has let communities down.
Question 5: Do you agree with our assessment on the impact of our proposed broadcast licensing priorities for the short to medium term at Annex A3? Please give reasons for your answer.	Confidential? –N Rutland & Stamford Sound has been on SSDAB since it launched in the area and find it a useful way to reach more listeners and advertisers but are also aware of its shortcomings. There are parts of each town centre – Oakham and Stamford - near buildings where the digital signal is not robust enough, there are also many villages that look towards the towns of Oakham, Uppingham and Stamford that don't receive a useable signal due to the cost of building extra transmitters and local topography – my own included - these same areas also suffer with poor mobile signal and slow broadband, where FM would be able to penetrate. As the only local radio station dedicated to our communities, providing hourly Rutland and Stamford news, events and information every day, the station deserves as wide a platform of listening options as possible. I would also note how important radio was during the pandemic, and was one of the most trusted sources of information. Local retailers also report that around half of the new radios they sell have no DAB band at all, which speaks to the continuing demand and usefulness for FM.
Question 6: Do you have any other comments to make on the proposals?	Confidential? –N I have been in dialogue with Ministers and Ofcom over several years to try and achieve new FM community station licensing, including a meeting in 2023 where we discussed the need for continued FM provision in rural areas and the limitations of SSDAB technology, and most recently writing to Dame Melanie Dawes in November 2025 asking Ofcom to confirm it would still consult on the future of FM community radio licensing, so I am pleased to see this consultation now taking place. Rutland and Stamford Sound is exactly the kind of station this process should be designed to help, a vital local

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	voice for rural communities that national and regional broadcasters simply cannot reflect. It is the only local radio station providing hourly Rutland and Stamford news and information every day, works closely with Citizens Advice Rutland, and serves a rural listenership that depends on it to stay informed and connected. That is precisely why FM community licensing matters so much. I strongly urge Ofcom to issue FM licences for rural stations, and to ensure Rutland, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire communities are in the first areas to receive FM licences.

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