Your response

About Arqiva

Arqiva is a leading UK communications service and infrastructure provider, operating at the heart of the UK broadcast industry.

Our broadcast transmission network spans over 1,450 sites and delivers universal broadcast television, also known as Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT), and radio services to over 98.5% of the UK, ensuring universal availability of a wide range of free-to-air services. Arqiva holds two of the three national commercial DTT multiplex licences, operates two national commercial digital radio multiplexes, and holds multiple DAB local radio multiplex licences.

Arqiva operates over 80 ground satellite dishes for Direct-to-Home (DTH) TV and is the UK's largest independent reseller of satellite capacity, with a growing market share in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) uplinking. Arqiva's network also hosts multiple government, mobile, emergency services, transport and telecoms contracts operated via Cellnex.

We are dedicated to supporting and advancing the UK's broadcast industry, ensuring that our customers can deliver their content to audiences wherever they are and however they choose to watch or listen – with services meeting the highest standards for reliability, security, and user experience.

Response

Arqiva welcomes Ofcom's Call for Input on the future spectrum needs of the Programme Making and Special Events (PMSE) sector and supports the objective of ensuring that PMSE users continue to have reliable access to spectrum in the context of growing demand and potential changes in the wider spectrum landscape.

We recognise the continuing and growing importance of UHF spectrum to professional audio PMSE applications. Ofcom's analysis demonstrates the increasing reliance of wireless microphones and in-ear monitor systems on the interleaved DTT UHF bands, with peak demand increasingly concentrated at a small number of large events.

The near-complete loss of PMSE access to the 700 MHz band has not been offset by significant take-up of alternative spectrum, such as the 960–1164 MHz DME band. Instead, demand has largely migrated into the remaining lower-frequency UHF spectrum.

Future of DTT

We note that one of the key drivers for this review is the potential for future changes to Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) and the possible repurposing of parts of the UHF band. While these considerations remain under review, they are clearly relevant to PMSE users given the extent to which audio PMSE relies on shared access to DTT spectrum.

Both Arqiva's direct engagement with Ofcom and our participation in the DCMS Future of TV distribution stakeholder forum – which concluded in January 2026 – demonstrates that it is possible to maintain a universal DTT service while reducing the amount of UHF spectrum required for broadcast use. In particular, our analysis indicates that a transition from six to three national DTT multiplexes from 2034 could enable the release of spectrum in the 600 MHz band, while continuing to support nationwide television coverage for both PSB and Commercial channels.

Importantly, this three-multiplex model is consistent with PMSE continuing to operate in the UHF band, albeit within a potentially reduced overall spectrum envelope. We consider it important that any future decisions on DTT spectrum explicitly recognise the ongoing dependence of PMSE on UHF frequencies and ensure that repurposing options are assessed with appropriate regard to coexistence, interference management and the practical usability of spectrum for PMSE.

Alternative Sharing Options

Arqiva supports Ofcom's review of possible additional sharing opportunities, including the potential for more flexible use of interleaved DAB spectrum in geographic areas where those frequencies are not used for broadcasting. However, this is an area that would require particular caution.

Any future consideration of such an approach would need to ensure that DAB reception is adequately protected, including beyond formal licence boundaries where listeners and broadcasters may reasonably expect continuity of service. It would also be important to ensure that any new sharing arrangements do not constrain the future development or expansion of DAB services.

In practice, interference considerations are likely to affect the reliability of wireless microphone operation in areas subject to significant DAB signal levels. This may limit the real-world applicability of this option but reinforces the importance of maintaining robust protection of incumbent broadcast services should the concept be explored further.

Similarly, other spectrum options identified in the Call for Input, such as potential access to the 700 MHz duplex gap, would require careful assessment of interference risks and long-term compatibility with existing and anticipated primary uses.

Across all potential future options for PMSE spectrum access, Ofcom should prioritise robust interference management and realistic assumptions about coexistence. Professional PMSE applications, particularly audio, are highly sensitive to interference and depend on predictable and reliable spectrum access. Any new sharing arrangements or alternative bands should therefore be assessed not only in terms of theoretical availability, but their practical usability in real-world event and production environments.

Conclusion

To summarise, the proposal put forward by Arqiva for the long-term future of DTT permits the ongoing use of the UHF band by PMSE. We believe that this option remains the best option for the PMSE sector as it avoids unnecessarily disruption, cost and the risk of interference which could impact and hamper the sector if it was forced out of the UHF spectrum altogether.

Please tell us how you came across about this consultation.

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