



Submission to Ofcom on extending DAB services in Northern Ireland consultation

1. Introduction

The BBC welcomes the opportunity to respond to Ofcom's consultation on extending DAB services in Northern Ireland, published on 14 February 2013. We are keen to continue to be at the forefront of efforts to promote the DAB radio platform throughout the UK. With that in mind, we are broadly supportive of proposals that will increase the breadth and quality of DAB service offering to listeners whilst ensuring that existing services do not suffer unacceptable risks of harmful interference.

The BBC national DAB multiplex covers 94.3% of homes while the national commercial DAB multiplex covers 84.6%. At a time when DAB radio is accounting for an increasing share of total listening time¹ we welcome further moves to encourage DAB take-up, especially in areas that are less well-served than the UK as a whole.

Northern Ireland does not have two national multiplexes, setting it apart from England, Scotland and Wales. We therefore offer our broad support for Ofcom's proposal to extend the Digital One multiplex so that it covers all four Nations, ensuring that all listeners have the opportunity to enjoy similar breadth of national channels.

Ofcom does have a general policy of ensuring that there are sufficient safeguards in place for existing radio services. The BBC notes that any technical issues should be resolved using the normal safeguards that are already in place for existing radio services and the agreed radio industry Adjacent Channel Interference (ACI) MoU.

¹ According to Ofcom's *Digital Radio Report*, October 2012, digital radio (of which DAB is the main component) share of total radio listening increased from 20 to 30% between 2009 and 2012.



2. Responses to questions

Question 1: Do you think that allowing Digital One to extend the coverage of its national radio multiplex licence to include Northern Ireland would be calculated to maintain or promote the development of digital sound broadcasting in the UK otherwise than by satellite? Please explain the reasoning for your view?

The BBC agrees with this. We consider that if listeners are offered an increased choice of quality channels on the DAB platform they will be more likely to switch to DAB radio.

Question 2: Do you think that Digital One's proposals for providing coverage of Northern Ireland are satisfactory?

On the basis of the information provided by Digital One to Ofcom, we are content that the proposals for extending its multiplex to Northern Ireland are satisfactory. In particular, we have not identified any potential for a significant increase in interference to the existing BBC national DAB multiplex.

Question 3: Do you consider that Digital One has the ability to maintain its national radio multiplex service if its request is granted? Please explain the reasons for your view.

On the basis of the information provided we have no reason to believe that Digital One would be unable to maintain its radio multiplex service if its request is granted.

Question 4: (For programme service providers on the national radio multiplex, and the holder of the Northern Ireland local radio multiplex and its service providers only.) Do you consider that there are sufficient safeguards in place to protect your rights and interests in the event that Digital One is permitted to extend coverage to include Northern Ireland?

Yes, on the assumption that any technical issues will be resolved using the normal safeguards that are already in place for existing radio services and the agreed radio industry ACI MoU.

Question 5: Do you consider that there are any other grounds on which Ofcom should approve, or not approve, the request from Digital One? Please explain the reason for your view?

We agree with Ofcom's general policy for granting requests as set out in the four criteria in paragraph 1.4 of the consultation document. Based on those criteria, we are not aware of any reasons why Ofcom should not approve Digital One's request.