

Name and title under which you would like this response to appear:

Ianto Brychan - Client Manager

Representing:

Welsh Language Board

What are your comments on these proposals?:

The Welsh Language Board welcomes the opportunity to respond to Ofcom's consultation document on the future of radio.

The Welsh Language Board is in general agreement with the proposals outlined in the consultation document. The difference in the degree of regulation between analogue and digital radio is anomalous and steps should be taken to ensure that regulation is in alignment.

However the Board is concerned about the effect this will have on Welsh language public, local, commercial and community radio. At the moment, for example, the BBC's Welsh language radio station, Radio Cymru, is not available on digital radio and it is hoped that this will be rectified as soon as possible.

Many commercial local radio stations in Wales have a minimum amount of Welsh language broadcasting included in their license agreements with Ofcom, and it is feared that this provision might be lost in a deregulated climate. Will Welsh language provision still be included in license agreements between Ofcom and local commercial radio stations in the future?

It is also welcomed that Ofcom will intervene to ensure that local radio stations broadcast a minimum amount of local programming. However the situation is slightly different in Wales. Will the minimum local programming hours include Welsh language programming or will there be a minimum amount of Welsh language hours in addition to this? The question of Welsh language broadcasting will, of course, vary across Wales, and the percentage and numbers of Welsh speakers in each area must be a factor in making the decision about Welsh language provision.

The Welsh Language Board also welcomes Ofcom's proposal to simplify community radio regulations. Community radio must remain on a not for profit basis. More detail is needed, however, about the criteria on which social gain is assessed and we suggest that Welsh language provision is included when making this assessment in Wales. Access to Welsh language community broadcasting would certainly be of social gain to Welsh speakers in Wales, and the level of this provision will need to increase in areas where there are large numbers or a high percentage of Welsh speakers.

The Welsh Language Board is already working closely with Ofcom and is more than happy to give assistance and advice about how to ensure that Welsh language provision is given appropriate attention when formulating radio licensing criteria in Wales. We wish Ofcom the best of luck with the consultation on the future of radio and we look forward to working with you to ensure that Welsh speakers continue to have access to Welsh language radio.