

07 March 2005

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Dear Sir

Re: Radio - Preparing for the Future.

I am to you writing in response to above consultation document. I only wish to respond to a small number of questions, which are relevant to me, listed in the document. Although I currently live in Switzerland, I am a UK citizen, and I intend to return to the UK shortly.

Question 8.

I think that the UK requires a minimum of two new national multiplexes. One to allow the BBC to increase its existing bandwidth, and one to allow a number of 'quasi national' stations to become truly national.

Questions 9 and 10.

I believe all the new multiplexes should be awarded as broadcasting act licenses.

Question 11.

I think there is a need for national radio stations that can cater for niche programming. One example would be a national Jazz music station. As you are aware Jazz FM is sadly changing its name and programming, to become more commercial. This is unfortunate as I think niche audiences, (I actually dislike Jazz myself), should be catered for, with the increased number of channels that DAB provides.

Question 12.

No, the Bandwidth should be used for either higher bit rates for existing stations, or an increased number of stations.

Question 13

Increasing the non programme related data carried on DTT would be acceptable. Currently a large amount of the bandwidth of DTT is occupied by bland, uninteresting programming. Allowing more radio and data transmission on these multiplexes would be sensible, given their much larger capacity when compared to the Band III spectrum.

Question 14.

Absolutely not, the current bit rate of 128Kbps is already inadequate, the marginal improvements that can be achieved with improved coding, will still not sufficiently improve the quality of the sound on DAB. The minimum bit rate should be raised using the extra capacity on the new multiplexes.

Summary of Questions 8 to 14.

I am greatly concerned about the current audio quality of DAB in the UK. Both BBC Radio 4 and Radio 5 Live are of sufficient quality when listened to on DAB. My problem is with the current bit rates of music stations. The current bit rate of BBC Radio 3 I would describe as adequate, but 6 Music, BBC Radio 2 and the commercial stations that I listen to sound distinctly odd on DAB. For example when I listen to BBC Radio 2 on DAB then switch quickly to FM, I consider the sound on FM much more preferable.

Basically I consider the current 128kbps limit for music stations to be inadequate. The extra capacity of new multiplexes should firstly allow the BBC and commercial stations to increase the bit rate of its existing services, and then additional stations could be added.

Questions 17, 18 and 19.

I agree that it is important to define a set of public purposes for radio, based on the principals of diversity and interest. The demise of Jazz FM is an example where the system is currently failing, there is a need to cater for niche audiences. In addition to this I do feel that there is a current over supply of 'middle of the road' stations, perhaps these will be thinned out by market forces.

Asking the public what they require from radio is one way of determining requirements, but I do feel that consultations like this do not have a sufficiently high profile to attract a large public response.

My personal radio listening is adequately provided for by the BBC, and I certainly welcomed the additional digital only channels that were added a couple of years ago. However, now I have a young family I feel that there is insufficient provision for children on the radio, apart from the excellent AbracaDABra, which is only available in London.