

**Title:**

Mr

**Forename:**

Fergus

**Surname:**

O'Hár

**Representing:**

Organisation

**Organisation (if applicable):**

Raidió Fáilte

**What additional details do you want to keep confidential?:**

No

**If you want part of your response kept confidential, which parts?:****Ofcom may publish a response summary:**

Yes

**I confirm that I have read the declaration:**

Yes

**Additional comments:**

Raidió Fáilte would be interested in taking part in the small scale DAB trial. We are keen to improve our service to the community of Irish speakers in the Belfast area which we currently serve. Some areas of the city have difficulty in receiving our fm signal due to geographical restrictions such as hills etc. I would be hopeful that a DAB signal might better reach some of these areas.

In addition we would be interested in exploring the possibility using DAB technology to help provide a service to a number of isolated communities in a possible targeted community of interest network through use of on-channel repeater technology (possibly if necessary combined with an internet stream link). I realise that this trial is aimed at testing the technological possibilities with regard to the development an affordable DAB platform for small scale radio services. However I feel that it is helpful to look at how such an affordable DAB platform service could potentially developed to create new and innovative ways providing low cost radio services for communities.

While at this stage I have not made specific agreements with potential partner organisations there are a number of possible partnerships which we are exploring with regard to providing a DAB multiplex service in the Belfast area - which would involve Trial 1 (or possibly Trail 2)

We are also exploring the possibility of linking with a partner outside of Belfast for Trail 3 which would cover the Belfast area as well as a specific area some distance outside of Belfast and which could be used as a way of exploring the possibility of using the low cost DAB technology to help provide distinct but linked community radio services to separated communities of interest.

We also have access to a person with technical expertise in the area of multiplex DAB provision who could help us deal with many of the technical issues.

We will continue to explore the possibility of creating suitable partnerships and if it is felt that it would be helpful that Raidió Fáilte take part in the Ofcom Small Scale DAB trial we would be happy to do so and I am confident that we will be able to fulfil the requirements of the trial.

Whatever the outcome of these particular trials I would be interested in being kept up to date in what appears to be, potentially, an important and exciting development in the provision of community media services.

**Question 1: Do you agree that we have identified the objectives which the small scale DAB multiplex trial should seek to achieve?:**

I would suggest that the objectives set and the trials as suggested should allow Ofcom to take a further step in planning for provision of small scale DAB multiplex services.

I would suggest that the third principle objective would be better stated as being aimed at enabling 'possible stakeholders' to learn about the potential opportunities rather than 'the markets', particularly given that the service is aimed at (among others) small scale and community radio services.

Given that this approach to providing a DAB service is relatively new and aimed at small and community services and others, it would be reasonable to expect that there will not be a lot of knowledge among prospective stakeholders on the detail of the required technology, of the equipment concerned and consequently of the costs involved, the criteria that prospective operators will require 'understanding of installation and operating costs' might be difficult to fulfil without some more detailed information as to what is involved in terms of technology, equipment etc

**Question 2: Are there any other questions or issues which the small scale DAB multiplex trial should seek to address?:**

The possibilities that could be opened by the development of a software defined radio approach to DAB multiplexing and transmission should be explored not only with the view to delivering better low cost local services but also with the view to looking at new possibilities that could be opened through the development of this technology. One use which could be investigated is the possibility that the system could help serve scattered 'community of interests'. The creation of a DAB network, using a system of 'on-channel repeaters' or internet connections could enable scattered 'communities of interest' to be provided with a service. The small scale multiplex trial could allow this question to be investigated.

**Question 3: Do you agree with our proposed technical licence conditions?:**

The technical licence conditions seem appropriate for the most part although in the situation where some of those willing to take part in the DAB trial may have a limited knowledge of the specific technical information involved in a DAB multiplex service it is difficult to answer definitively with regard to the proposed technical conditions. It would be helpful if Ofcom were in a position to discuss with prospective participants the details of what might be required in their specific circumstances. For example in Trial 2 and 3 a knowledge of how close the transmitter sites need to be to each other would be required by prospective participants. In the case where a participant was wishing to create a network linking communities constituting a dispersed community of interest, what is the maximum separation that could be between the transmitter 1 site and the transmitter 2 site with an in-channel repeater. It could be that online streaming could allow a link between two transmission sites so as to allow the signal to be further transmitted via an in-channel repeater

**Question 4: Do you agree with our approach to non-technical licence conditions and requirements?:**

The approach to non-technical licence conditions seems reasonable.

**Question 5: Do you agree with our proposed approach to awarding trial licences?:**

While aspects of the approach to awarding trial licences seem reasonable, other aspects could pose problems for smaller community broadcasters. Could Ofcom assist in suggesting possible partners in particular areas.

As I have suggested that it would be useful to include in the trial the possibility of connecting a number of aerials serving specific scattered communities. The aerials could be connected by on-channel repeaters or by other means such as an on-line internet stream. This could allow scattered communities to receive some content from other sources relevant to their community of interest, while also supplying their own local content

The issue of the participants undertaking to meet the costs and to provide a breakdown of costs in relation to the trial would obviously require some more detailed discussion with Ofcom as to the detailed requirements of what is involved

**Question 6: Do you agree with our proposals set out in this section in relation to final reporting obligations, the recovery of the equipment and the extension of trial licence duration?:**

The proposals with regard to final reporting, recovery of equipment and extension of trial period is acceptable.

I would suggest that a reporting template would assist the participants in knowing what information they are required to collect and would also assist Ofcom in analysing the results