

Jon Heasman
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(By e-mail to: localness@ofcom.org.uk)

04 December 2018

Dear Mr Heasman

FURTHER CONSULTATION: LOCALNESS ON COMMERCIAL RADIO

I am writing on behalf of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee of the National Assembly for Wales.

I wrote to you on 30 July about Ofcom's proposed relaxation of the localness guidelines for local commercial radio stations. I am now responding to your consultation on revised 'approved areas' for Wales, which Ofcom has proposed in light of the responses to the original consultation.

As I explained in our previous response, reducing the number of approved areas is in our view likely to have a detrimental impact on some communities and lead to a greater centralisation of production. We are particularly concerned that if production moves out of rural, Welsh-speaking areas it could have a detrimental impact on the volume of Welsh language content: a matter of considerable concern for Welsh-speaking audiences who are already inadequately served by the commercial radio market.

The changes that are now proposed go some way to addressing our concerns but our fundamental point remains in relation to the proposed reduction of approved areas in South Wales from two to one.

We continue to have concerns that as well as the economic and social impact of job losses, removing the boundary between South East and South West Wales could potentially reduce the extent to which radio stations are embedded in – and reflect – the areas to which they broadcast, leading to a further homogenisation of content. The proposed removal of the boundary between South East and South West Wales (which contains very significant Welsh-speaking areas) continues to be a cause for concern that Welsh-speaking audiences will lose out.

Given our concerns the Committee believes that there should continue to be three approved areas for Wales, broadly along current boundaries.

Can I apologise that this response is slightly outside your consultation window. However, I am sure you will want to take the Committee's views fully into account before making a final decision.

Yours sincerely



Bethan Sayed.

Bethan Sayed AM
Chair

