



Jon Heasman
Ofcom
Riverside House
2A Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA

30 November 2018

Dear Mr Heasman

RE: consultation on approved areas in Scotland and Wales

As the Assembly Member for the constituency of Llanelli, I am writing to inform you that I do not agree with the proposals for changing the approved areas for local radio broadcasting in Wales.

These changes will potentially mean a significant decrease in genuinely local content being served to my constituency, and across Wales.

Wireless Group and Global have local units just outside my constituency in Swansea, these are currently sited in the West Wales approved area. These units provide much needed and valued locally produced content, and important employment.

We have already seen Nation radio wind down its offering in Narberth, just outside my constituency and relocate most of its production to St Hilary near Cardiff. This centralisation happened under the current, more stringent regime and it's my concern that a more permissive regime will simply accelerate such moves by other broadcasters.

Ofcom guidelines currently require these units to be maintained in order to serve local content in the West Wales area, including Llanelli, by radio stations such as Heart, The Wave, and others.

Under these proposals, these units could be closed, and "local content" for radio across West Wales could be produced in Cardiff or elsewhere in South Wales. Rationalisation across a variety of services, not just radio, has seen services centralised in our largest cities at the expense of local provision.



The proposed change, combining the West Wales and South Wales areas is therefore clearly a threat to local journalism and locally relevant content. Especially as proposals elsewhere and already agreed reduce commitments to the volume of locally made content being broadcast – allowing stations to broadcast more generic, and centrally made content.

Taken together, these proposals could seriously decrease genuinely local radio in my region, and across much of Wales.

I am concerned that the majority of respondents to the consultation process so far seem to have come from within the commercial radio sector, who have a clear commercial interest in rationalisation and cost saving.

I am aware the Culture, Media and Sport Committee of the National Assembly for Wales collectively voiced concerns on a previous consultation and proposals for a single approved area for Wales. Whilst broadcasting is not a devolved function, Assembly Members, individually and collectively, have a clear interest in this area on behalf of our constituents.

I strongly urge Ofcom to rethink its approach to the areas in Wales, and to preserve the current “West Wales” area in order to protect local content.

Yours sincerely,

Lee Waters AM/AC