

Your response

Question	Your response
<p>Question 1: Do you have any comments on Ofcom's proposed Work Plan for 2025/26?</p>	<p>Confidential? – N</p> <p>Section 2.18</p> <p>I respond in a similar vein to my response last year in relation to Ofcom's continued refusal to allow new FM radio entrants.</p> <p>(As a note my comments last year were mis-represented in the summary document. This was acknowledged to me by email but sadly the summary document was never corrected.)</p> <p>There continues to be calls from across the country for Ofcom to facilitate new FM licencing. During scrutinization of the Media Bill in the House of Lords, Lord Storey, Viscount Colville and Baroness Berridge all raised concerns and tabled amendments to the Bill to enshrine in law a requirement on Ofcom to allow new, on-demand local FM entrants. See here. These amendments may well have been passed had the Media Bill not been rushed through in wash-up once the election was called.</p> <p>Banbury's MP has also raised the issue in the House of Commons. See here.</p> <p>Ofcom continues to point to a decline in FM radio listening but fails to do any research into why this is. Rather than switching to digital could it possibly be because there is no longer any choice on FM, just relay after relay of national station feeds? The value of FM licences to the large groups is evident to see, with small stations still being acquired to relay national output when often the same output is already available on DAB.</p> <p>Ofcom insist the way forward is Small Scale DAB and plan to spend all their time on this project, to the detriment of any FM licencing. Whilst this technology may be successful in large population centres it is clear it isn't financially viable in most small markets and technically is not reliable. I suspect a fair proportion of the multiplexes awarded will never go on-air, and of those that do, away from large population areas, they will only survive if the owner is willing to heavily subsidise them.</p>

Question	Your response
	<p>Additionally in many areas there isn't more than one financially viable local broadcaster in the market, so the extra capacity offered by DAB argument is meaningless.</p> <p>I would imagine in ten years' time – maybe five - IP listening will outstrip that of both DAB and FM. Then turning off both DAB and FM will be the hot topic. In the meantime for those viable stations which don't want DAB but do want FM, allowing them access to the broadcast frequencies they want right now should be Ofcom's priority.</p>

Please complete this form in full and return to planofwork@ofcom.org.uk