



**BBC response to Ofcom's Consultation on the  
Definition of New Music on Radio 1 and Radio 2**

**20 February 2017**

## **Introduction**

We welcome the opportunity to respond to your consultation *Definition of New Music on Radio 1 and Radio 2*.

The BBC's contribution to the UK music sector, through broadcasting on TV, radio and online and broader activities such as live events and talent initiatives, is huge. The BBC's music radio stations lie at the heart of this contribution, particularly Radio 1 and Radio 2, which offer significant exposure to artists due to their reach and position as trusted guides for audiences.

The BBC is supportive of Ofcom's proposed definition of New Music and the amended New Music Quota. We set out the case for changing the New Music definition in our response to Ofcom's consultation *Holding the BBC to account for the delivery of its mission and public purposes* and our response in relation to Ofcom's information requests in August and December 2017. Our submissions set out:

- The traditional process for supporting and developing tracks/artists based in a 8 to 10 week time period;
- The change in music industry operation from singles leading to an album launch to an entire album being released on one day; and
- The BBC's preferred approach. In doing so we set out the impact of the change on BBC's ability to meet the quota, the rationale for the proposed framework and the BBC's consultation process with industry to arrive at the approach.

We are pleased to see that Ofcom has picked up these points and subjected them to further examination and testing with industry. Below we draw out some specific points on both the proposed definition and the change in the Radio 1 New Music quota.

## **New Music**

Ofcom proposes the following definition for new music:

*"A music track is to be considered "New Music" for a period of either:  
(a) 12 months from first release (whether by physical, radio, download or streaming means), or  
(b) 6 weeks after it enters the Top 20 of the UK Official Singles Chart whichever is sooner."*

We consider that the proposed definition provides a good balance. It limits the period for the most successful tracks to be classed as 'new', while allowing album tracks and non-Top 20 releases to effectively remain 'new' for 12 months from initial, digital release. This gives the BBC the ability to fulfil a key role and invest in the development of new artists and bring new music to a wider audience.

**Table 1: BBC new music definition analysis**

<u>July 2017</u>	<u>Radio 1</u>		<u>Radio 2</u>	
<b>Total Plays</b>	1026		716	
<b>Total New Plays (Current Definition)</b>	563	55%	192	27%
<b><u>Plays analysis - based on 12 months from Digital Release</u></b>				
New plays - 12 months (no chart element)	693	68%	217	30%
New plays - 12 months or 8 weeks of Top 40	554	54%	201	28%
New plays - 12 months or 6 weeks of Top 40	516	50%	201	28%
New plays - 12 months or 4 weeks of Top 40	455	44%	192	27%
New plays - 12 months or 8 weeks of Top 20	602	59%	204	28%
<b>New plays - 12 months or 6 weeks of Top 20</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>28%</b>
New plays - 12 months or 4 weeks of Top 20	531	52%	202	28%
New plays - 12 months or 8 weeks of Top 10	621	61%	204	28%
New plays - 12 months or 6 weeks of Top 10	600	58%	204	28%
New plays - 12 months or 4 weeks of Top 10	578	56%	203	28%
<b><u>Selective plays analysis - based on 6 months from Digital Release</u></b>				
New plays - 6 months (no chart element)	583	57%	179	25%
New plays - 6 months or 8 weeks of Top 40	501	49%	170	24%
New plays - 6 months or 6 weeks of Top 20	485	47%	171	24%
New plays - 6 months or 4 weeks of Top 10	501	49%	171	24%
<b><u>Selective plays analysis - based on 3 months from Digital Release</u></b>				
New plays - 3 months (no chart element)	490	48%	166	23%
New plays - 3 months or 8 weeks of Top 40	454	44%	164	23%
New plays - 3 months or 6 weeks of Top 20	439	43%	165	23%
New plays - 3 months or 4 weeks of Top 10	442	43%	165	23%

Source: BBC analysis of Radio Monitor, Official Charts Company, and BBC Playlist data, sample month July 2017

Our analysis shows that the Ofcom proposal most closely replicates the outcomes under the current definition of new music (see table above). Narrower definitions would severely limit the ability of the BBC to support truly new music as there would be insufficient time to promote tracks and artists. In particular we welcome Ofcom's consideration that a narrower definition would likely have a greater negative impact on new emerging talent and those publishing independently.

We consider that a chart element to the definition is important as it distinguishes between 'hit' tracks and those less familiar. These hits would be considered as 'new' for a shorter period.

We agree with Ofcom's proposal to use the UK official singles chart in its definition, as it takes account of both sales and streams making it more likely that that the measure continues to work regardless of how consumption changes over the Charter period.

We also agree with Ofcom’s proposal to use entry to the UK official singles chart Top 20 as a limitation in the definition of new music. In our view entry to the Top 20 is a good indicator of when a track is starting to impact on a wider, more mainstream audience, beyond an artist’s initial fan-base support. In terms of sales numbers, we estimate a song needs around 75% more sales to break into the Top 20 compared with the Top 40; and a further 60%-100% boost to make the Top 10.

In its consultation, Ofcom notes that the impact on the daytime output of Radio 1 and Radio 2 of imposing a limit based on the Top 20 and Top 40 would be marginal. We disagree. While it may be a relatively small difference in percentage points for the BBC’s quota, it would – as our analysis above of the sales necessary to break into the Top 20 shows – limit the BBC’s ability to support and promote new and emerging artists and music.

Taken together the new definition supports the BBC in the delivery of its third public purpose, i.e. allowing Radio to deliver the most creative, highest quality and distinctive output and services. The new definition allows our stations to provide more support to unfamiliar artists and genuinely new music whilst at the same time reducing time available for hit tracks to a six week window.

### **New Music Quota for Radio 1**

Ofcom proposes the following quota for new music on Radio 1:

*“In each Financial Year at least 50% of the music in Daytime is New Music, of which a significant proportion must come from new and emerging United Kingdom artists.”*

We also note that Ofcom is proposing to increase the quota for new music on Radio 1 during daytime from 45% to 50%, as it initially proposed in its July consultation *Holding the BBC to account for the delivery of its mission and public purposes*. This closely reflects Radio 1’s performance over recent years, and as such reflects Radio 1’s longstanding distinctiveness.