

Hi

I just feel the larger operators want to drop local coverage and move towards becoming a larger regional and eventually just a national network.

This is ok but I think Ofcom should be looking towards providing and supporting a truly local network of FM, or indeed AM stations to provide the local coverage that the big operators like Global want to pull away from by reducing the cost of, and the application of, licences and also reducing the restrictions that are currently imposed on radio stations, such as the type of music that can be played.

I think this will help local radio stations to develop original and hopefully popular programmes and flavours that match the local communities that they are serving. But as part of their operating licence these new stations should be protected from aggressive take overs or mergers so we don't end up with another quasi national networks in a few years time.

But as the FM band is congested with little or no spare frequencies to go around it is probably best to take a firm stand with these big commercial operators to provide the current level of local programming and actually provide more in the way of locally produced programmes and to provide training, support and encouragement to local people who want a career in broadcasting.

Another alternative, but it wont be popular, is if Global and other big operators will not agree to this then they have their FM licences withdrawn and the FM frequencies then allocated to radio stations that are interested in providing local radio as I have mentioned earlier.

This does mean that the larger commercial operators are still available on the DAB platform via the national D1 or SDL ensembles, but not on local and regional DAB ensembles which should be reserved for local or regional radio stations.

Kind Regards

Simon Hockenhill