

Title:

Mr

Forename:

Stuart

Surname:

Roulstone

Representing:

Self

Organisation (if applicable):

Email:

What do you want Ofcom to keep confidential?:

Keep nothing confidential

If you want part of your response kept confidential, which parts?:

Ofcom may publish a response summary:

Yes

I confirm that I have read the declaration:

Yes

Ofcom should only publish this response after the consultation has ended:

You may publish my response on receipt

Additional comments:

Question 1: Do you think that allowing Now Digital to extend the coverage area of its Exeter & Torbay local radio multiplex licence to include North Devon would unacceptably narrow the range of DAB programme services available in the Exeter and Torbay area? Please explain the reasons for your view.:

No, not at all. Historically, the Exeter & Torbay area has always been served well with a strong commercial presence for many years. Extending the DAB coverage to North Devon would not alter this.

Question 2: Do you think that allowing Now Digital to extend the coverage area of its Exeter & Torbay local radio multiplex licence to include North Devon would be calculated to maintain or promote the development of digital sound broadcasting in the UK otherwise than by satellite? Please explain the reasons for your view.:

I do see this as an opportunity to promote the development of digital sound broadcasting within North Devon by means other than satellite but I fear there may be a price to pay for the advancement of such technology, namely the reduction in programme content specific to the listener's region.

Question 3: Do you think that Now Digital's proposals for providing coverage of North Devon are satisfactory? Please explain the reasons for your view.:

No, I believe them to be unsatisfactory simply because of the size of Devon and its differing needs from the North to the South. Although the Government has reassured us that the switchover to a digital service would only happen when it matches that of the existing FM service I feel that the North Devon countryside does not lend itself to good reception. With North Devon being such an expansive and undulating area I fear that a percentage of the region could lose its coverage completely.

If there were to remain an FM service and North Devon was to continue to receive its local service from the east of the county then surely it has lost its identity. Local radio should give the listener a feel for the area; the confidence that matters of local importance, relevance or interest to the target audience in the area will be broadcast and a feeling of ownership. A radio station based in the heart of North Devon can only achieve this.

Question 4: Do you consider that Now Digital has the ability to maintain its local radio multiplex service if its request is granted? Please explain the reasons for your view.:

Most probably, although I was surprised to see the Now Digital website had been suspended whilst trying to log on recently, due to a technical fault no doubt.

Question 5: (For programme service providers on the Exeter & Torbay local radio multiplex only) Do you consider that there are sufficient safeguards in place to protect your rights and interests in the event that Now Digital is permitted to extend coverage to include North Devon?:

Question 6: Do you consider that there any other grounds on which Ofcom should approve, or not approve, the request from Now Digital? Please explain the reasons for your view.:

I was disappointed to hear that the tender for the FM licence for North Devon and Torridge may be withdrawn in favour of an application to extend the regional South Devon DAB/digital radio service to North Devon and Torridge. The result being that North Devon would continue to be fed news and traffic updates from across the county, one of the largest in Britain, but yet without a radio station focusing on the expansive area of North Devon. Furthermore, this area could lose a percentage of its radio coverage completely if the application is successful, effecting both commercial and BBC services.

Despite the reassurances from the Government that the switchover to a digital service would only happen when it matches that of the existing FM service I feel that technology is being used as a smoke screen to the more pressing issue of programme content and its locality.

I believe radio to be a very powerful medium, able to communicate across many levels in an instance, working to inform its listening community whilst benefiting commercial enterprises and charitable organisations alike.

The volunteers at The Voice have worked tirelessly to give North Devon a truly local radio station and they deserve the opportunity to bid for the FM licence for North Devon and Torridge and bring local radio back to the region.

North Devon has lost its heart, it can't afford to lose its soul as well.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Roulstone