

Name of respondent: Gordon Sharpe

Representing :Thorne-Moorends Community Radio

**What are your comments on these proposals?**

My comments are with regard to Community Radio in the main, although I am involved with Hospital Radio as well and feel that some proposals will have an impact on that service also.

Within the community radio section I welcome the proposal in 6.10, to include volunteer time as part of the station 'turnover'. This is already a factor in some funding bids, where such time is calculated at a rate of perhaps £9 per hour value. A small community station providing, say, 12 hours a day of live broadcasts could easily be logging some 10,000 hours or more per year of volunteer time. The perceived value of which would outweigh any other single income source. The number of hours not only includes the presenter on air, but their show preparation, other volunteers manning the phones, training, doing admin work, and many other activities carried out by volunteers at the station.

However, I would disagree with 6.12 in the form shown in the summary document. In my own mind I see community radio as belonging to a particular community. To allow an existing group to operate another station in a different area removes the local community aspect. It may be that some resource sharing is possible without going as far as allowing a larger group 'muscling in' on areas outside their own. This would be similar to the situation currently seen with ILR, where there are few really 'local' stations, the majority being owned by companies with multiple stations in their group. If any community radio group could afford to launch in other areas then this would detract from the operation of their own group and possibly tread on the toes of people in other areas that they may target.

Looking briefly at DAB. I own a hi-fi separate model with an external antenna. I am sadly disappointed in the quality of the service to date with many stations breaking up and eventually dropping out altogether. It has not been used for many months now! It is worrying to note that community stations stand little chance of gaining space on a DAB multiplex and that the proposals to move away from AM and FM would leave such stations out in the cold. The 'big boys' would have an audience via DAB, as and when the current problems with signal strength etc. are sorted out, leaving community radio behind. Indeed, the consultation document only allows for Community Radio to continue until perhaps 2015.

This also impacts on Hospital Radio. Again, there is no reason why such stations operating on LPAM would be offered space on DAB, yet the number of people with FM/AM radios will fall as the changeover swings into action. In many areas where the station I am involved with operates, the staff and patients have radios available to enable them to listen to our station, as they cannot use the headphones attached to bedside units. Radios operate in day rooms, and other communal areas.

As and when these are replaced they have to be new units, the hospital will not allow donated/second-hand radios to be used for health and safety reasons. The market for models carrying AM has already diminished, which seems to be pushing out services like LPAM. Moving the ILR/BBC stations to DAB would have a major impact on small-scale stations, one of the considerations then being where to get a new radio from?