

Update: BBC proposals for new DAB+ radio services and new streams on BBC Sounds

BBC announcement

On 7 February 2024, the BBC [announced](#) that it is planning to launch new DAB+ extensions for BBC Radio 1, BBC Radio 2 and BBC Radio 3, which will also be available on BBC Sounds. It also plans to extend the broadcasting hours of BBC Radio 5 Sports Extra.

The BBC has also announced it is launching the necessary regulatory processes to assess the potential impact its proposed changes may have on competition. Ofcom in turn has extensive powers to scrutinise the BBC's plans.

BBC process and timing

Before launching the new DAB+ stations, the BBC has set out that it will be carrying out a public interest test where it considers whether, amongst other things, the public value of the change justifies any adverse impact on competition. As part of this process, the BBC plans to launch a consultation in the coming weeks. The BBC is expected to conclude its public interest test in the summer. If it is satisfied the test is met, it must publish its assessment and provide us with a copy.

The BBC also plans to launch music streams on BBC Sounds and hopes to launch these ahead of the DAB+ stations. The BBC will be considering the potential competition impact of the new streams. If they may have a significant adverse impact on fair and effective competition, they would be considered a "material change", and the BBC would also need to undertake a public interest test in relation to the music streams.

Ofcom process and timing

Once we receive the BBC's public interest test in relation to the DAB+ stations, we will undertake a competition assessment. We have up to 6 months to complete this assessment and we will consult with stakeholders on our provisional view before coming to a final decision.

If the BBC considers that the music streams are not a "material change" and that the change does not need to be the subject of a public interest test, we can review that decision. We would expect to publish an update about that review in the spring.

See our [guidance](#) for assessing the impact of proposed changes to the BBC's public service activities.

Stakeholder engagement

The BBC will be engaging with stakeholders as it considers the potential impact the changes may have on competition. In addition, if interested parties would like to discuss our reviews of the BBC's proposals, we can be contacted on BBCaudioproposals@ofcom.org.uk.

We will also be formally consulting as part of the competition assessment in due course.