

## Soar Sound

Question	Your response
<p><b>Question 1:</b> We consider that the launch of the four DAB+ music stations and the extension of broadcast hours for BBC 5 Sports Extra are material changes. If you disagree, please explain why you consider the BBC’s published proposals are not material.</p>	<p>Confidential? – N</p> <p>We agree that the BBC’s proposals constitute material changes. The introduction of new national DAB+ music stations and the extension of BBC 5 Sports Extra have significant implications for local media services in Leicester. These proposals risk diverting resources and focus away from place-based services, further reducing the BBC’s role in providing local content for the Greater Leicester Urban Area.</p> <p><b>Statement from Soar Sound for Inclusion in the Consultation Response</b></p> <p>As a community radio station dedicated to serving Leicester and its increasingly diverse population, Soar Sound faces significant challenges in accessing adequate broadcasting platforms to reach our audience effectively. While the BBC has the resources and regulatory support to launch new platforms such as DAB+ stations, Soar Sound is constrained by limited options for broadcast spectrum and insufficient digital coverage in Leicester.</p> <p><b>Challenges with SSDAB Coverage in Leicester</b></p> <p>The current SSDAB multiplex for Leicester does not provide adequate coverage for community radio stations like Soar Sound. Key issues include:</p> <p><b>Limited In-House Reception:</b> Many residents in Leicester cannot receive SSDAB broadcasts within their homes, severely restricting audience reach.</p> <p><b>Poor In-Car Reception:</b> Even in-car reception is patchy and unreliable in many parts of the city, undermining our ability to connect with mobile listeners.</p> <p><b>Restrictions on Access to FM and AM Licensing</b></p>

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	<p>Soar Sound is unable to apply for an FM or AM licence due to Ofcom's current policy of not accepting applications for stations using the analogue spectrum. This policy leaves us with no viable alternative to SSDAB, further inhibiting our ability to serve our audience with locally relevant content.</p> <p><b>Declining Local Content from BBC Leicester</b></p> <p>At the same time, BBC Leicester is reducing its originated content, creating a vacuum in the provision of local news, information, and culturally specific programming that reflects the lives of Leicester's residents. This decline has left communities underserved and disconnected from vital local narratives.</p> <p><b>A Proposal for Enhanced Local Service</b></p> <p>If the BBC no longer requires its 104.9FM frequency, Soar Sound would be ready to take on this spectrum to deliver a robust, locally originated service for the residents of Leicester and Leicestershire. This would include:</p> <p><b>Locally Originated Content:</b> News, cultural programming, and entertainment that reflect Leicester's unique identity.</p> <p><b>Community Engagement:</b> A platform for diverse voices and stories that celebrate and connect Leicester's communities.</p> <p><b>Responsive Public Service:</b> Tailored content that addresses the civic, social, and cultural needs of the region.</p> <p>We urge Ofcom to recognise the importance of ensuring that community radio stations like Soar Sound have equitable access to the broadcast spectrum, particularly in cities like Leicester where public service media is in decline. Allocating resources and licences to community-led initiatives would help fill the gaps left by BBC Leicester and support a vibrant, locally focused media ecosystem.</p> <p>Soar Sound stands ready to expand its service and deliver the content Leicester deserves, if</p>

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	<p>provided with the necessary regulatory and spectrum support.</p>
<p><b>Question 2:</b> Do you consider that the BBC's published proposals are clear in relation to their scale (both in terms of financial resource and in terms of reach and type of content) and the timescales for implementation? If not, please provide details of the areas where you feel more clarity is required.</p>	<p>Confidential? – N</p> <p>The BBC's proposals lack clarity regarding:</p> <p><b>Geographic Relevance:</b> How will these new services serve Leicester, a multicultural city with specific needs and interests?</p> <p><b>Resource Allocation:</b> Will the funding of these national services come at the expense of local programming, particularly BBC Leicester?</p> <p><b>Content Differentiation:</b> How will these services add value without duplicating content already available through commercial stations or community radio?</p> <p>Soar Sound calls for greater transparency on how these changes will impact existing local services and funding priorities.</p>
<p><b>Question 3:</b> Did the BBC's PIT consultation processes provide suitable opportunity for you to set out your views fully? If not, please provide details.</p>	<p>Confidential? – N</p> <p>The BBC's consultation process did not provide sufficient opportunities to address concerns specific to Leicester. Community stations like Soar Sound, which serve niche audiences such as White British residents who are now an ethnic minority in Leicester, were not adequately engaged. We recommend that future consultations include focused outreach to ensure the voices of underrepresented regions and demographics are heard.</p>
<p><b>Question 4:</b> Given that both proposals raise a number of contentious issues, it is our intention to undertake full BCAs for both. If you disagree and think that Ofcom should undertake Shorter Assessments, please explain why.</p>	<p>Confidential? – N</p> <p>We support Ofcom's intention to undertake full BBC Competition Assessments (BCAs). These proposals have far-reaching implications for market competition and the viability of community media, which play an essential role in addressing the gaps left by declining local services such as BBC Leicester.</p>

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<p><b>Question 5:</b> Do you agree with the BBC’s assessments in its PITs about the potential public value and/or market impact of the proposals? Are there any additional public value and/or competition considerations that have not been identified by the BBC?</p>	<p>Confidential? – N</p> <p>The BBC’s Public Interest Tests do not sufficiently account for the unique needs of multicultural cities like Leicester. Key shortcomings include:</p> <p><b>Failure to Address Local Needs:</b> National services cannot replace the hyper-local content that resonates with Leicester’s diverse communities.</p> <p><b>Neglect of Market Impact:</b> The proposals risk crowding out community radio stations like Soar Sound, which provide bespoke content for residents, workers, and students in Leicester.</p> <p>Soar Sound urges Ofcom to prioritise investments in place-based services that reflect local identities and civic life.</p>
<p><b>Question 6:</b> Do these proposals lead to any significant market impact concerns which might affect your own services? If so, please explain how the BBC’s proposals would affect your services if they go ahead.</p>	<p>Confidential? – N</p> <p>The BBC’s proposals threaten the sustainability of Soar Sound by:</p> <p>Drawing audiences away with generic, national content that lacks local relevance.</p> <p>Reducing opportunities for collaboration with the BBC on local initiatives, further isolating Leicester’s communities from mainstream media.</p> <p>Undermining the value of community-led content that celebrates Leicester’s diversity and local identity.</p> <p>Soar Sound calls on Ofcom to ensure that the BBC’s proposals do not lead to further homogenisation or duplication of content, but instead encourage a renewed focus on place-based services. Leicester’s multicultural population deserves a media landscape that reflects its rich social and cultural fabric, supports civic engagement, and empowers community voices.</p>