

Revocation of the East Fife small-scale radio multiplex licence award

Background

Under section 51(6) of the Broadcasting Act 1996 (as modified by the Small-scale Radio Multiplex and Community Digital Radio Order 2019), Ofcom may revoke the award of a small-scale radio multiplex licence where the licence itself has not yet been granted and Ofcom has reasonable grounds for believing that the person to whom the licence was awarded will not provide the service within 18 months of the date of the award.

Decision

Ofcom has taken the decision to revoke the licence award we made on 18 July 2023 to C.I. Broadcasting Limited ('C.I. Broadcasting') in relation to the East Fife small-scale radio multiplex service.

This is on the basis that the statutory conditions for revocation as set out above have been met. Firstly, the awarded licence has not yet been granted. Secondly, we have reasonable grounds to believe the service will not be provided within 18 months of award (i.e. by 18 January 2025), as C.I. Broadcasting has informed us that it no longer intends to launch the service.

Next steps

We will consider whether to re-advertise a small-scale multiplex licence in the area should we receive any expressions of interest following today's announcement. Should we decide in principle to do so, it may be appropriate to adjust the advertised area if, to the extent there is interest in establishing a small-scale multiplex in the area, views have changed on the most appropriate area to be covered.

In its letter to Ofcom surrendering the licence award for East Fife, C.I. Broadcasting said that instead of re-advertising the East Fife licence and the neighbouring Glenrothes & Kirkcaldy licence (which was also recently revoked by Ofcom) it would like us instead to consider advertising a 'Dundee and North East Fife' licence (covering Dundee, St Andrews and Cupar) and a 'South West Fife' licence (covering Dunfermline, Cowdenbeath, Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes and the Leven/Methil area). Ofcom notes we have previously advertised a licence for Dundee, but it did not attract any applications, while we have yet to advertise a licence for Dunfermline & Kinross.

We would welcome comments from any other potential applicant before deciding whether and when to re-advertise, and on the appropriate area to be covered.