

Consultation response form

Consultation title	Ofcom's proposed Plan of Work
Full name	[X]
Contact phone number	[X]
Representing (delete as appropriate)	Organisation
Organisation name	Bucks Radio (part of Buckinghamshire Media)
Email address	[X]

Your response

Question	Your response
Question 1: Do you have any comments on Ofcom's proposed Plan of Work 2024/25?	Confidential? – N

We comment in relation to section 2.18 "We undertake work to understand changes in markets and the needs of audiences, and report on, advise on and implement changes to our regulation. During the coming year, key projects will include:" and the task: "Commercial radio local content: Following the Media Bill, we will consult on new 'localness' guidelines and implement a new regime for regulating local news provision on analogue commercial radio."

This item – one of the areas created from changes in the Media Bill - will consult on the deregulation of existing analogue licences, effectively allowing them to remove local programming and bases within an area, with just tokenistic local content remaining through local news programming.

Clause 42 of the Media Bill provides an opportunity for Ofcom to fill the local void by accepting on-demand applications for new analogue entrants. I understand this was anticipated by elected members to provide a balance to the deregulation of existing services.

We – and others - therefore cannot understand why Ofcom are proposing to only consult on one-half of the change to analogue licencing without consulting on the other.

Local radio has been, and continues to be, picked apart, with a succession of commercial stations closed and the BBC introducing regional and networked programming at the expense of local output.

Ofcom has the option within the Media Bill to facilitate local analogue services across the country, giving communities the chance to once again receive local radio. SSDAB has proven, in many places, to be unaffordable, or impractical.

We would urge Ofcom to consult on both parts within the timescale. If that is not possible, protect local listening by consulting on new on-demand analogue applications BEFORE allowing existing licence holders the opportunity to remove any remaining semblance of localness from analogue broadcasting.

Local listeners, businesses, and charities who can benefit from accessible local radio should be considered and not discarded at the expense of big groups. The Media Bill provides this opportunity, but not without correct consultation.