

# Review of BBC Digital Radio Services

*This memorandum is written on behalf of*  
**CBC – Christian Broadcasting Council**



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The Christian Broadcasting Council of the United Kingdom (CBC) wishes to give our views regarding the DCMS review of the BBC's Digital Radio Services especially their new radio services that are domestically broadcast via DAB radio - 1Xtra, The Asian Network, BBC 5 Live Sports Extra, Radio 6 Music and Radio 7, and the World Service.

CBC believes that the BBC's Digital Radio Services are developing in ways that are generally in keeping with the BBC's core purposes and but that some of their music services are not distinct enough from some of the services already provided by commercial radio companies. However overall the BBC's new digital services do add value to the range and selection for the listener.

CBC now gives below our comments on these national services.

1. **1Xtra** is building an important relationship with a young audience, particularly those from the Afro-Caribbean community. The station is encouraging and nurturing young musical talent and it is building on the work already done by BBC Radio 1.
2. **Radio 6 Music** is a station that in some ways competes with the variety of alternative music stations from commercial radio. Such stations as XFM, The Arrow, Planet Rock and Kerrang! all to some extent overlap part of this BBC station's output. CBC does not believe that this is a good use of the mandatory licence fee. The RAJAR figures for Q1 2004 show that 6 Music is not reaching its audience as well as commercial radio:

Station	Weekly Reach	Av Hrs/Listener	Share of Listening
6 Music	*	4.4	0.1%
Kerrang!	2.0	3.1	0.2
XFM	1.0	7.0	0.1

3. **BBC 5 Live Sports Extra** provides on a part-time basis the ability for the BBC to provide extra sports coverage some of which is simulcast on LW. It allows the BBC to compete with the national commercial radio station – talkSPORT – on what some might consider an unfair basis.
4. **The Asian Network** has been a good move by the BBC to bring their West Midlands Asian programming to a national audience. It is making a real community and cultural contribution across the UK. It is clearly distinctive and offers choice. As this service is now available nationally on DAB and DSAT radio, it does raise the need for the BBC to still keep using AM frequencies that simulcast this service full time on 828, 837, 1449 & 1458 and also in the evenings on other AM frequencies around the country. The DCMS should ask

Ofcom to make these AM frequencies available for use by for local radio services that could broadcast to unserved audiences.

5. **Radio 7** is entirely distinctive and it allows the BBC archive of speech programming to reach people who have not heard these radio classics or the audience who love to hear them again. This complements and extends the choice for those who are actual or potential Radio 4 listeners. CBC believes that this station has little impact on the commercial radio, however we believe that its use of book readings could overlap with the output of Oneword.
6. **World Service** on digital gives UK-wide access to this completely distinctive station. This adds to listener choice.

In addition CBC would like to comment on the use by BBC local radio of 128 kbit on the local radio multiplexes. In most cases the BBC could use 80 kbit for these local radio services and thus free up space for new services such as those that could be provided by independent Christian broadcasters, who until the change in the law in 2003 were barred from access to DAB digital radio.

We trust that this memorandum will be a useful contribution to the review by the DCMS into the wider context of the Review of the BBC's Charter.

Yours truly,

Mrs Olave Snelling  
Chairman of the Executive Council – Christian Broadcasting Council

J Peter Wilson  
General Secretary to the Trustees – Christian Broadcasting Council

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*The Christian Broadcasting Council, known as CBC, was founded in 1983:*

- ✓ *To stimulate and promote the knowledge of the Christian faith and the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the broadcasting media in the United Kingdom.*
- ✓ *To encourage the highest standards of Christian media communication.*
- ✓ *To support and develop the knowledge and standards of all those involved in broadcasting.*
- ✓ *To bring together in fellowship those working in broadcasting and those who support the vision of CBC, under girding and encouraging them in their spiritual lives.*

*Membership is open to individuals, corporate bodies and Christian ministries. The Executive Committee of CBC contains representatives from the independent Christian broadcasting sector including radio (community, commercial & RSL), television and independent production.*