

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for sending the document in November -  
Consultation on Media Ownership Rules.

My views relate to the ownership of national analogue and digital licences by religious groups (7.6) and a general observation on local and regional distinctiveness.

It seems to be unreasonable to prevent religious bodies from applying for a national radio licence. However such a licence should be granted only to a body willing to work ecumenically. This is clearly most likely to be a Christian organisation. It should be remembered in all the talk of a multi-faith Britain that less than 5% of the population belongs to any non-Christian religion.

Given that the Government is keen to inculcate higher moral and ethical standards in society, to grant a Christian station a national licence could well help that aim, though the DCMS would also have to ensure a regulatory pattern which maintained and even enhanced a religious presence on mainstream channels, both radio and television. In recent years much has been lost from BBC and commercial channels. Indeed commercial radio has no obligation to carry religious information and ideas. A Christian national radio channel could provide a corrective to the present imbalance in commercial radio.

A corrective is also needed in relation to standards. It seems odd that a Government committed to raising standards of public decency and behaviour is so lax in the areas of regulation concerning sex and violence. The only taboo in many areas seems to be restraint. Again Christian ownership could provide some balance in the outlook on our national life.

Ownership rules also need to ensure that a few powerful groups dominating both radio and television are prevented from running local radio and regional television with little regard for the distinctiveness of the area served. It is vital that the flavour of the area is to the fore and that in regional television not only that regional features are made but that they and daily news coverage is broadcast at times convenient for many people to watch. The mess post 'News at Ten' and the relegation of the regional late news from about 2230 to 2330 needs to be resolved. I wrote at the time to point out the likely loss to the regional audience when the ITC underook the consultation prior to the move of 'News at Ten'. Events have justified my concern.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Yours faithfully,

Nigel Holmes  
Woodside  
Great Corby  
Carlisle CA4 8LL

01228 560617