

RADIOCENTRE SUBMISSION TO CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT COMMITTEE'S STATE OF PLAY INQUIRY

1. What is the topic that you want the Culture, Media and Sport Committee to examine?

- The future sustainability of trusted media in the UK and access for audiences.
- There are a number of other important policy areas for the commercial radio sector but these are likely addressed separately by the committee, such as the future of the BBC and implementation of the Media Act.

2. What are the challenges or opportunities that require consideration?

- Traditional media is undergoing a transformational shift from broadcast or print to online and digital distribution.
- While this has expanded reach and commercial opportunities it has given rise to new risks of unfair gatekeeping behaviour from large tech platforms, which poses significant risks to the future sustainability of UK media.
- It has also given rise to new entrants in the media ecosystem that are unregulated and/or lack content moderation and fact checking, increasing the potential for increased misinformation. This is particularly of concern for younger demographics who increasingly consume media (and news) via platforms like TikTok, YouTube and Instagram (and other social media platforms).
- Commercial radio is seeing a dramatic shift to IP listening, particularly on voice-activated smart speakers – the Media Act has brought in important safeguards (with implementation currently under consultation by Ofcom) to secure the future of radio on smart speakers.
- However, as technology develops at pace (especially with AI), there are many risks that were not addressed by the Media Act, such as:
 - o Future of radio in cars, at a time when car markets are starting to sell cars without radio receivers (this applies to EVs in particular) and radio's relationship with listeners in cars is being disintermediated by large tech platforms
 - o Future of radio on other internet-connected devices (non-voice activated).
 - o The future of TV distribution (DTT) and the knock-on impact thereof on the cost and viability radio broadcasting should TV DTT switch-off, due to shared infrastructure between TV and radio.
 - o Data sharing and self-preferencing
 - o The impact of AI – including protection and monetisation of IP.
- There are also wider concerns about the changing political landscape, particularly with the new US administration potentially taking a more aggressive stance against regulation of big tech platforms. The swift implementation of the Media Act (alongside the DMCC regime) is therefore vital to ensure that the regulatory framework to support media access and fair competition with large digital platforms is not watered down.
- There are also larger questions about how to safeguard the future sustainability of trusted (and regulated) news media – and ensuring that this is freely accessible and attractive to the general public, including young people, in an increasingly fragmented and online world, where disinformation is rife.

3. To what extent are these challenges or opportunities shared across DCMS sectors?

- All British media and the wider creative industries will share concerns about these areas including:
 - o Digital gatekeeping and prominence/accessibility
 - o Future distribution in an increasingly online world
 - o The future of terrestrial TV broadcast (DTT)
 - o The impact of AI (and protection of IP)
 - o Trust and media plurality – and particularly reaching younger audiences in an increasingly fragmented media environment
 - o The future role and remit of the BBC and its impact on fair and effective competition.

4. What is the role for the Government and/or Parliament in dealing with these issues?

- Holding government to account for the implementation of current legislation that addresses some of these issues.
- Parliamentary scrutiny of Ofcom and the CMA as regulators.
- Interrogating these issues via committee and bringing together stakeholders and experts to recommend policy solutions.
- Introducing new regulation and legislation – i.e. to secure the future of radio in cars; to regulate AI; to support the viability of trusted public service media and access for audiences.

5. Are there any upcoming deadlines, milestones or other time considerations the Committee should be aware of (excluding the Government’s Spending Review and Industrial Strategy)?

- Ofcom’s roadmap for implementation of the Media Act – Part 6 (which regulates radio selection services) to take effect from H1 2026
- First consultation on Part 6 of the Media Act – principles and methods for designating RSS – closes 18 March 2025
- CMA’s implementation of the DMCC Act – this includes the CMA’s ongoing designation investigations into Google and Apple’s mobile ecosystems, which includes voice assistants within its scope
- IPO, DSIT and DCMS consultation on AI and copyright – closes 25 February 2025
- The Future of TV Distribution Stakeholder Forum – running throughout 2025 (although this lacks direct representation from the radio sector)

6. Is there any other recent or upcoming work from governments, trade bodies or other relevant organisations on these issues?

- Ofcom’s work on media plurality and media literacy

ABOUT RADIOCENTRE

Radiocentre is the industry body for commercial radio. We work on behalf of more than 50 stakeholders who represent over 90% of commercial radio in both listening and revenue.

www.radiocentre.org

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