

Revocation of the Wakefield, Castleford & Dewsbury 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 02 March 2023 to Mid Yorkshire DAB Limited in relation to the Wakefield, Castleford & Dewsbury 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 02 September 2024) as Mid Yorkshire DAB has informed Ofcom it no longer intends to launch the service. Mid Yorkshire DAB said it was unable to meet the statutory launch deadline “due to significant supply chain issues in sourcing and installing the necessary broadcasting equipment in time.”

Next steps

Mid Yorkshire DAB has expressed its wish that a licence for this area be re-advertised. However, it believes that a revision of the Wakefield licence area to focus on the Wakefield District, without Dewsbury, would be beneficial. Wakefield District includes, as well as Wakefield itself, Castleford, Pontefract, Featherstone, Knottingley and Normanton. It notes that Dewsbury is not part of the Wakefield District but is instead part of the Kirklees local authority based in Huddersfield.

Ofcom appreciates the circumstances leading Mid Yorkshire DAB to request withdrawal of the award. We consider this to be an area with evidence of demand and support from the community and local radio sectors for provision of a small-scale multiplex service, while noting the comments made by Mid Yorkshire DAB with regard to the inclusion of Dewsbury in the licence area.

Whilst it is unfortunate launch could not be achieved within the 18-month statutory window, we welcome the continued interest from Mid Yorkshire DAB in establishing a service.

We therefore intend to re-advertise the licence, albeit that we would welcome comments on the coverage of the previously-advertised licensed area (particularly with regard to the inclusion of Dewsbury) and on the timing of any re-advertisement.