

Digital Economy Act becomes Law in the UK

London, 9th April 2010

The UK radio industry yesterday welcomed the Governments support for radio as the Digital Economy Bill passed into law. The Act gives broadcasters, manufacturers and listeners a clear roadmap for the future of digital radio in the UK.

The Digital Economy Act includes six sections relating to radio which will ensure a smooth transition from analogue to digital radio services nationwide for the main public broadcasters and the larger commercial broadcasters. The Act also makes provision for local stations to remain in FM and was supported by the BBC, commercial broadcasters, local and regional broadcasters.

Mr Jørn Jensen, President of WorldDAB, said 'The migration to digital radio has been moving steadily forward in Europe and around the world. This is yet another mile stone in the roll out of the DAB family of standards and signals to other Governments and regulators that the time for digital radio is now. The radio and associated industries around Europe need clear plans on which to base future development all of which are included in the Act; a plan for FM switch over, provision for adequate network planning, clear guidelines on licenses, plans for local and regional broadcasters. The confidence this step has given the market will ensure that radio stays relevant to consumers in the future ensuring new services, new receivers and growth of radio in a multimedia world.'

In Europe support for digital radio using the DAB family of standards has been shown by the Government in Denmark where in 2009 it was announced that digital radio was the future of radio broadcasting and re-planning of the FM network ceased. In January 2009 the French Government passed a law in support of digital radio setting out a clear three step programme for the integration of digital radio into all radio receivers sold in France including those in cars from 2013. Most recently the Italian Communications Authority approved new regulation governing the start up of digital terrestrial radio in Italy and services are planned to be on air by the end of 2010.

The DAB family of standards remains the most successful terrestrial broadcasting technology in Europe and around the world. Australia, which launched digital radio services in the middle of 2009, has recently published figures detailing the speed of take up by consumers which has exceeded all expectations. There are now 449,000 people listening to digital radio in an average week and around 104,000 digital radios in the market. Listeners around the world are now enjoying digital radio.

ENDS

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The Digital Economy Act – Synopsis of Radio Sections:

Section 29 – allows a date for switchover to be set (Government has said this will only happen when agreed coverage and listening criteria have been met).

Sections 30 and 31 – grant licence renewals to local and national analogue stations also broadcasting on digital to facilitate investment in digital radio

Section 32 – gives Government the power to withdraw those renewals

Section 33 – gives greater operational freedom for local Commercial Radio stations

Section 34 – gives Ofcom the flexibility to re-plan local multiplex licences and extend the coverage area of Digital One, the national commercial multiplex

Section 35 –allows a new piece of (secondary) legislation to be brought forward to extend multiplex licences.

Notes to Editors: The DAB family is the most successful set of digital radio standards in the world today. Created from the outset for mobile and portable reception of audio, multimedia and video services. The family includes the compatible standards DAB, DAB+ and DMB digital radio and DMB mobile TV. Collectively these are often referred to as the Eureka 147 Family of Standards, having originated as an EU funded Eureka project. The system is on-air in nearly 40 countries across Europe, Australia and the Far East. More than 500 million people are within range of DAB, DAB+ or DMB services, with over 1,000 services on-air. In Europe, digital radio is available in the UK, Denmark, Malta, Norway, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Spain with digital radio launches planned for France, Ireland, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and Czech Republic. The world's first DMB mobile TV services launched in South Korea in 2005 and is now one of the most successful markets in the world. DAB is also on-air in China as the only industrial standard for digital radio and was successfully used for mobile TV during the 2008 Olympics. DMB mobile TV is currently on-air in Norway as part of the 'Mini-TV' project. Other DMB mobile TV services and trials are planned for Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Indonesia. In 2008 the industry body responsible for the Eureka 147 family of standards, the WorldDMB Forum, created the 'Digital Radio Receiver Profiles' which specify a set of minimum requirements and features for different types of consumer digital radio receivers. The Receiver Profiles ensure interoperability of new receivers and services between countries whose broadcasters may be using different combinations of DAB, DAB+ or DMB and creates a harmonised digital radio and multimedia market across the world.

About WorldDMB

WorldDMB is an international, non-governmental organisation with a mandate to promote the awareness, adoption and implementation of Eureka 147 based technologies worldwide. The organisation's name refers to 'digital multimedia broadcasting' including radio, mobile TV and broadcast new media services. Its members include public and commercial broadcasters, receiver manufacturers and other companies and bodies committed to the promotion of services and equipment based on the Eureka 147 family of standards.