

SECRETARY OF STATE SWITCHES ON DIGITAL EXPANSION AND LAUNCHES NATIONAL RETUNE INITIATIVE

LONDON, MARCH 2016: The Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, Rt Hon John Whittingdale MP, today signalled a major expansion of choice and coverage of DAB digital radio stations for over 20 million households at an industry conference, *Drive to Digital: National Now*, hosted by talkSPORT presenter, Colin Murray.

Mr Whittingdale performed the official switch-on of the UK's second national DAB digital radio multiplex network alongside Steve Holebrook, Managing Director of Arqiva Terrestrial Broadcast and Chairman of Sound Digital. Mr Whittingdale also launched a national retune campaign, pressing Digital Radio UK's big green retune button and urging listeners to retune their digital radios to take full advantage of the range of services now available.

The new network from Sound Digital, a joint venture company formed by Arqiva, Bauer Media and Wireless Group, will feature 18 digital radio stations, with 11 now on -air and the remaining seven launching by the end of March. In conversation with Planet Rock Breakfast presenter, Paul Anthony, the Secretary of State welcomed the expansion of choice and coverage, emphasising the significance of this launch for the radio industry.

In further content news, the conference heard about new station **Heart extra** from Global, a national brand extension of Heart, which launched this week on the Digital One DAB network, whilst the BBC confirmed the launch of **BBC 2 Radio Country**, a four-day national digital radio pop-up station running from 10 -13 March to coincide with the C2C Festival.

Rt Hon John Whittingdale MP, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, said: *"The launch of this new DAB network with 18 national stations is a tremendous step forward for digital radio. It means listeners around the UK have a greater choice of stations than ever before. All the public need to do is retune their digital radios so they can get the most out of the fantastic choice now available."*

The 18 digital stations which will be launching on the new national DAB network by the end of March represent the UK's biggest ever expansion of national radio choice. The stations include the return of **Virgin Radio**; new music station **Mellow Magic**; new sports station **talkSPORT 2**; new talk station **talkRADIO**; business station **Share Radio**, and the launch of the UK's first DAB+ services, **Fun Kids**, **JazzFM** and **Magic Chilled**; as well as the national expansion of existing regional stations, **Kisstory** and **Heat**. [See Notes for Editors for full line up].



Digital Radio UK today also announced details of a consumer communications campaign encouraging listeners to retune their radios that will run across commercial radio throughout March, and further supported by the BBC. To ensure they can receive the new stations listeners should retune their digital radios by pressing the retune or rescan buttons. To check which stations they can get and for more details about retuning listeners can go to www.getdigitalradio.com/retune.

The Secretary of State hailed the transformation of the coverage of national and local DAB stations. He welcomed the expansion of BBC national DAB to 360 sites providing coverage to nearly 97% of the population and the expansion of local DAB coverage, which has been backed by Government and supported by industry, taking coverage of local stations from 75% to 91% by the end of Q3 2016.

Steve Holebrook, Managing Director of Arqiva Terrestrial Broadcast, said: *“As well as rolling out the UK’s second national DAB digital radio multiplex we have also been busy extending both the BBC’s network as well as local DAB coverage. Now is a great time to retune your DAB radio, or to go out and buy one, to ensure you have access to many new exciting DAB only stations as well as receiving familiar names in DAB for the first time as coverage is expanded.”*

Dee Ford, Group MD, Radio, Bauer Media, *“We are constantly innovating our products and distribution across power brands like Magic, Absolute Radio and KISS, which has resulted in Bauer becoming the leading commercial player in UK digital listening – operating 9 of the top 10 commercial digital radio services. Fresh, new, exciting, engaging content delivered through loved and trusted radio brands keeps audiences listening and coming back for more.”*

Helen Boaden, Director BBC Radio, said: *“Digital radio is in rude health; digital-only stations like 6 Music and 4 Extra are going from strength to strength, we are continuing our innovative pop-up services with Radio 2 Country and we are expanding our national DAB coverage. We welcome the launch of new, digital-only commercial stations on the new network and hope the increased choice will encourage even more listeners to try digital radio.”*

Will Harding, Global’s Chief Strategy Officer, said: *“Digital listening is really gathering pace and we are investing heavily in launching new digital only stations. Digital One covers 90% of households in the UK and we have already extended the incredibly successful brands Capital and Smooth across the UK as well as launching Radio X last year. Now, listeners will be able to enjoy the UK’s biggest commercial radio brand, Heart, across the country and turn up the feel good on digital radio.”*



The combined DAB coverage expansions will bring over 10 million people and 10,000 kilometres of roads into coverage by the end of the year. By the end of 2016 the DAB coverage criteria set by Government will have been met. The DCMS plans to review a decision about digital switchover when the share of digital listening, which is currently at 42%, has grown to 50%.

Ford Ennals, CEO Digital Radio UK, said: *“This is a massive moment for digital radio with an explosion of station choice on the DAB platform. With improved coverage on local and national networks, and over 40 stations on national DAB, including the first DAB+ stations, there has never been a better time for listeners to tune into digital radio. We hope that everyone retunes their radios to take full advantage.”*

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- **Sound Digital - full station line up:** On air now: **FunKids (DAB+); JazzFM (DAB+); Heat Radio; Kisstory; Sunrise Radio; UCB2; Share Radio; Absolute 80s; Planet Rock; Premier Christian Radio; Panjab Radio.** Launching 15 March: **talkSPORT2;** Launching 21 March: **talkRADIO;** Launching 27 March **Premier Christian Praise;** Launching 30 March: **Virgin Radio.** Launching before end of March, date TBC: **Mellow Magic; Magic Chilled (DAB+); Awesome Radio.**
- **Heart extra** launched on Digital One on 29 February.
- **BBC 2 Radio Country,** a national digital radio pop-up station, runs from 10 -13 March to coincide with the C2C Festival.
- *Drive to Digital: National Now* is a Digital Radio UK event taking place at London Transport Museum in Covent Garden, London from 2pm – 4.30pm on Tuesday 1 March.
- 41.7% of radio listening hours in the UK are to digital platforms (source: Rajar Q4 2015).
- Over 50% (50.7%) of total listening hours to National BBC and commercial stations are now digital (source: Rajar Q4 2015).
- 54% of the UK population has access to a DAB digital radio (source: Rajar Q4 2015).
- The benefits of digital radio include extra station choice, easy tuning, track and artist listings, and clear digital-quality sound.



About Digital Radio UK

Digital Radio UK works with Government, broadcasters, manufacturers, retailers, and a wide range of stakeholders to make digital radio the natural choice at home, in car and on the move, and to help secure UK radio's digital future. Digital Radio UK's Board comprises representatives from the BBC, RadioCentre, Arqiva, Global, Bauer Media, CommunicorpUK, together with techUK and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

About Sound Digital

Sound Digital is a joint venture company formed by Arqiva, Bauer & Wireless Group to bid for the second licence to operate a national commercial DAB multiplex licence in the United Kingdom. This licence was awarded by Ofcom in March 2015 following a competitive bid process.

Sound Digital combines two of the UK's leading commercial radio broadcasters with the UK's leading provider of broadcast transmission services. The consortium's shared goal is to play a leading role in the development of digital radio. www.sounddigital.co.uk.

For further information

Yvette Dore, Communications Director, Digital Radio UK

0207 010 0722/07887 682 909

yvette.dore@digitalradiouk.com