

SAVE OUR SOUND UK

Supported by Unions & Associations With Memberships Of Over 4 Million People

PRESS RELEASE: Thursday 18th March 2010

Save Our Sound UK rallies against Government's 'questionable priorities'

While the Government is taking steps to 'divvy-up' the airwaves in the face of strong opposition, it keeps thinking of reasons not to fully compensate the little-guys being booted-out. Save Our Sound UK asks 'why the inconsistency in political will?'

In an unprecedented move last week, the Government sought approval from Parliament to tell the regulator Ofcom how to cut the spectrum cake, which the Government has referred to as the '**billion pound prize**'¹. Meanwhile, the same Government has found a number of obscure barriers to delivering what Save Our Sound UK believes is needed to prevent a **major setback to the live events and entertainment industries**.

The eviction of the Programme Making and Special Events (PMSE) sector from the airwaves in question will generate a massive **windfall for the Treasury**. Just to make sure that it is allocated in the right way, the Government wants to tell Ofcom how to do it. However, the Government seems to be hiding behind the regulator's limited powers when it comes to providing **compensation to those being evicted** and who need it in order to continue to operate.

Save Our Sound UK is lobbying the Government to provide compensation for all frequencies being cleared at levels that will provide for the purchase of like-for-like replacement equipment. Acknowledging that the regulator's powers are limited, the group has consistently argued that **Government should act if and where Ofcom cannot**.

Passing the buck?

Despite this, the Government's spokesman in the House of Lords said last Monday that the 'decision must be made within the powers that have been laid out for **Ofcom** by Parliament'. Contrastingly, Ofcom has said that 'our duty is to secure the optimal use of spectrum....Any considerations beyond promoting spectrum efficiency are a matter for the **Government** to consider'.

Sir Cameron Mackintosh, legendary theatre producer, said, 'It is puzzling that the Government is prepared to flex its muscles and take the tiller from Ofcom in one instance, **where it can make a lot of money**, but not another, where it will have to spend a bit of money. Too much emphasis is being placed on the identity of the winning bidders. This should not come at the expense of providing for the vibrant industries being evicted.'

Tony Lennon, President of the Media and Entertainment Union BECTU, said, 'It seems that the Minister has either exposed an important weakness in the regulatory regime or **someone is being disingenuous**. From our perspective, the answer is simple: if Ofcom cannot legally do what is needed, then the Government must. If neither can legally do what is needed, then the law should be changed'.

For further details, please call Alun Rees, Campaign Co-ordinator for Save Our Sound UK on 020 7828 1603 or via email on alun@ranelagh.info

¹ <http://interactive.bis.gov.uk/digitalbritain/2009/09/spectrum-the-billion-pound-prize/>