

RTE

Press Book



Summary Media Coverage Report

Source	Date	Page	Headline
Limerick Leader	20080329	19	RTE extends its new digital radio service to Mid-West
Limerick Leader - County Edition	20080329	20	RTE extends digital radio service to Mid-West
Cork Independent	20080327	27	Cork listeners join the digital revolution
Irish Times Business	20080321	7	Mixed signals on digital radio



RTE extends its new digital radio service to Mid-West

LIMERICK

DAVID HURLEY

RTE Radio this week extended its digital radio services to Limerick on a trial basis.

The new technology, which was rolled out in Dublin and in the North-East last year, provides listeners with a clearer signal and additional radio services to those currently offered on FM and long wave following the closure of RTE's medium wave transmission network this Monday afternoon.

The extension of the trial of Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) to Limerick and Cork means that almost half the population can now receive digital radio services once they have a DAB receiver, which are available in most electrical stores.

"Manufacturers have only just starting making DAB receivers, so at this stage we only have a small selection of both portable and hi-fi type receivers, but I would say that demand will increase over

the coming months when people realise that these new services are out there," said Cahir O'Leary, manager of Kiely's Electrical at the Parkway roundabout.

Following the launch of the trial in Limerick, the managing director of RTE Radio, Adrian Moynes, said: "I hope that listeners in Limerick will join listeners in the Dublin and North-East areas who are already experiencing the benefits of digital radio."

"We see DAB as a great opportunity to bring radio into the digital age and to provide new content and more choice to radio listeners."

In addition to RTE Radio 1, RTE 2FM, Radio na Gaeltachta and RTE Lyric FM, the State broadcaster has launched a 24-hour news headlines service, a children's only service and a number of specialist music channels on the digital platform. Opt-out programming of news, sports and religious events, are also available.

Limerick West's Deputy John Cregan, chairman of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, welcomed the introduction of DAB in Limerick.

"As you know, it has been available in Dublin and the North-East for over a year, where it has been very well received."

"I think it has to be a positive development that listeners in Limerick, and especially in rural areas, can also avail of these additional services," he said.

Independent broadcasters such as Today FM and Newstalk have begun providing digital services in Dublin and the North-East, but they have yet to confirm if they will extend those services to Limerick during the trial period, which will last until the end of the year.

For more information on Digital Audio Broadcasting log on to www.digitalradio.ie



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Cork listeners join the digital revolution

Cork, Dublin and Limerick are already stocking a wide range of digital radios from as little as €40.

RADIO listeners in Cork have become the latest to join the digital revolution and can now avail of RTÉ Radio's new digital stations.

RTÉ Radio recently extended its trial of digital radio technology and its new digital radio stations to Cork and Limerick cities. RTÉ Radio began testing a DAB (Digital Audio Broadcasting) radio service in the Greater Dublin and North East Coast area in March 2007.

Listeners in this area and in Cork and Limerick cities who have a DAB digital radio, can tune into seven new RTÉ digital radio services; a kids-only radio service, a non-stop news headline service, two speech services and three music-only services, via the digital radio trial.

Managing Director of RTÉ Radio, Adrian Moynes said that he hoped listeners in Cork will join listeners in the Dublin and North East area who are already experiencing the benefits of digital radio. "We see DAB as a great opportunity to bring radio into the digital age and to provide new content and more choice to radio listeners," he said.

As part of RTÉ's digital radio trial the broadcaster is testing new content and programming. This means that the content may evolve and develop over the coming months before the final services are launched later this year. While the services are still on trial until November this year the broadcaster expects to further expand its digital radio network during 2009.

Electrical retailers in



Mixed signals on digital radio

JOHN COLLINS

RTÉ WILL cease broadcasting on medium wave (MW) next Monday just as it expands its digital radio service to cover almost half the population.

This week the State broadcaster extended its trial of digital radio technology to Cork and Limerick, making it available to 44 per cent of the population.

Based on the Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) standard, the trial broadcasts include seven new RTÉ digital radio services including a children's radio service and a dedicated news headline channel, as well as content from commercial broadcasters.

However, some industry observers have wondered if the State broadcaster is backing the right technology, particularly in light of its statutory obligation to broadcast to the Irish abroad.

Brian Greene, a digital media consultant, says "killing MW to fund DAB is a crazy move by RTÉ" because DAB has a short range while MW can be picked up by listeners in the UK.

For its part, RTÉ maintains that its services are available on the Sky Digital platform and over the web.

According to JP Coakley, RTÉ Radio's head of operations, the broadcaster will save €1.5 million in annual running costs by shutting down MW, of which €1 million

relates to electricity costs.

Coakley says the MW infrastructure had "an immediate need to inject circa €2.4 million in capital as the installation is reaching the end of its natural life".

The savings will not just fund DAB but a number of online projects, improvements to FM broadcasting and additional programming resources, according to Coakley.

"That said, national DAB has to stand as a separate business and rationale - it's about an industry moving together to provide the next generation of radio to the listener, rather than just what RTÉ can fund on its own," says Coakley.

The replacement that RTÉ is proposing for MW is long wave (LW). RTÉ installed a new LW transmitter in 2007, which also supports broadcasting in a newer digital technology called Digital Radio Mondiale (DRM).

However, Greene maintains that because DRM is more efficient, it has to be broadcast at a lower power. As a result, an Algerian radio station also broadcasting on LW252 is causing interference with RTÉ's signal.

Coakley concedes Tipaza in Algeria interferes with LW252 at night in London and parts of south-east England, but points out that MW is not available at all in London.

This month Greene wrote to

Cathal Goan, director-general of RTÉ, raising questions about the broadcaster's transmission planning and move to digital.

He also questions just how successful DAB has been in the UK, despite the fact that well over five million receivers have been sold there and the format dominates sales of kitchen, portable and clock radio sales.

He says DAB is now 23 years old, having first been demonstrated in 1985. It uses lower quality MPEG-2, compared to the more efficient MPEG-4 used by DRM and newer digital standards such as DAB+, and has yet to be a "roaring success" in the rest of Europe.

In many ways RTÉ has made a pragmatic choice by choosing DAB given its installed base in our largest neighbour and the spillover of retailers from Britain that are selling DAB receivers in Ireland.

"We see DAB and DRM as complementary in the same way that we see FM and LW as complementary," explains Coakley. "They do different things. One gives a good quality domestic service, the other is poorer quality but has a greater reach."

Coakley believes, however, that DRM is still unproven. "It is still very difficult to find reasonably priced sets and there's no new content available."

Digital radio primer: the facts

■ RTÉ is one of the main players in an industry grouping giving trials to Dab (digital audio broadcasting) in Ireland.

■ RTÉ began a public digital audio broadcasting trial in the first half of 2007 and the broadcasts are now available to 44 per cent of the population.

■ An independent industry group, digitalradio.ie, has been formed to smooth the transition to digital radio and to promote its uptake.

■ Dab receivers automatically tune into available stations and there is much less crackle and hiss compared to FM.

■ Additional information such as the artist and song title can be embedded in the Dab broadcast and displayed on the receiver's screen.

■ Companies such as Virgin are giving trials to Dab for multimedia services including the delivery of TV and music downloads to mobile handsets.

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