

# Strictly foxtrots ahead of reality-TV rival

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**S**TRICTLY Come Dancing scored a further ratings victory at the weekend, beating reality rival *The X Factor* for a second night running. Saturday's edition of the BBC1 dance contest pulled in an average audience of 8.1 million, while the ITV singing show drew 7.7 million, including viewers of its +1 catch-up channel.

The dance show's launch on Friday had 700,000 more viewers than *The X Factor*, after ITV unusually opted to screen an extra edition in a head-to-head clash. Simon Cowell's show was left with one of its lowest ever audiences – just 5.8m.



**■ DID BADLY:**  
Jennifer Gibney

her dance partner Kevin Clifton impressed the judges with their waltz to Adele's *Someone Like You*.

Irish actor Jennifer Gibney – best known for her role as Cathy in *Mrs Brown's Boys* – didn't fare as well.

The 50-year-old Dubliner, who is married to Brendan O'Carroll – creator of the *Mrs Brown* series who also stars as main character Agnes Brown – scored just 18 out of a possible 40 following her jive routine to Pharrell Williams's hit *Happy* with Irish dance partner Tristan MacManus.

With no public vote or elimination, the scores will be carried over to next week, when the first couple will leave the competition.



**■ GAINING VIEWERS:** This year's *Strictly Come Dancing* celebrity line-up

# Stormont seeks answers on RTE longwave switch-off

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**A**STORMONT committee is to write to RTE's director general demanding answers on the potential impact the broadcaster's decision to scrap its longwave service will have on Northern Ireland's Radio 1 listeners.

Last week *The Irish News* reported that RTE had given listeners just four weeks notice of its plans to drop its Longwave 252 service from October 27, amid claims that fewer than 2,000 people would be affected.

In response to the revelation, members of Stormont's enterprise committee discussed the issue and agreed to write to RTE boss Noel Curran to express their concerns.

Committee chairman Patsy McGlone said the letter would demand answers on "exactly how many people will be affected and the measures RTE intend to put in place to ensure can still access Radio 1".

The SDLP MLA for Mid-Ulster also revealed that copies of the letter would be sent to the Republic's communications minister, Alex White, as well as the Oireachtas committee on communications, and Ofcom, which regulated the



north's communications.

"While the RTE FM signal is very good in many places in the north there are still areas like north Antrim where it is not available and people have relied on longwave to listen to Radio 1," Mr McGlone said.

"We need to know exactly what

**“ We need to know exactly what RTE plans to do for people**

– Patsy McGlone

RTE plans to do for people.”

Meanwhile, Sinn Féin East Antrim MLA Oliver McMullan rubbished a 2008 claim by a senior RTE figure that the broadcaster would work to ensure the entire north would have access to the popular station.

When RTE controversially ceased its medium wave frequency, direc-

tor of operations John Paul Coakley wrote in *The Irish News* of its aim "to ensure that within a couple of months the RTE Radio 1 signal will be as good, if not better than it ever has been".

Mr Coakley also they would also work to ensure that "both FM and longwave are consistently available throughout the island".

However, Mr McMullan, who said he was "gobsmacked" by the broadcaster's latest plan, insisted that Mr Coakley's claims "are not the case six years on".

The assembly member said Radio 1 coverage in many parts of his rural constituency remained patchy or non-existent.

He also accused RTE of using "backdoor procedures" to drop its longwave service by issuing a low-key statement this week and by not contacting political representatives in the areas likely to be hit worst by the decision.

"We have had no communication with RTE over this even though we live in an area where the signal is already patchy," he said.

"RTE needs to address the issues with public representatives because we are the last stop for people when they have concerns to raise."

More information on the planned change is available at [www.rte.ie/staytuned](http://www.rte.ie/staytuned).



## Broadcaster sending out the wrong signals

THE suggestion from RTE that its FM signal covers 98 per cent of Ireland is disingenuous.

There may be a signal somewhere up there in the atmosphere but it's not strong enough to make it to my radio in Belfast city centre. I am hampered by a lack of technical understanding on the functioning of radio signals but RTE Radio 1 FM seems to be available in the car across much of the north yet not on a transistor radio in our homes. And it is in the kitchen, bathroom,

OPINION

**Billy Foley**



When the medium wave signal was removed in 2008 RTE promised to boost the FM signal but in both work and home all I can get is static on the frequency on which RTE promises reception. After the departure of MW, I moved to longwave where solid reception is available at 252. Now LW is going, my options are to sit in the car in the garage or fire up the laptop and listen to RTE on the internet. Hope it works better than the RTE player which routinely blocks me for being in the UK.

garage and garden that many of us want to listen to RTE news and sport. This is not simply another radio channel to northern audiences. It has a deeper cultural and political importance than that. Unfortunately, RTE continues to pay lip service to its audiences across the border.



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