

# Dead air from Belfast-born boss amid row

By Valerie Robinson and Claire Simpson

**R**TE boss Cathal Goan's Northern Ireland roots have failed to prompt him to comment publicly on the controversy surrounding the loss of the broadcaster's MW service in the region.

Mr Goan, who was born in the Ardoyne area of north Belfast, completed his education at University College Dublin. He joined RTE in 1979, initially working in radio production before moving to television in 1988.

He continued on an upward trajectory as editor of the Irish language current affairs and arts programme *Cursai* before his 1990 appointment as the editor of Irish language programming.

In 1994 Mr Goan was appointed head of Teilifis na Gaeilge, overseeing the development of the Republic's third national television service. Six years later he was made director of RTE television and a member of the RTE executive board.

In 2003 he became one of the most powerful figures in



■ TIGHT-LIPPED: Cathal Goan

Irish broadcasting when he was appointed director-general of RTE, representing the broadcaster nationally and internationally.

Last July the University of Ulster conferred an honorary degree of DLitt (doctor of letters) upon Mr Goan in recognition of his services to Irish

language broadcasting and the media industry in Ireland.

*The Irish News* contacted RTE seeking an interview with Mr Goan on the impending loss of the station's medium wave radio service but his spokeswoman said he was "not giving any interviews at present".

"The main topic at present is RTE Radio and plans re MW – there is no active issue with TV," she said.

Co Armagh native Dr Ian Malcolm, the sole northern representative on RTE's nine-member board, also said he could not comment personally on the decision to ditch the MW service.

Members of the board, known as the RTE authority, are appointed by the Irish government and meet once a month to guide the broadcaster's corporate direction.

Dr Malcolm is a fluent Irish speaker and part-time journalist. He edited the *Antrim Guardian* for several years before working for the *News Letter*.

He was granted a PhD by Queen's for research into attitudes of young Protestants towards the Irish language in the north.

## The broadcaster's history

By Valerie Robinson

**I**RELAND'S state broadcaster first hit the airwaves on January 1 1926 as Radio 2RN, the original callsign for Radio 1.

Most people on the island couldn't receive 2RN's signal on their wireless, prompting the statutory body to establish a high-power station in Athlone in 1932 to coincide with the Eucharistic Congress, the greatest gathering of

**Most people on the island couldn't receive 2RN's signal on their wireless, prompting the statutory body to establish a high-power station in 1932**

Church dignitaries Ireland had seen. Initially the station was known as Radio Athlone, becoming Radio Eireann in 1938. The conservative broadcaster faced stiff competition, particularly in the border region, from

the BBC and Radio Luxembourg. Today Radio 1 is known for its coverage of news and current affairs, leaving its sister station 2FM, founded in 1979, to concentrate on popular music. The Irish language

station Radio na Gaeltachta began broadcasting in 1972. Lyric FM, which focuses on art and classical music, joined the network in 1999.

RTE Europe is also found on long wave, Sky Digital and Hotbird while DAB test broadcasts of RTE's four stations began along the east coast of the Republic in 2006.

The stations are also now carried on digital cable platforms in the Republic.

## harms environment

the higher the frequency being broadcast – ie due to their radiated wavelength long-wave antennae are tall masts in their own right, while VHF

antennae can be added to existing masts or buildings (in the case of low-powered ones) and generally have much less visual (or other

planning) impact.

"While we are alert to environmental issues our remit does not extend to research or policy in this area."

# Great Spring City Breaks!

fly from **£19.99** one way



BELFAST CITY TO:

fares from

**Cardiff £21.99**  
**Manchester £19.99**

All fares are one way



Cardiff



Manchester

BOOK BY 21.02.08

**flybe.com**

Northern Ireland's low fare airline.

Fares are one way including taxes & charges, only available online, subject to availability. £1.99 handling fee applies to all credit cards & 99p for debit cards per passenger per one way flight, minimum fee may apply. 21 day advance purchase required. Available for travel on or before 25.10.08. Not all routes operate throughout the entire travel period, see website for details.