

RTE radio to move frequency in battle for Belfast listeners

By Claire Simpson

RTE is to move its Radio 1 FM frequency in a bid to attract more listeners in Belfast, it was reported yesterday.

The station is broadcast on 95.2 FM but its signal in greater Belfast is consistently interrupted by Radio Ulster on 95.3FM.

Radio 1 is also broadcast on medium-wave (MW) and long-wave (LW) but RTE's decision to switch off its MW service on March 24 will leave many listeners in the city with a patchy LW signal.

The Sunday Times reported that RTE is now planning to switch its FM frequency to 87.8FM, which broadcasts classical music station Lyric FM.

RTE declined to comment on the report yesterday.

The broadcaster's decision to ditch its MW service has been heavily criticised by politicians on both sides of the border.

Critics claimed that tens of thousands of Northern Ireland radio listeners will be affected if the RTE goes ahead with its plan to scrap the popular service.



■ **DECISION:** Cathal Goan

But RTE has defended its decision, citing environmental concerns, value for money and reception quality as the reasons for ditching MW.

The broadcaster's plans have already been discussed in the assembly and the Dail.

RTE officials, including Belfast-born director Cathal Goan, defended their decision in front of the



■ **COMMITTEE:** PJ Bradley

Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications last week.

SDLP assembly member PJ Bradley, who was at the hearing, said Mr Goan told the committee the broadcaster hoped it improve the FM signal but "immediately qualified this by stating international rules would apply, without specifying the effect on coverage".

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