

CMA launches probe into music streaming market

Streaming has changed the way we listen to music. In the UK, more than 80% of recorded music is now listened to via a streaming service rather than using traditional physical media like CDs and vinyl.

Linking the creators making the music and the fans listening to it through a streaming service is a complex network of companies that help make, promote and distribute recorded music.

The Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) study will [examine the music streaming market](#), from creator to consumer, paying particular attention to the roles played by record labels and music streaming services.

As part of its assessment of how well the market is working for audiences, the CMA will consider whether innovation is being stifled and if any firms hold excessive power. The [CMA's study](#) will help build a deeper understanding of how firms in the market influence listeners' choices and experiences.

While focussing on potential harm to consumers, the CMA will also assess whether any lack of competition between music companies could affect the musicians, singers and songwriters whose interests are intertwined with those of music lovers.

If the CMA finds problems, it will consider what action may be necessary.

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

Whether you're into Bowie, Beethoven or Beyoncé, most of us now choose to stream our favourite music.

A vibrant and competitive music streaming market not only serves the interests of fans and creators but helps support a diverse and dynamic sector, which is of significant cultural and economic value to the UK.

As we examine this complex market, our thinking and conclusions will be guided by the evidence we receive.

The CMA is committed to fostering effective competition in digital markets and is working in a number of areas to achieve this goal. Its work includes investigating [Google's 'privacy sandbox'](#), [Facebook's use of ad data](#) and [Apple's AppStore](#). The CMA has also begun a market study of [mobile ecosystems](#) as well as launching the [Digital Markets Unit](#) in April 2021 – which is operating in shadow form pending legislation that will provide it with its full powers. An independent CMA Inquiry Group is also separately investigating Sony's [completed acquisition](#) of 'artist and label' services

provider AWAL.

The [market study](#) takes place in parallel to a wide range of work being done by the government in these markets. While the CMA's work will focus on competition issues, it will maintain a coherent approach with other related work including initiatives being undertaken by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, the Intellectual Property Office and the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation.

The [CMA now welcomes comments on any of the issues raised in its Statement of Scope and the accompanying Market Study Notice](#) from consumers, businesses and other interested parties.

1. Market studies examine why particular markets may not be working well for consumers. They may lead to a range of outcomes, including: a) making recommendations to the government to change regulations or public policy; b) encouraging businesses in the market to self-regulate; c) taking consumer or competition law enforcement action against firms; d) making a reference for a more in-depth (phase 2) market investigation; e) "clean bill of health".
2. A market study formally begins with the publication of a Market Study Notice by the CMA.
3. The CMA must within 12 months of publication of a market study notice publish a market study report setting out its findings and the action (if any) it proposes to take.
4. [Letter from Andrea Coscelli to Julia Lopez MP, Julian Knight MP and George Freeman MP on music streaming](#). Further correspondence between the [CMA and the government regarding music streaming](#).
5. More information on the CMA's approach to market studies can be found on the [Market studies and investigations – guidance on the CMA's approach: CMA3 guidance page](#).
6. According to [BPI](#) – the British recorded music industry's trade association – streaming now accounts for 83% of UK music consumption.
7. Media enquiries should be directed to the press@cma.gov.uk, on 020 3738 6460.

[Government eases social care restrictions after booster success](#)

Press release

Restrictions in place to prevent the spread of Omicron in adult social care will be eased following the success of the booster roll out



- Unlimited visiting for care home residents to return
- Reduced isolation following a COVID-19 infection for those receiving care
- Changes will ensure those providing and receiving care are kept safe while increasing freedoms for residents

Restrictions in place to help prevent the spread of Omicron in adult social care will now be eased as Plan B measures are removed following the success of the booster programme.

From Monday 31 January, there will be no limit on the number of visitors allowed into care homes and self-isolation periods will be cut and now care homes only have to follow outbreak management rules for 14 rather than 28 days.

By Wednesday 16 February, care workers will be asked to use LFD tests before their shifts replacing the current system which included the use of weekly asymptomatic PCR tests.

86.5 per cent of all care home residents have now had their booster jab, which provides maximum protection against Omicron, with the latest data from the UK Health Security Agency showing it is 92% effective in preventing hospitalisation two weeks after it is administered.

The safety of care home residents will continue to be the priority. The new measures will ensure there are still robust protections in place to protect them while case rates in the community remain high.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

I know how vital companionship is to those living in care homes and the positive difference visits make, which is why we continued to allow three named visitors and an essential care giver under Plan B measures.

Thanks to the progress we have made, I am delighted that care home restrictions can now be eased further allowing residents to see more of their loved ones.

Changes to testing and isolation requirements for those receiving care

include:

- Self-isolation periods reduced from fourteen to ten days for those who test positive, with further reductions if they test negative on days five and six.
- Isolation periods for those in care following an emergency hospital visit will be reduced from 14 to a maximum ten days, in line with the NHS and following the latest advice from SAGE.
- Removing testing or self-isolation requirements following normal visits out.

Minister for Care Gillian Keegan said:

Thanks to the continued success of the vaccine rollout, I am delighted we can ease restrictions in care settings and allow unlimited visits to ensure people living in care homes see all their family and friends.

The changes announced today are backed by scientists, ensuring we all have more freedoms from coronavirus, including care home residents and their families.

Essential care givers should continue to be able to visit inside a care home even during periods of outbreak affecting a care home.

- Updated guidance will be published in due course with further details on changes to visiting, isolation and testing.
- As set out in the Autumn and Winter Plan, the government will continue to provide LFDs free of charge in the coming months, but universal free provision will end at a later stage as the government's response to the virus changes.

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[Ongoing efforts to facilitate a sustainable resolution to the conflict in Syria](#)

Thank you, Madam President. I thank UN Special Envoy Pedersen for his, and his team's ongoing efforts to facilitate a sustainable resolution to the conflict. And I thank Ms Hijazi for her powerful statement today.

In 2022, the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Syria will enter its 12th

year. 13.4 million people remain in need of humanitarian assistance and over half of Syria's population has been displaced by violence.

Over the last 11 years, the Syrian regime has perpetuated appalling violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. The UK strongly supports efforts to hold those responsible to account. Without political progress, significant reform and a cessation of attacks on civilians, an unrepentant Syrian regime cannot be considered fit to govern.

This year there have already been multiple incidents across Syria resulting in damage to civilian infrastructure, including water supplies, which have worsened the humanitarian crisis and caused the death of civilians, including children.

An attack on 20 January, where missiles targeted civilian infrastructure in Afrin, resulted in the deaths of at least eight civilians, and wounded approximately 29 others, including women and children – some of whom remain in critical condition. We condemn the ongoing targeting and destruction of civilian infrastructure in North West Syria.

Developments in North East Syria over the last week also highlight how, even without territory, Daesh and its poisonous ideology continues to pose a threat in Syria, Iraq and the wider world. We welcome the news today that the Syrian Democratic Forces have re-taken control of Ghwaryan prison in Hasaka, and we look forward to further detailed and constructive Council discussion tomorrow on how best to address the threat posed by Daesh.

The UK is grateful for Special Envoy Pedersen's recent efforts to stimulate discussion on a step-for-step approach and for his update on those efforts today. In resolution 2254 the Council agreed that only a UN-led political process could end the conflict and bring lasting peace to Syria.

Any step-for-step process should be fully compliant with resolution 2254, it should be designed to benefit the people of Syria and it should be accompanied by a clear process of verification. Assuming the Syrian regime and its backers are willing to engage in good faith, we stand ready to support.

Thank you, Madam President.

Government readies Sizewell C nuclear project for future investment

- Business and Energy Secretary announces £100 million to support the continued development of the Sizewell C project in Suffolk
- Sizewell C would produce 3.2 GW of electricity powering the equivalent

of around 6 million homes, and providing increased longer-term energy resilience

- nuclear power has a key role to play as we work to strengthen Britain's energy security and reduce our exposure to volatile global gas prices

Plans to build a new nuclear power plant in the UK have been backed by £100 million of government funding to support the continued development of the Sizewell C project in Suffolk.

The funding commitment from Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng will be used to continue the development of the project which will aim to attract further financing from private investors and, subject to value for money and relevant approvals, the UK government.

Ministers have made a commitment to reaching a Final Investment Decision on at least one large-scale nuclear power station this parliament. This would provide continuous, low carbon electricity at scale, strengthen Britain's energy security and reduce our exposure to volatile global gas prices, provided there is clear value for money for consumers and taxpayers.

Negotiations between the government and Sizewell C project developer, EDF, have been ongoing since last year. If built, Sizewell C would power the equivalent of around 6 million homes, as well as supporting up to 10,000 jobs in Suffolk and across the UK.

Business and Energy Secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, said:

In light of high global gas prices, we need to ensure Britain's future energy supply is bolstered by reliable, affordable, low carbon power that is generated in this country.

New nuclear is not only an important part of our plans to ensure greater energy independence, but to create high-quality jobs and drive economic growth.

The funding announced today will further support the development of Sizewell C during this important phase of negotiations as we seek to maximise investor confidence in this nationally significant project.

The £100 million option fee will be invested by EDF into the project to help bring it to maturity, attract investors, and advance to the next phase in negotiations. In return, the government will take certain rights over the land of the Sizewell C site and EDF's shares in the Sizewell C company, providing opportunities to continue to develop nuclear or alternative low carbon energy infrastructure on the site should the project not ultimately be successful.

If Sizewell C reaches a Final Investment Decision, the government will be reimbursed the £100 million option fee with a financing return, either in the

form of either cash or an equity stake in the project.

If the project does not reach this important milestone, then the government would ask for either the Sizewell C Company shares or the Sizewell C site or, if EDF is unable to provide these assets as requested by government, the money will be refunded by EDF together with a financing return.

No decisions, including on the final configuration of Sizewell C's investors, have been made.

Simone Rossi, CEO of EDF Energy, said:

We're very pleased that the government is showing its confidence in Sizewell C which, if approved, will lower energy costs for consumers and help to insulate the UK from global gas prices. Together with our own investment, these funds will allow us to continue to move the project towards a financial investment decision.

Sizewell C will benefit from being a near replica of Hinkley Point C in Somerset which is more than 5 years into construction and making great progress in the challenging context of the COVID pandemic. Sizewell C will provide a huge economic boost to East Suffolk where it already enjoys the support of most local people. It will also bring new opportunities for thousands of nuclear supply chain companies up and down the country.

The announcement comes as the Nuclear Energy (Financing) Bill, which will enable a Regulated Asset Base (RAB) funding model framework for new nuclear projects, passes through Parliament. It is estimated that RAB could lower the cost of each new large-scale nuclear power projects by more than £30 billion, compared to the existing Contracts for Difference model.

The RAB model is also expected to reduce Britain's reliance on overseas developers for finance by substantially widening the pool of private investors to include British pension funds, insurers and other institutional investors from like-minded countries.

The government has made up to £1.7 billion of new direct government funding available at the Spending Review for developing a large-scale nuclear project to the point of Final Investment Decision this Parliament project – on top of a £120 million enabling fund to support further nuclear projects and inform potential investment decisions during the next Parliament.

Last year, £210 million was also invested into a Rolls-Royce venture to design the UK's first Small Modular Reactor (SMR), pioneering the next generation in advanced nuclear generation.

- The government has made a commitment to bringing at least one large-scale nuclear project to a final investment decision in this Parliament, subject to value for money and other considerations

- this is not a direct investment but instead represents the purchase of a Combined Option by government in relation to the shares in the Sizewell C GenCo and the land on which the Sizewell C power plant is planned to be built, to be exercisable if the project does not proceed
 - the UK government is not committed to Sizewell C as a result of this announcement. In the event the project is successful the government would see the £100 million, together with the market-based financing fee, returned in the form of either cash or equity, depending on market demand at the time. In the event the project is not successful, HMG could call for the Sizewell land site to be used for other nuclear or low-carbon projects, or call for the shares in Sizewell C should we consider these have more value at the time. If EDF were not able to provide us with either as requested, HMG would be repaid the original sum together with the financing return. This ensures that the money, together with a financing return (or equivalent value in shares or land), would be returned to taxpayers whether the project proceeds or not
 - the £100 million funding is derived from this Financial Year (2020 to 2021), and is not part of the spending review announced in the autumn of 2021 when HMG announced that up to £1.7 billion of new direct government funding would be available for developing a large-scale nuclear project to the point of Final Investment Decision this Parliament. Deployment of this funding on Sizewell C will be subject to negotiations with the developer, value for money and relevant approvals
 - the investment builds on the [2020 Energy White Paper](#), which committed the government to the aim of bringing a new large-scale nuclear project to Final Investment Decision in this Parliament, subject to clear value for money and relevant approvals. It forms part of the Prime Minister's [Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution](#)
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[England returns to Plan A as regulations on face coverings and COVID Passes change today](#)

- From today and because of the success of the booster rollout, all measures under Plan B have been lifted meaning face coverings are no longer mandatory in indoor venues
- COVID Passes are now voluntary for large events and nightclubs and people are no longer being advised to work from home
- It comes as hospital admissions stabilise, Omicron infections decline and the number of people in intensive care with COVID-19 continues to fall

From 00:01 on Thursday 27th January England returned to Plan A measures following the huge success of the vaccination programme and falling Omicron infections.

Plan B measures were initially introduced on 8 December 2021 to slow the spread of the Omicron variant and buy time for scientists to better understand it and get more jabs in arms. The Get Boosted Now appeal was launched, bringing the date for all adults to be offered a booster to the New Year.

This target was reached, and over 37 million boosters have now administered. The vaccination programme has succeeded in reducing the risk of severe infection and hospitalisations, easing pressure on the NHS. Hospital admissions have now stabilised and the number of people in intensive care units with COVID-19 continues to fall.

As of today the lifting of Plan B means:

- mandatory COVID-19 certification will end, but venues may choose to use the NHS COVID Pass voluntarily;
- face coverings will not be required by law in indoor venues;
- local directors of public health are still able to recommend face coverings in communal areas only in education settings within their area, but only where the department and public health experts judge the measures to be proportionate – this is a temporary measure;
- infection prevention control guidance continues to require face coverings be worn in health and care settings, including primary care and pharmacies;
- it is suggested that people wear face coverings in crowded and enclosed spaces where they might come into contact with people they do not normally meet; and
- it is still a legal requirement for those with COVID-19 to self-isolate for 10 days with the option to end self-isolation after 5 full days following two negative LFD tests.

As of Wednesday 19 January, the government no longer asked people to work from home. People should speak to their employers about arrangements for returning to the office, and should follow the Working Safely guidance.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The tireless efforts of NHS and care staff, and the army of volunteers, as well as the phenomenal response of the British public means over 37 million people have been boosted. I want to thank everyone who has come forward to Get Boosted Now.

Our vaccines, testing and antivirals ensure we have some of the strongest defences in Europe and are allowing us to cautiously return to Plan A, restoring more freedoms to this country.

As we learn to live with Covid we need to be clear eyed that this virus is not going away so if you haven't already – please come

forward for your first, second or booster jab.

Today's changes follows a review last week of data including infections, vaccine efficacy, COVID-19 pressures on the NHS, workforce absences, public behaviours, and views from the scientific community.

Vaccines continue to be the main defence against COVID-19 with data from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) showing a booster is 92% effective in preventing hospitalisation from two weeks after it is administered and is 65% to 75% effective against symptomatic infection from Omicron. More than 83% of people aged over 12 in the UK have had their second dose and of those eligible, 81% have received their booster.

Though infections continue to fall, Omicron remains prevalent across the country – especially in the young and the elderly. Remaining cautious and taking precautionary measures is vital alongside vaccines and testing to control the spread of COVID-19. As the virus becomes endemic, the government will set out a long-term strategy for living with COVID-19 and replacing legal requirements on self-isolation with advice and guidance urging people with the virus to be careful and considerate of others.

The government and the UK Health Security Agency continues to monitor new variants to keep the country safe and are working with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other national public health bodies to establish the International Pathogen Surveillance Network to improve surveillance around the world. The UK is also providing world-leading genomic sequencing capability through the New Variant Assessment Platform (NVAP).

Background information

The changes are not subject to vote as the regulations mandating face coverings in certain settings, and the use of COVID-19 passes have been allowed to expire, as of 23:59 on Wednesday 26 January.

To help do your bit as we learn to live with COVID-19, you should:

- Let fresh air in if you meet indoors, meeting outdoors is safer;
- Get tested, and self isolate if required;
- Continue to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you may come into contact with other people you do not normally meet;
- Try to stay at home if you are feeling unwell;
- Wash your hands;
- Download and use the NHS COVID-19 app;
- If you haven't already, Get Boosted Now;
- Confirmatory PCRs are no longer required after positive lateral flow results;
- Given the accessibility of LFDs, positive cases can end their self-isolation period after 5 full days if they test negative on day 5 and 6; and
- Fully vaccinated contacts can also avoid isolation by testing daily with LFDs.