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**By Ronan Foster,
Media Correspondent**

THE NAMES of two groups awarded licences to operate new independent radio stations in Co Wicklow were announced yesterday by the Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC), bringing to 13 the number of local radio franchises awarded to date.

One licence was on offer in both north and south Wicklow, and there were two applicants for each. One applicant for the north Wicklow licence, Bradan Media Sales, effectively withdrew when it did not submit an oral presentation of its case to the IRTC at a hearing in Wicklow last month.

The licences have been awarded to the North Wicklow Community Broadcasting Co-Operative Society Ltd of Chamber of Commerce house, 10 Prince of Wales Terrace, Quinsboro Road, Bray; and in south Wicklow, to Wicklow Media Services

Ltd, c/o Augustus Cullen & Son, 7 Wentworth Place, Wicklow town.

Both stations are expected to share some transmission resources, the IRTC said, but the station serving the southern part of the county will have to consider particular problems with the hilly terrain. Some additional booster transmitters may be required and it is possible that some areas may not receive the new station.

Further hearings of applications for local radio licences will take place in Carrickmacross, on Thursday, with more hearings in other centres during the month. All 25 commercial radio stations are expected to be operational before the end of the year, including the Kerry service, which will be readvertised once the IRTC has been given permission by the Department of Communications to offer AM rather than FM transmission facilities there.