

BAN BURY LOCAL RADIO Limited
42 South Bar,
Banbury,
OXON,
OX16 9AE

Tel: 01295 251900
E-Mail: support@banburylocalradio.com
www.banburylocalradio.com

Neil Stock
Head of Radio Planning and Licensing OFCOM
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London SE 1 9HA.

March 9th 2004.

Dear Neil Stock,

Consultation Document.

You will be aware that I am currently chairing a group who are intending to bid for the new licence that will shortly be advertised for the Banbury area. I have had a consortium in place for 18 months and am currently finalising the membership of my board to lead the application bid when it is finally advertised. You will also be aware that we have been concerned at the delay in advertising this licence. Our RSL trial broadcasts were in January and August 2003 and were welcomed by the local population. We are confident in our ability to provide this much needed service and our market research has shown that we are trusted locally to deliver a truly local radio station.

My board are working with Laser Broadcasting who are providing the advice and technical know-how on licence applications and station set-ups. I understand that they have made a response to the Consultation Document. I agree with their responses to your hypothetical questions, but would wish to emphasise some of points that they have made.

Question 1.

I think that your plans should be welcomed. We have found that there is a need for a truly local service. Banbury has suffered from being able to receive FM signals from various services such as Warwick, Birmingham, Stratford and Oxford, so there is no real local content. There is a clear market need for both the audience and the advertiser.

Question 2.

Whilst understanding that larger licences are more likely to be economically viable and be better able to support more specialised programme formats, we have found that there is a need for a localised service. Costs of running a station are now stabilised and we feel that there is a market for relatively cheap local advertising - supporting local businesses and supporting the local radio station.

Question 3.

My previous comments apply here.

Question 4.

I believe that smaller local stations providing a wide variety of programming best serve local audience and local revenue.

Question 5.

Banbury Local Radio has been waiting for the advertisement for our area for over six months. I understand that the transition from Radio Authority to Ofcom has caused the delay and is a one-off situation. Any process that can speed up the process would be very welcome. Strategic planning and formulating a business plan are very difficult if there are no firm dates to work to.

Question 6.

It would be useful to have specific information about specific licences. In our own case, we have taken note and acted on information affecting the local application - in this instance, about one year ahead of the advertisement.

Question 7.

The information listed is all very useful and would be helpful. I am concerned however that a group such as BLR, who have been working on the application for a considerable time and shown commitment, may well be overtaken by another group joining the process at a later stage. I think that it is important that the application should show proof of local support.

Question 8.

Any information about existing listening patterns and existing formats would be very useful. I think that a new station would wish to undertake its own research as well as having information on audience figures from Ofcom. It is not clear to me how Ofcom will be able to produce information for new areas if it does not match existing RAJAR TSA?

Question 9.

There is no doubt that a single letter will simplify the process for Ofcom, but I am concerned that information in a letter cannot be expanded or explained. I think that the licence provider should be able to make a personal assessment. I cannot agree that the interview process could result in the limitation of information to a level that would be "most likely to succeed". In my experience, the interview represented a need for 100% knowledge about the local situation and the ability of the

station to deliver its promise of performance. I feel that it would be much easier to provide misleading information in a letter than in a face-to-face interview. The telephone interview was a good compromise.

Question 10.

A simplified process is preferential. However I would not wish to lose sight of the ability to show that we have spent 18 months building local support and being identified as a main contender. The letters of support that are received are largely sent in the belief that they will aid the application.

Question 11.

I suppose that a protracted decision process-makes it less likely that a non-deserving applicant should win the licence, but the Irish system is too long winded. From a personal point of view, we have already instigated a series of public meetings to clarify our application to local people.

Question 12.

I do not feel that there would be any advantage in referring to unsuccessful applicants, although it would be useful to have information as to the merits of bidders after the decision.

Question 13.

I hope so.

Question 14.

Question 15.

I feel sure that there is an opportunity to reduce costs. Recent press speculation about costs and fees at Ofcom makes this uncertain. I hope that application fees may be able to be reduced.

I hope this is some help,

Yours sincerely,

The Lord Colwyn
Chairman Banbury Local Radio.