

OFCOM CONTENT SAMPLING REPORT

Station: Gold (Plymouth)
Dates Sampled: 6, 7 and 8 January 2008

CONTENT SAMPLING FINDING

The station's speech requirement is achieved through news, traffic and travel updates, together with frequent local information items and does not exceed the 25% cap on speech output.

The station provides a 24-hour news service. Hourly bulletins across daytime include local news, and are routinely two or three minutes in duration. There is also a local headline service at peak times during breakfast and drivetime programming.

The music mix covered a range of genres and decades. The cap on tracks less than 15 years old was not exceeded.

The station's public file outlines its specific obligations together with general information about the station.

Gold Plymouth is operating within its Format.

Character of Service

A CLASSIC HITS STATION TARGETED PRIMARILY AT 35-54 YEAR-OLDS IN THE PLYMOUTH AREA.

Detail

The programming will feature classic pop hits selected predominantly from the period 15-50 years prior to broadcast. Hits less than 15 years old will never account for more than 30% of the music output.

Speech should never normally exceed 25% of daytime output or 50% non-daytime (apart from sports coverage weekday evenings or weekend afternoons), but a reasonable balance of information from across the area must be maintained within each day.

Across each week, during non-locally produced/presented time there must be at least 40 informational inserts/drop-ins spread through weekday daytime and 10 through weekend daytime.

Hourly bulletins containing local news will be aired at least during daytime. National and international news will feature at all other times.

Themed music or music days focussing on a genre from the main mix (ie 60s, 70s, 80s etc) may also be broadcast.

Format Obligations : Pre-sampling obligations

Gold (Plymouth) was formerly known as Classic Gold 1152, which was renamed Gold in August 2007 as part of GCap's re-branding of the service across the Network. Ofcom agreed to a Format change in September 2007 to align the Gold Network and allow for a predominately networked station.

All Gold networked stations carry obligations to deliver local information through set 'drop-in' slots through the day, because so much of the output is centralised.

The station's Format requires it to provide a 24-hour news service with local news bulletins hourly during daytime, an emphasis on classic pop hits, with no more than 30% of the music output being less than 15 years old. Speech is to not exceed 25% of daytime output.

Localness and General Content findings (excluding news)

The station provides hourly local weather reports, and local traffic reports during breakfast and drive-time. The Format requires 40 local information inserts throughout the week. There are regular events listings, although these are limited to 'What's On' items for the two theatres in Plymouth (Plymouth Theatre Royal and Plymouth Pavilion). Additionally there is a networked community feature (as a local information insert) called 'go-for-it' which aims to unite businesses with local schools by directing listeners to a website run by this initiative. In the three days sampled, one scheduled insert was omitted.

There is one locally produced and presented programme daily. The speech content during the locally presented programme during the sampling period was limited to the same local drop-ins as used during other non-locally produced and presented times.

Some automation errors were found. Most particularly a traffic item being repeated, and the speed changed on some news bulletins and some tracks. These errors were infrequent.

News

The station provides locally-produced news bulletins on the hour through both weekday and weekend daytime, with half-hourly bulletins during weekday daytime at 06:30, 07:30, 08:30, 16:30 and 17:30. At other times national and international news is carried on the hour.

Examples of local news stories featured during the monitoring period included: how the change in baggage restrictions in UK airports affected Plymouth airport, the football cup draw for Plymouth Argyle, the death of a school girl during an explosion as she passed a house, and teenage self-harm.

Music

The Format requires a Classic Hits station with a mix of pop hits from the last five decades. Artists featured Beatles, Elvis, Eagles, Aretha Franklin, Elton John, The Doobie Brothers, Bee Gees, Moody Blues, David Bowie, Jimi Hendrix, Fleetwood Mac, Kinks, Stevie Wonder, Neil Diamond, Drifters, Rod Stewart, Blondie, Paul Simon, Bon Jovi, Rick Springfield, Status Quo, Beach Boys, Cilla Black, The Who, Phil Collins, Shirley Bassey, The Doors, Meatloaf, Everly Brothers, Pink Floyd,

Jacksons, Police, Bob Marley, Hot Chocolate, Steely Dan, Diana Ross, Dolly Parton and Wilson Pickett.

The Format allows for hits of less than 15 years old to not account for more than 30% of output. The station is operating within this quota; artists featured from the last 15 years include Robbie Williams, Madonna, Texas, Simply Red, Oasis, David Gray, The Corrs and Take That.

Notes on content sampling

Ofcom's content sampling procedure

In Ofcom's move of emphasis from input regulation towards output regulation, content sampling has become an important regulatory process. Ofcom has already published the methods to be applied when formally listening to local commercial stations to create a content sampling report. These methods and processes are published at <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/radio/ifi/contentssampling/>.

Background information

Content sampling is a major Ofcom tool in judging the level of station compliance with regard to

- a) Public File*
- b) Localness*
- c) Music*

Content sampling may be carried out as part of an organised process, or may be as the result of a complaint.

Public File

Public File obligations are enshrined within each station's Licence. The Public File and/or station website will, in many cases, not only support the findings of content sampling, but signpost monitors to output that enhances specific aspects of localness and music, whether or not it involves the specific days being monitored.

Localness and music

Localness guidelines are available on Ofcom's website at www.ofcom.org.uk/radio/ifi/rbl/car/localness/ and station localness and music obligations will vary considerably from Format to Format.