

OFCOM CONTENT SAMPLING REPORT

Station: Swansea Bay Radio
Dates Sampled: 14, 15 and 17 November 2007

CONTENT SAMPLING FINDING

The station's required average 25% speech minimum is achieved through news, traffic and travel updates, weather, local event listings and weekday programming items that featured a broadcast from local businesses. Welsh language items were in evidence and included events listings and information about donating blood.

The station provides a 24-hour news service. Hourly bulletins are routinely five minutes in duration, with extended bulletins (six or seven minutes) at key junctions throughout the day. There is also a headline service at peak times during breakfast and drivetime programming. The station is therefore over-delivering on its Format obligations.

The gold and easy listening music mix blends familiar tracks from a wide range of artists and includes a sprinkling of tracks from Welsh artists.

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

This station is operating within its Format

Character of Service

A LOCAL SPEECH AND MUSIC STATION FOR THE SWANSEA AREA, WITH 24-HOUR NEWS, INFORMATION AND COMMENT AIMED PRIMARILY AT THE 35+ AGE GROUP, WITH A PREDOMINANTLY GOLD AND EASY LISTENING MIX OF MUSIC.

Format Detail

The service will target listeners aged 35+ with a distinctive mix of gold and easy listening music, local news, information and features.

Speech is an important ingredient and will on average account for 25% of station output. Locally-relevant weather, travel and what's on information will be broadcast at least hourly during daytime, while other speech content should include coverage of issues affecting the local community, health advice and other items designed to interest the target audience. Welsh culture and language will be reflected, with at least three different features – such as what's on or job vacancies – broadcast in Welsh each day, during daytime.

Local news is integral to the service. Bulletins that include local content will be broadcast at least hourly, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. During weekday daytime hours, all main bulletins will be of at least four minutes duration, but at least three will be of extended duration (up to seven minutes). Bulletins broadcast between 2200-0500hrs inclusive on Friday and Saturday nights may be pre-recorded; all other bulletins will be broadcast live.

The music output will consist predominantly of gold and easy listening tracks from the 60s and 70s through to the present day. At least 50% of the daytime music output will be more than twenty-five years old, while tracks from the last five years will account for no more than 20% of the total tracks played. Music output will include local and Welsh artists on a weekly basis, and a sprinkling of songs in the Welsh Language. In addition, there will be a weekly programme dedicated to nostalgia, featuring music predominantly from the 40s, 50s and early 60s (including Big Band numbers).

Overnight output may be automated, but all other presentation will be live

Format Obligations: Pre-sampling observations

Swansea Bay Radio was awarded a licence to cover Swansea and the surrounding area on the 7 November 2005, and began broadcasting on 5 November 2006.

The station's Format requires it to provide a 24-hour local news service throughout the week, an emphasis on the provision of 'gold' and 'easy listening' genres, and that at least 50% of daytime tracks must be 25 years or older. There is also a commitment that no more than 20% of the entire music output will be drawn from the last five years. A weekly 'nostalgia' show should also be in evidence.

Localness and General Format Findings (excluding news)

The station provides frequent weather, traffic and travel reports together with regular local event listings, such as the switching on of the Christmas lights, various craft fairs, and information about amateur dramatic productions. During this sampling period there were also announcements in Welsh about the Dylan Thomas literary exhibition at the Dylan Thomas Centre, current events and opening times of museums and galleries in Swansea, and a public service announcement from the Welsh Blood Service giving details on how and where to donate blood.

The 'At Work Network' item on weekdays broadcast from local businesses. While this provided interaction with the locality, it did raise some concerns relating to the Ofcom Broadcasting Code in the manner that one of the items was executed. These concerns, therefore, have been taken up directly with the station.

Saturday afternoon programming provided information about local sporting events in addition to more general what's on information.

News

The station provides a 24-hour news service. Locally produced news bulletins follow a three-minute national and international news update and bulletins are routinely five minutes in duration with extended bulletins (up to six or seven minutes) at 0800, 0900, 1300, 1700 and 1800. There is also a headline service during peak breakfast and drivetime sequences

One of the stories to dominate the local news was the funeral of former rugby union player and broadcaster, Ray Gravell. His funeral took place on the 15 November and the station provided frequent announcements, the day before and on the day of the funeral, about where and what time it would take place. Other stories featured included: a murder trial in Neath; council leader's disappointment at council's budget settlement; Swansea farmers' environment initiative commended; Swansea NHS Trust report findings; improvement to coastal footpaths recommended, and; a Neath couple wins £250,000 on the lottery.

Music

Across this sampling period, a mix of tracks that reflected the obligations set out in the Format were in evidence. Artists featured included Aretha Franklin; Sister Sledge; Bruce Hornsby; The Doobie Brothers; Paul Young; Simply Red; The Bee Gees; Small Faces; Neil Diamond; Johnny Nash; Al Stewart; Glen Campbell; Otis Redding; The Isley Brothers; Stevie Wonder; KT Tunstall; Leona Lewis; All Saints; America; Fleetwood Mac; Dusty Springfield; The Eagles; Jim Capaldi; Boz Scaggs; Hall and

Oates; The Beatles; The Beach Boys; Go West; Genesis; ABC; Randy Crawford; The Supremes, and Mary Wells.

Tracks from Welsh artists were represented by Tom Jones and the Stereophonics. More generally, the station says that the following Welsh acts are scheduled for daytime plays each week: Mal Pope; The Storys; Andy Fairweather Low; Dave Edmunds; Badfinger; Bonnie Tyler; Cerys Mathews; Super Furry Animals and Shakin' Stevens.

The station also informed us that there are Welsh tracks on rotation and receiving plays from 20.00 to 05.00. These include: Alistair James - 'Angen'; Alcatraz - 'Bipopalwla'r Delyn Aur'; Celt – 'Helpwch Fi'; Tebot Pwys - 'Rhywun Wedi Dwyn Fy Nhrwyn'; Y Toredos - 'Cofia'.

We noted that these were not in evidence during this sampling period and therefore asked the station to give us an indication as to how many times over a week such tracks were likely to be broadcast. They confirmed that this would generally be up to four tracks over a 7 day period, scheduled outside of daytime hours. They also provided us with broadcast details of some of the local artists that have been featured in the last 6 months. These included features and interviews that included Welsh language tracks. While the Format refers to a 'sprinkling' of tracks, it is not specific as to the amount or the frequency. We therefore reminded the station of the need to continue to ensure that this material is scheduled in an accessible manner.

The obligation to provide 'nostalgia' tracks from the 1940s – 60s period is incorporated within Sunday morning programming from 0600-0900. We noted that artists representative of this era included Frank Sinatra; Dean Martin; Johnny Mathis; Mel Torme, and The Shadows.

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.