

## Belfast independent local radio licence applications

# Questions and responses: Lagan FM

*These are the responses received from Lagan FM to the non-confidential questions asked by Ofcom regarding the group's application for the Belfast licence.*

### **1. By what means did Lagan FM identify its target audience.**

Our starting point in identifying the lagan.FM target audience was recognising the significant number of listeners to BBC services in Belfast and particularly BBC Radio Ulster. In addition, Rajar analysis indicated that the existing commercial stations were not adequately appealing to the 35 plus listenership. Our aim was to design a radio station proposition that would attract a sizable proportion of the BBC audience while filling a gap in the offering of the existing local commercial stations.

We had no preconceived ideas about formats. However, we did not believe that the commercial sector could support an all speech service in this market and therefore the new station should be music based but speech rich. The research processes used were specifically designed to identify:

- The section of the underserved audience who were most likely to convert to a new commercial radio service.
- The format and speech content most likely to attract them.

In addition to the Rajar analysis, the research processes used were as follows:

- a. Focus Groups. These were made up of individuals in the 35 - 59 age range. Among other discussion points, they were asked to consider the possibilities of a new, music based radio service and create playlists of tracks that they would like to hear on their ideal station. These tracks were analysed and three music alternatives emerged:

1. A mix of Soft Rock and Contemporary Easy Listening
2. Rock
3. Easy Listening

- b. Quantitative Survey. The three music formats were tested. Both concepts 1 and 3 scored highly with the 35 plus age groups. However closer analysis showed that the Easy Listening (concept 3) attracted a much older audience (36% were over 65) than the Soft Rock and Contemporary Easy listening mix (concept 1) where the appeal was generally broader and peaking among the 40-59 age group.

Further, the research showed that compared to other age groups the 60 plus audience was less likely to convert to becoming commercial radio listeners as they were unlikely to change their existing listening habits – 31% saying they would not change. As the much older sections of the audience were also likely to be less attractive to advertisers, concept 1 was adopted as the lagan.FM format.

The research was also used to identify the demands that our potential audience had in the way of speech content. As our application demonstrates the demand was very specific. For example, they wanted controversy but not sectarian politics.

- c. Finally, lagan.FM is not just concerned with the socio-economics of its audience but about understanding their lifestyles and reflecting them throughout the programming. To this end, we commissioned an independent report which uses a lifestyle segmentation model that describes the UK population by ten key segments, each of which has a number of sub segments within them. Each segment describes a part of the population that is characterised by their lifestyle, shopping behaviour, media likes, propensity to switch brands, work ethic etc. In short the segmentation looks for key similarities and describes the population by their preferences and consumer behaviour as opposed to just their socio-economic groups. It also places the population into common groupings where distinct similarities exist. Sources used are detailed below.

There are five profile subsections in the Belfast transmission area that make up 58% of the population and represent lagan.FM's potential audience.

We know lagan.FM has fairly broad appeal from a music point of view. As with all strong locally focused stations, it will be the speech output that determines the style and tone of the station.

In summary, the core target group for lagan.FM is 40-59 year olds who enjoy a mix of soft rock and contemporary easy listening music together with speech content specifically designed to meet their expectations.