

## Manchester independent local radio licence applications

# Questions and responses: Manchester Citybeat 97.7

*These are the responses received from Manchester Citybeat 97.7 to the non-confidential questions asked by Ofcom regarding its application for the Manchester licence.*

### **1. Given the finding on p48 of your application that among over 45s GMR is rated for local news and information, and your stated target audience of over 45s, please expand on the assertion (p28) that Manchester Citybeat 97.7 FM's localness would confer an editorial advantage over GMR?**

As our research disclosed, the perception of the vast majority of the over-45s in the Manchester market is that, currently, GMR is the main provider of quality news and information. It is its provision of this vital programming ingredient that makes it number 3 in the 45+ market and sets it apart from the local commercial stations in the area as well as from Radio 2 and Radio 4, the only two stations with greater market share than GMR amongst 45+s.

GMR's 9.3% share (Qtr 4, 2004) amongst 45+s is vindication of the demand for local news and information but not necessarily a reflection of its editorial standards and suitability for our target audience. As its name infers, GMR (Greater Manchester Radio) covers a broad area, akin to that of a Commercial Radio 'regional' radio station, covering many cities and towns. GMR extends to the boundaries of Blackburn and Warrington, into Saddleworth, which is close to Huddersfield and Halifax in Yorkshire, and includes the suburbs of Bolton, Rochdale, Hale, Wilmslow and Stockport. This is a far wider transmission area and remit than Manchester Citybeat 97.7FM will have which, to all intents and purposes, will only cover the city and, at best, broadcast within the M60 circular motorway.

Therefore, by GMR covering a wider area where, it so happens, there is usually a lot going on means it has to dilute its city news coverage accordingly to accommodate all the news within its area.

Manchester Citybeat 97.7FM will have 'local' editorial advantage over GMR within Citybeat's MCA by not only being able to concentrate on city-focused news stories but also by being able to expand on these city-focused news stories both within the bulletins and also if it becomes our news story of the day and gets debated in our phone-in shows.

**2. Please explain the reasoning behind the decision not to include reference to each of plays, comedy, quizzes and game shows within the Format despite their specific mention in the Programming Philosophy section of your application (p34).**

We specifically did not list out all the programming features in the programming philosophy as we felt these features are encapsulated under the term 'entertainment'.

We used our best endeavours to ensure we included everything on the Format we feel Ofcom would require and reviewed many other existing radio station Formats. At best, we found the terminology "... to include information and/or features of particular relevance ..." to be the most appropriate.

We would be more than happy to include our features in our Format as follows:

"Speech will include regular news, views, entertainment (such as plays, comedy, humour, quizzes and game shows), information and listener interaction."

**3. Please explain any specific steps that were taken to ensure that the telephone survey research (p47) was not biased due to some of the interviews taking place during the run up to Christmas 2004 – normally a period avoided by market research companies.**

I am afraid that I don't agree with your assertion that our market research could be "biased" by performing interviews in the "run up" to Christmas and that respondents' radio listening habits change between 12th December (when the RAJAR quarter finished) and 19th December (when our demand research finished). We did not find any discrepancies between our research data and RAJAR with regard to listening habits or indeed that of our tastes and interests survey that took place in November. The results of our demand survey that 'finished' on 19th December proved we accurately reflected the tastes and interests of our target audience.

On checking with the Quality Control Department at NOP World, who in turn has checked with the Market Research Society, there is no such guideline that states that research companies should not conduct research on or around the Christmas period, or any other period of the year for that matter, apart from national holidays. Guidelines from the MRS state only that: "Telephone calls must not be made to a domestic household before 9am weekdays and Saturdays, 10am Sundays, or after 9pm any day, unless by appointment".

NOP World categorically believes that it met the objectives of the study; to gauge people's opinions and their reactions to a potential new radio service. A cross-

section of radio listeners within the potential transmission area were interviewed on the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th and finished on the 19th December. NOP World does not believe that respondent opinions would have been influenced by the fieldwork timing.

Prior to commissioning the whole research programme with NOP, we discussed timing with them and the particular issue of getting fieldworkers and respondents to complete the survey over the holiday period. Our choice was to complete it before Christmas or leave it until the New Year. The 9th February application date made it impossible to get the fieldwork completed and properly analysed and then programming written, with subsequent Board approval, before the deadline. To complete the demand survey on 19th December we felt to be reasonable.

You will have noted from this, and other applications CN Radio has submitted to you for the larger scale licences, that our research methodology is comprehensive and the chronology a very pure way of conducting research and drawing conclusions. With only three months from the advertisement of the licence on 10th November (which determines coverage area) and the submission of completed applications on 9th February we had no choice but to conclude our programme of research in December for the following reasons:

(i) We do not pre-determine our programming and conduct demand research separately from tastes and interests. To test a product in the same survey as determining tastes and interests is not conducive with giving the target audience exactly what they want.

(ii) Our application and business plans cannot be produced until we receive the results of the demand research and then only if the results are satisfactory. For example, if there was no demand for our proposition, despite it being designed to reflect the tastes and interests of our target audience following the first survey, we would re-design it and go back into the field and re-test it. If we had waited until after Christmas and the New Year holiday period to sample 750 respondents to then start to write and prepare comprehensive business plans it would have been impossible to guarantee our application was accurately written or submitted to the deadline.

For you records, our audit trail was:

Application advertised	10th November
Work out which postcodes will be in the TSA	
Market gap and tastes and interests survey	17th November – 28th
November	
Results back and draft programming schedule	2nd December
3 Focus Groups	6th December

Monitoring of stations in the marketplace  
Correlate information and build the product  
Demand survey

8th December

15th – 19th December

We feel that by segmenting our research this way, rather than including market gap, listener attitudes, tastes & interests and demand all into one survey we achieve a far better reflection of the needs of the market in our product and a true recognition of the demand for our proposition that few of our competitors can match.

**4. Please can you provide a definition of what for your purposes will constitute 'current chart material' as indicated in your Format as not normally making up more than 20% of daytime output.**

As demonstrated on page 37 of our application current chart material would comprise tracks that suited our music policy that targets a 45+ listener. At the time of submission this was demonstrated by the inclusion of the following artists and tracks:

Lucie Silvas	Breathe In
Norah Jones	Sunrise
Hall & Oates	I Can Dream About You

Looking at this week's chart and new releases, the current chart material on our playlist would be selected from the following tracks:

Daniel Bedingfield	The Way
The Coral	In The Morning
Natalie Imbruglia	Shiver
Hall & Oates	I'll be around
Lemar	Time to Grow
Kristan Leontiou	Fast Car
Maroon 5	Must Get Out
Mario	Let Me Love You
Oasis	Lyla
Bruce Springsteen	(Album tracks: Devils and Dust)
Lucie Silvas	The Game Is Won
Rob Thomas	Lonely No More
KT Tunstall	Other Side of the World
Keith Urban	Days Go By
Stevie Wonder	So What The Fuss

A definition reflecting our approach to chart music selection would be:

A broad range of music selected from chart and new release tracks that complied with our policy of mood, energy and tempo in the middle ground (not too heavy/quick/up neither too soft/slow/down).