

Manchester independent local radio licence applications

Questions and responses: Manchester 97.7 FM

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

1. Given that the proposal and Format would be for a music-led station (with up to 30% speech in daytime), please explain the thinking behind the decision to omit any commitment in the Format on the era or genre of music that would be played.

We state clearly in the 'Format' that our offering will be a 'full service local radio station playing a broad selection of music'. Within the application we define our music format as Adult Hit Music.

"The music policy will be an Adult Hit Music format, which plays "adult hits" from all eras, specifically from the 70's, 80's, 90's and today, together with big hits from earlier decades that will be carefully crafted into the mix. The music policy will have the flexibility to play selected tracks from/by visiting artists and music pertinent to events happening in the area."

We have used the terms 'broad' and 'full service local radio' to define our intentions and minimise the wording within the Format and that the definition within our application expands on the detail.

"We also believe this broad music format ideally fits the idea of a local station for Manchester which by its nature will not broadcast to a specific age group or demographic either for general information, entertainment or music. We want to be the "home page" of radio listening in Manchester, accepting listeners will always tune into those services playing music of specific interest to them, but returning to Manchester FM as their base for entertaining and informative listening with local feel, and a touch of humour."

We have not been specific in our era or genre of music as it extremely 'broad', as per our detailed definitions within the application. Similarly news, although extremely detailed in our application will have the same broad diversity of cover.

Our application does not follow the now standard narrowcast, genre specific, music niche models, designed to plug a specific gap in a particular radio market. As our research clearly points out there is a need for a single service that fulfils the desire and wishes of those who live, work and play, in Manchester.

2. Similarly, please explain the thinking behind your decision not to include any specific commitments on local news in the Format, given the detailed description of news in the in the application (pp19-21).

Our research defined that there was a need for a local news service and within the application we refer to local news as a priority and that we would capture more local audio, voices and stories. Our detailed news schedule also incorporates other regular news feature items, City Beat, Lifestyle and Business.

“The establishment of a principle that local news is a priority, with an energetic drive to capture the voices of the people in the news with more local audio and more local stories.

Hour by hour re-writing and scripting of both national and local news. The establishment of a specialist team to cover the entertainments scene under a generic name such as “City Beat.”

The establishment of a credible and specialist city/business news service, compiled in house, plus the appointment of a lifestyle reporter.

How would this be perceived by the listener as adding choice?
We will incorporate a distinctive 6 minute, on the hour news from 0600 to 0900; 1200 and 1300; and 1600, 1700 and 1800. “

Within the ‘Detail’ of the Format we again use the terminology a ‘broad mix’ of music, comedy, news, travel and information, all elements of a 24/7 full service local radio station, and all of which are detailed within the application. Our Format definition was intended to convey the message that it will deliver exactly what it states, a full service local radio service with a broad mix of music and news.

3. Can you confirm whether you intend to broadcast any automated output, and if so, what the maximum extent of this would be, in line with paragraph 5(b) of section 6 of the advertisement?

With regard to Service Duration we have declared it will be a 24 hour service and further indicate that 22 hours per day will be locally produced – this allows for the inclusion of IRN news and comedy programmes recorded outside the TSA.

A full service local radio station is not served well by automated programming hence within the sector ‘Provision of local material’ we clearly state that most programmes will be live and originated locally and that the exception to this would be overnight output, which may, from time to time be voiced tracked, though still originated locally.

Although we will be committed to live programme output across the full day, the ‘time to time’ reference was included as a safety measure to cater for unforeseen circumstances, and only pertains to overnight programming.

Your question asks if we 'intend to broadcast any automated output' and our response is that it is not our intention to commit regularly to automated output. We have included a reference to voice tracked output only to cover the aforementioned 'unforeseen circumstance'.

To put a figure on this I would use holiday cover or illness as a measure for an equation to estimate the percentage of output, based on overnight programming only which would result in automated programming comprising 2% of the output across a year, if we chose to automate.