

Preston independent local radio licence applications

Questions and responses:

These are the responses received from PLC FM to the non-confidential questions asked by Ofcom regarding their application for the Preston licence.

1. **Research:** Please clarify whether the intention is to play music from the last 40 or from the last 45 years? (In the format "the last 45 years" is stated, whereas, "the last 4 decades" is stated in research question 18 – (likelihood to listen to proposition).

I think this depends on the interpretation of "the last four decades" which could mean the last 46 years. The last decade was the nineties. The last four full decades were the sixties, seventies, eighties and nineties. Our research indicated considerable affection for music from the late 1960s. As we are not able to predict how musical tastes will develop over the 12 year licence period we felt it was sensible at this time to draft a Format which would permit the inclusion of hits from the late 1960s until the year 2015 – two thirds of the way through the licence period.

2. **Format:** Please could you supply a music log (listing title and artist of each track) for six daytime hours on PLC FM. These hours should be taken from a typical weekday, between 06.00 and 19.00.

Please find attached an example of a typical weekday music log, assuming the station was on the air today.

3. **Format:** The PLC Station Format (page 23) states that: "plc fm will play a mix of adult contemporary and classic hits from the last 45 years and today." Please clarify the percentage air-play breakdown between "adult contemporary" and "classic hits".

As Ofcom will be aware "adult contemporary" and "classic hits" are generic musical definitions and indeed many songs fall within both categories. In general, "classic hits" are memorable and valued mainstream pop tracks drawn from the 1960s, 1970s and sometimes the 1980s. "Adult contemporary" may be from any era but the term is usually applied to pop and rock music released during the past fifteen or twenty years, selected to appeal to the taste of an adult audience, typically those over 25, avoiding the excesses of singles charts caused by youthful record buyers.

Although an exact calculation is not possible, it is likely that the proportions of these two genres would be similar to those of their most commonly sourced eras. On page 27 of our application we indicate that approximately 44% of our music will be more than 21 years old. In other words, were we on-air today, 44% of tracks played would be drawn from 1985 or earlier and distinguished by their classic qualities and historical associations while 42% would be between three months and twenty years old, largely drawn from the adult contemporary genre.

We would therefore expect that our music mix could be defined as 44% classic hits, 42% adult contemporary and 14% current or recent hits.

4. **Format:** The PLC Station Format states "current hits or hits from the last three months", which seems tautological. Is this a typographical error? If not, please clarify what the differences are between the two.

Our research and experience elsewhere shows that songs frequently remain very popular with radio listeners for some weeks after they may have dropped from the singles sales charts and might no longer be called "current hits". We would regard these as part of the maximum 14% of music drawn from the current period for the purposes of our Format promise.

If Ofcom regards this as unnecessarily specific we would be happy to delete the words "or hits from the last three months" from the draft Format.

5. **Engineering:** Please confirm you are satisfied that your proposed transmission parameters are compliant with Ofcom's restrictions, specifically those set out in Section 2.5 (ii) of the licence advertisement.

We entered into detailed discussions with arqiva to derive the proposed transmission solution, which we note has also been adopted by the other applicants for this licence. In particular, our consultant Brian Lister, rejected two earlier proposals from arqiva which appeared to transmit unacceptably strong signals into Lytham St. Annes (as mentioned in 2.2 of the Ofcom licence advertisement) and excessive field strength towards Blackburn and Darwen (to protect coverage of the Blackburn licence on 107.0 MHz beyond Line B defined in Section 2.5 (ii)).

The proposed use of a directional antenna at the Guildhall site reduced the signal sufficiently to the west but we accept some pockets of higher signal strength remain beyond Line B, particularly on the tops of hills where there are very few residents. arqiva understood this would be acceptable to Ofcom.

Naturally, we and arqiva will be happy to work with Ofcom to ensure that our transmissions do not cause interference within the coverage area of the Blackburn licence, not least as The Bee is co-owned by two of our major shareholders The Local Radio Company and The Radio Business!