

Format Change Request Form OfW 332

Station Name:	107.9 Home FM
Name of Person Proposing Format Change:	Mike Vitti, Area Director/Regional Programme Controller, The Local Radio Company PLC
Outline Format Change(s) Proposals:	<p>Since day one Home FM has battled relentlessly to drive the daily phone-in element contained within the station's format, however the station has been relatively unsuccessful. The station promotes the feature but the audience has provided very little content, feedback or contribution. Consequently it is becoming increasingly difficult to generate enough response to even provide for the feature. The station has tried accommodating the feature into the lunchtime news programme, set up a rant-line and promoted it tirelessly but to no avail.</p> <p>Saturday afternoon however is a completely different proposition. Following the 'live' football commentaries on Huddersfield Town FC, the station has instigated a 'live' phone-in from 1700-1800. This has proved so successful that callers each week are regularly turned away as there is not enough airtime to take all the contributors! It appears that during the weekdays, people across Kirklees and Calderdale expect to be 'fed' information but do not expect to contribute to the output themselves. The same applies when operating phone-in competitions (prize dependant of course). The Home FM audience seems to expect a mix of entertainment and fact during the day offered to them on a largely non-interactive basis. However, mention Sport, and in-particular Huddersfield Town FC or Huddersfield Giants Rugby League club and they queue up to offer opinion. This begs the question: <i>Why not offer a daily sports phone-in?</i> This too has been tried and failed. Opinions are generally only offered following games when emotions are high. Also, there is the opportunity to alienate the many listeners who have no sporting allegiance whatsoever, whereas the current Saturday sports phone-in is broadcast at a time synonymous with Sports output across the spectrum. In view of this, I would like to request a proposed change to the Home FM Format.</p> <p>The request: Change the weekday phone-in obligation to a weekly Saturday Sports phone-in, while offering the provision to host additional phone-in programmes following evening matches, thus, offering listeners the chance to air their views during the week too. In addition, the station is proposing a 24-7-365 feedback facility using the station e-mail, sms, mms and answer-phone. Audio will then be gathered, produced and broadcast across all day-parts showcasing listeners thoughts and opinions.</p> <p><i>Proposed Format Change 2 - Reduction of Asian Output from 9 Hours weekly to 6 hours weekly</i></p> <p>Home FM produces, presents and provides its obligation and commitment to nine hours of weekly Asian output. For some time now these programmes have been hosted by a White European presenter and the station feels that</p>

this programme has not fully embraced the Huddersfield Asian Community to the best of its ability. Rather than present one weekly three-hour Asian programme and non-stop Asian music for two-hours Monday to Friday from 01:00 – 03:00, we have now taken steps to hire an Asian Presenter for the Sunday night programme. The three-hours now contain; focused multi-cultural and multi-lingual content. This new programme will go a long way to cement the bond between Home FM and the Asian community as a whole. The programme now takes hold of Asian music in its entirety and includes an Asian Top Ten hour, an hour showcasing the latest Bollywood releases and a myriad of local information and content necessary to the credibility of the programme.

The response from the local Asian community is very encouraging. Home FM is now catering for its Asian listeners and this output is clearly targeted and focused. In light of these enhancements and rather than paying what the station feels is 'lip service', Home FM would like to propose the following change to the format:

Repeat the three-hours of Asian output that is broadcast each Sunday evening from 19:00 as it consists of three separate, self-contained hours. The proposal would be to re-run this content at a more palatable time during the week; Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings from 22:00. This change enhances the station's daily output and demonstrates our continuing commitment to the ethnic community groups across Kirklees and Calderdale without compromising or altering the station's character of the service.

Operators of analogue local radio licences may apply to Ofcom to have the station's Format amended. Any application should be made using the layout shown on this form, and should be in accordance with Ofcom's published procedures for Format changes (available on our website).

Under section 106(1A) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 (as amended*), Ofcom may consent to the change only if it is satisfied that *at least one of the following four criteria is satisfied:*

- (a) *that the departure would not substantially alter the character of the service;*
- (b) *that the departure would not narrow the range of programmes available by way of relevant independent radio services to persons living the area or locality for which the service is licensed to be provided;*
- (c) *that the departure would be conducive to the maintenance or promotion of fair and effective competition; or*

- (d) *that there is evidence that, amongst persons living in that area or locality, there is a significant demand for, or significant support for, the change that would result from the departure.*

Only one of these four criteria need be satisfied in order for Ofcom to consent to the proposed change. However, even if Ofcom is of the opinion that the proposed change satisfies one or more of the statutory criteria, there may be reasons (depending on the particularly circumstances of the case) why Ofcom may not consent to the proposed change.

In addition, applicants should note that, under section 106ZA of the same Act (as amended*), a proposed change that *does not* satisfy the first of these criteria (i.e. a change that Ofcom considers *would or could* substantially alter the character of the service) must, if it is to be considered further under any of the other three criteria, be consulted upon. #.

In the event that Ofcom receives a request for Format change and considers that criterion (a) is *not* satisfied, it will seek confirmation from the applicant as to whether it wishes to proceed with the request (and, if so, whether it wishes to amend or replace its submission in light of the necessity to make it public).

Please present your submission in the following manner:

Section 106(a) relevance...

After much consultation** with listeners and staff alike, it is our strong belief that the changes contained within this document will enhance the station's service to the community without altering the existing character of service. The changes will consolidate already strong and popular programming features like the weekly sports phone-in rather than a daily phone-in which enjoys no such success.

Couple the above with changes stated to our Asian/multicultural programming across the week, Home FM believes that this proposition offers a more focused and potentially more successful service. It also shows our commitment to the Asian communities across Kirklees and Calderdale, enhancing rather than changing the character of Home FM's output.

Section 106 (b), (c) and (d) relevance...

Gauging opinion locally, we feel that the suggested changes to format listed within this document would in no way narrow our range of programming available but provide us with the opportunity to; provide a better produced and more enhanced service than is available at present. The changes would bring about fairer promotion of events and lifestyle across the Kirklees and Calderdale area without compromising effective competition across the spectrum for locally originated programming.

Judging from comments passed by regular listeners to Home FM, the changes listed would not only be attractive to Home FM's current audience but to all radio listeners across the TSA offering more choice on the dial and give the opportunity to interact and benefit from the service. In the case of Asian programming, as you will see from the suggested change, significant support has already been received by regular listeners, stating that the station has at last taken the 'bull by the horns' instead of paying what appears to be 'lip service'.

Any additional information and/or evidence in support of proposed change(s).

The above proposals have not been entered into lightly. The staff at Home FM has worked continuously and diligently to try and make certain programming features work in light of poor responses. The growth in listener participation for the Saturday Sports phone-in has proved that Home FM can provide a service and cater for its listening public. The public response and that of Sporting clubs across the area has shown that our commitment to the audience continues and has grown. It is planned that the phone-in will be extended to a 'Fan's Forum' programme broadcast from Huddersfield Town FC in front of a Live Audience with the Chairman and the Manager of the club as the panel of experts.

Likewise, the response from local Muslim contributors, who have passed comment on the new sound of our Asian output, also provides the evidence we were looking for in that Home FM has thought long and hard about how any changes to the format may affect the community. The station is looking to enhance its output and commitment to the community at a time when many services would like to have provisions removed from their formats. Thus demonstrating the stations promise to deliver quality locally focused programming to Huddersfield.

I sincerely hope that these proposals meet with your approval

Notes

* As amended by sections 312 and 313 of the Communications Act 2003

Ofcom may approve a change under any of criteria (b) to (d) without consultation, or after a consultation of less than 28 days, if Ofcom considers that to hold a consultation at all, or for 28 days or more, would result in a delay that would be likely to prejudice the interests of the licensee. Ofcom may also remove for the purposes of consultation any confidential information submitted by the licensee.

Version 4 – amended March 2007

OFCOM NOTES ON THE REQUEST

Ofcom concluded that the two requests were not unreasonable, and both were accompanied with useful background information.

The radio landscape in the area has changed over the years (with particular regard to speech) and the changes to phone-in output would not create a substantial change to the station's character as such. In the circumstances, and taking into account the history of the programming, the change is agreed. As far as the Asian broadcasting request is concerned, it is felt the station has taken a sensible path in the creation of the strip-programming approach, which should have a positive effect

on programme quality and more closely address the obligation's raison d'être. It, too, is agreed.

** Correspondence has been – and is being – made available to Ofcom.

June 8 2007