

LOCAL RADIO LICENCES:
COVERAGE BRIEF AND SPECIFICATION

BIRMINGHAM

1. Two licences, one each on the FM (VHF) waveband and the AM (medium wave) band, are being offered for the provision of Independent Local Radio services in the Birmingham area. Applications are invited for either or both of these licences. Each licence is offered for the use, from a single transmission site, of a single frequency on that waveband.
2. The FM licence is an existing one, currently held by Buzz FM, which is now being re-advertised. The AM licence is a new one, which will make use of a frequency currently assigned to BBC Local Radio (Radio WM), which the BBC will be relinquishing. (The other existing Birmingham ILR licences, held by Midlands Radio plc, are not due for re-advertisement until 1994).
3. The closing-date for applications for these licences is **Tuesday, 11 January, 1994**. Completed application forms must reach the Chief Executive of the Radio Authority, at Holbrook House, 14 Great Queen Street, London, WC2B 5DG, by 14.00 on that date.
4. This coverage brief provides information specific to these advertised licences for the Birmingham area. Intending applicants must study, in conjunction with this brief, the **Notes of Guidance for Local Licence Applicants (Re-advertised Licences)**, available from the Authority's Head of Development, which provides general information on the submission of a licence application and the requirements of an ILR service. Applications must be submitted on a standard **Application Form**, also available from the Head of Development. The existing licensee for Birmingham (i.e. Buzz FM Ltd.) should complete version [A] of the application form; all other applicants should complete version [B].

5. These licences are each offered for a service designed to cover the following area:

Most parts of the Birmingham area, and some surrounding districts.

The coverage, as defined by usual UK planning criteria, of both licences will depend upon the transmission sites selected by the successful applicant(s), and the transmission powers and aerial characteristics deemed appropriate for the coverage intended. It is expected that coverage on the FM waveband should encompass most parts of Birmingham and the surrounding area which are inside the boundary formed by the M6, M5 and M42 motorway system, except that it is unlikely that adequate reception (to UK planning standards) will be obtained south of a line drawn between the M40/M42 interchange and Rubery. Also, applicants should note that on the FM waveband there are likely to be localised deficiencies in coverage in certain districts within the licence area, due to terrain and other environmental factors. On the AM waveband, in addition to the area described above, it is likely that during daylight hours adequate reception will be obtained over a substantially wider area, including most parts of Wolverhampton, Walsall, West Bromwich and Dudley. (Applicants may form their own impressions of the coverage to be expected, by listening to existing BBC transmissions on the 1458 kHz frequency). On the AM waveband, however, transmissions are subject to reductions in coverage outside the hours of daylight (which, in winter, may include part of the early-morning peak-listening period) due to incoming interference, and applicants should take account of this factor when preparing their programming and business plans.

AM licence

6. The service currently provided by BBC Radio WM on the AM frequency of 1458 kHz, using the transmission site and aerial characteristics detailed below, achieves coverage in daylight hours of an area with an adult population estimated at around two million.

7. Details of the existing transmission site and characteristics are as follows:

Location:	Langley Mill
National Grid reference:	SP 160 968
Total maximum effective monopole radiated power:	10.0 kiloWatts
Aerial pattern:	See attached template
Mast height:	71m above ground level
Frequency:	1458 kHz
Site operator:	NTL

FM licence

8. The Authority is seeking nominal clearance of a different frequency at a higher effective radiated power than that currently in use. As noted in paragraph 5 above, the eventual power and aerial characteristics will depend upon the successful applicant's choice of transmission site, but from the nominal site detailed below, it is estimated that coverage of an area with an adult population of around 1.2 million will be achieved. The frequency on which clearance is to be sought for the transmission parameters given below is 102.2 MHz. Amongst other services on related frequencies is ILR Lincoln, which is co-channel. Incoming levels of interference from Lincoln have been measured at a small sample of locations in the proposed coverage area to be in the region of 20 dB(μ V/m) at 10m aerial height, though generally a lower figure applies. Thus there may possibly be some parts of the coverage area where a full 45 dB co-channel protection ratio may not be obtained. However, in the north and east of the area, receiving aerial discrimination should improve the position. There should also be a correlation between the locations where the unwanted field strength reaches the levels mentioned above, and where the wanted field strength exceeds significantly the 54 dB(μ V/m) signal level (at 10m aerial height) used to define the coverage area, and on which the above population figure is based.

9. Applicants should note that although the transmissions of this FM licensee are to be confined to vertical polarisation (due to the densely populated area in which the nominal transmission site is located), the incoming interference will be of mixed polarisation. Applicants should also note that the use of a higher effective radiated power at the nominal site, or any other site in or close to a built-up area, will require the installation of an aerial with the minimum of a two-tier antenna system.

10. Details of the nominal transmission site and new characteristics are as follows:

Location:	Metropolitan House
National Grid reference:	SP 055 862
Total maximum effective radiated power (current):	500 Watts
Aerial pattern:	Omni-directional
Aerial polarisation:	Vertical polarisation only
Aerial height:	214m above sea level
Site operator:	RAC

Both licences (AM and FM)

11. It is for applicants to decide whether to make use of the sites described above, or to propose an alternative site or sites of their own choosing, without prejudice to their application. Applicants who wish to propose an alternative site must note carefully the relevant points outlined in Part III of the 'Notes of Guidance for Local Licence Applicants (Re-advertised Licences)', and should recognise that the submission of an alternative proposal for approval and clearance is a process that may take several months to complete, and that an outcome that is wholly satisfactory to the successful applicant cannot be guaranteed. A more comprehensive account is provided in the 'Notes on Approval Procedures for Sites and Frequencies', one of the supplementary documents listed in the Foreword to the 'Notes of Guidance', available on payment of a £10 fee for the complete set of documents. Applicants intending to propose an alternative site are strongly advised to obtain and study this.

12. The licensee will be responsible for its own transmission facilities, and will be free to decide whom to appoint for the supply, construction and maintenance of its transmission system and equipment. This will be the case whether the successful applicant chooses to locate the transmitter at an existing site or an alternative site. Applicants should, however, note that the BBC is currently prohibited from providing transmission services, other than access to a site, to ILR licensees.

Date of commencement of licences

13. Both licences, AM and FM, are offered for a maximum period of eight years. The AM licence is offered with effect from 1 October 1994, or as soon thereafter as the successful applicant is ready to commence broadcasting, subject to necessary frequency clearances having been obtained. The FM licence is offered with effect from 1 January 1995.

Programming proposals

14. In evaluating applications for either or both of these licences, the Authority will wish to assess the extent to which each applicant offers to provide a programme service or services which would broaden the range of choice in relation to other existing or proposed ILR services available within the licence area; i.e. the formats provided by the existing licensee for Birmingham whose licences are not currently being re-advertised (BRMB-FM and Xtra-AM), and the regional ILR service for the North-West, due to commence broadcasting in Autumn 1994 (for which the successful licence applicant will be decided and announced imminently).

Application fees

15. The application fees payable for these licences, which are both category B licences (adult population of between 1.0 million and 4.5 million), are £975 for

the AM licence, £1,475 for the FM licence, or £2,450 for licences to operate on both wavebands.

Licence fees

16. The annual licence fees payable for these licences, at the published tariff effective from 1 January 1993 until further notice, will be dependent upon the estimated adult population coverage to be achieved from each successful applicant's choice of transmission site at the power and aerial characteristics approved for use. For purposes of applicants' business plans, it is suggested that a sum of around £21,500 p.a. be allowed as the annual licence fee payable for the AM licence, and around £15,000 p.a. as the annual licence fee payable for the FM licence.

Date of licence advertisement: Friday, 8 October, 1993.

Formal notice of advertisement placed in the 'Birmingham Evening Mail' of that date.

Issued by the Radio Authority, Holbrook House, 14 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5DG, tel. 071-430 2724.