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## **Community radio licensing**

Our plans for inviting applications for community radio licences in 2018: list of areas

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**STATEMENT:**

**Publication Date:** 3 September 2018

# About this document

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In November 2017 we invited expressions of interest from groups interested in applying for a community radio licence. We received 90 expressions of interest by the deadline. As a result, we issued a short statement in June 2018 saying that we had decided to invite applications for new licences in some areas later this year.

This document lists the 43 areas for which we will invite applications. The list is drawn from the expressions of interest we received by the deadline. We have used the priorities which were set out in our 'call for expressions of interest'<sup>1</sup> to decide on the areas.

In the last quarter of 2018 we will publish an invitation to apply for a community radio licence in the areas listed (we will not accept applications from areas other than those listed).

For groups that submitted an expression of interest, and anyone else interested in applying for a community radio licence on FM, this document provides information about our plans.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/107570/call-expressions-interest.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/107570/call-expressions-interest.pdf)

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In November 2016, Ofcom consulted on plans for licensing more community radio services and changes to our technical policy. We published a statement in April 2017<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.2 As a result of this consultation we then embarked on a fourth round of community radio licensing, which commenced in April 2017. So far, we have invited applications in two phases. The two invitations, which listed specific areas for which we were willing to accept an application, were drawn up from the 98 expressions of interest for licences that we received in December 2016. There are over 260 community radio services broadcasting in the UK today.
- 1.3 We said in our April 2017 statement that after inviting applications for new licences, we would next invite existing stations to apply for an improvement to their existing coverage within their licensed coverage area or an extension to their existing licensed coverage area. We did this on 19 June 2018<sup>3</sup>. We have started work on the applications for improvements to existing coverage which were received by the deadline (31 July 2018). After that work is completed, we will turn our attention to applications for extensions to existing coverage (the closing date for these applications is 18 September 2018).
- 1.4 Following on from improvements and extensions to existing licensed services, we will turn our attention to licensing some more new community radio services. The purpose of this statement is to list the areas where we plan to invite applications for community radio licences later this year.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations-and-statements/category-2/cr-future-licensing>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/manage-your-licence/radio-broadcast-licensing/amend/invitation-apply-improvements-coverage-community-radio>

## 2. Plans to invite more applications

### Round 4: a third invitation to apply for community radio licences

- 2.1 During 2017, several groups who missed the expressions of interest part of our November 2016 consultation contacted us to say that they wished to have the opportunity to apply for a community radio licence. As a result, we invited further expressions of interest in November 2017<sup>4</sup> to help us understand the level of demand and where groups wished to apply for community radio licences.
- 2.2 We said that the responses we received would form the basis for a further invitation to apply for community radio licences. We added that *“we anticipate that we will have time to complete a further round of licensing before the licensing framework for small-scale DAB multiplexes is ready for us to implement”* (paragraph 1.2 in the call for expressions of interest). The legislation that will enable Ofcom to advertise and award small-scale DAB multiplex and service licences is under preparation, but not yet in place. As a result, we will have some time available to offer further analogue (FM) community radio licences.
- 2.3 Separately, as we said in paragraph 1.3 above, we have invited existing stations to apply to improve their coverage or extend their existing licensed coverage areas. The closing date for improvements has passed, and we have received over 80 applications. We do not know what the level of demand will be for extensions, but we wish to complete the majority of these requests before we start processing further applications for new licences.
- 2.4 When we invited expressions of interest for new licences in November 2017, we received 90 before the closing date. We have decided not to invite applications for every area for which we received an expression of interest for a variety of reasons.
- 2.5 When we invited expressions of interest we said *“If we receive a large number of expressions of interest, we may need to impose a limit on the number of areas for which we are willing to invite applications. In other words, we may not be able to invite applications for every area for which we have received an expression of interest”* (paragraph 1.6 in the call for expressions of interest).
- 2.6 We added that, in this case, we would prioritise as follows:
- a) areas unserved by existing community radio services, and areas for which we have invited applications but not received any in our current round of licensing (see [our website under ‘apply for a community radio licence’](#) for lists of applications received during 2017);
  - b) areas not covered under a) for which we believe there is a reasonable likelihood of suitable FM frequencies being available;
  - c) any other areas.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/107570/call-expressions-interest.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/107570/call-expressions-interest.pdf)

- 2.7 We have used these priorities to draw up a list of areas for which we will invite applications from the 90 expressions of interest. All the places selected fell under priority 'a' (see paragraph 2.6). Some locations were not selected because, even though they did not have a community radio service for which their area or community was the main focus, they were overlapped by a service in a neighbouring area. In addition, some expressions of interest were disregarded because they were received after the deadline (6 December 2017). Also, some areas were excluded because the areas were those where community radio licences have recently been awarded.
- 2.8 We intend to invite applications for new community radio licences, on FM, in the last quarter of 2018 in 43 areas (see section 3 for the list of areas). We anticipate that we will only have sufficient time to invite, and process, applications for these areas before we start licensing small-scale DAB.

### FM frequency availability

- 2.9 Potential applicants should be aware that in many parts of the country there is a shortage of suitable FM frequencies and that this is particularly acute in urban and suburban areas, but some other areas are affected too.
- 2.10 **It has been our policy for some time that we do not generally exclude areas from the applications process on estimated frequency availability grounds. Ofcom cannot guarantee the availability of suitable frequency resources to meet the needs of any applicant group in a particular area. This being the case, prospective community radio operators should note that applications are made entirely at their own risk and that the application fee will not be refunded if a suitable frequency cannot be found.**

### Next steps

- 2.11 As we said in our statement of 19 June, in the last quarter of 2018 we will publish an invitation to apply. The invitation will include the areas listed in section 3, and we will not accept applications from areas other than those listed.
- 2.12 An invitation to apply for a community radio licence is not limited to the people who submitted an expression of interest, but it is limited to the areas for which we invite applications.
- 2.13 The closing date for applications will be approximately three months after the invitation is published.
- 2.14 Potential applicants may wish to familiarise themselves with the further information on community radio licensing that is available on our website. This includes community radio guidance, [10 years of community radio licensing: advice for applicants, an application form, and advice on choosing a transmitter site](#).
- 2.15 Potential applicants are responsible for ensuring they keep themselves informed. We strongly recommend that anyone interested in applying for a licence should sign up for

Ofcom [broadcasting updates](#). We will not be writing to anyone who submitted an 'expression of interest' with further information.

## 3. List of areas

### The areas where we will invite applications for licences

- 3.1 We will invite applications for community radio licences in the last quarter of 2018. The areas are listed below, and we will not accept applications for places other than those listed.
- 3.2 Some of the places listed cover a wide area (some are the result of more than one expression of interest in adjacent areas, for example). Applications can be considered for a location or locations within the area described, though applicants are encouraged to read our [Coverage & planning policy for analogue radio](#) for guidance on coverage area policy (section 4).
- 3.3 **There is an acute shortage of suitable FM frequencies in many areas. Ofcom cannot guarantee the availability of suitable frequency resources to meet the needs of any applicant group. Prospective applicants should note that applications are made entirely at their own risk.**

Area description (taken from one or more expressions of interest)	Nation
Albrighton and Cosford (Shropshire)	England
Amersham and Chesham and the surrounding area (Buckinghamshire)	England
Borough of Scarborough (North Yorkshire)	England
Burghclere (Hampshire)	England
Carlisle (Cumbria)	England
Chesterfield (North Derbyshire)	England
Maryport, Workington, Whitehaven, Egremont (Cumbria)	England
Clowne, Bolsover and Barlborough (Derbyshire)	England
Dover (Kent)	England
Durham (County Durham)	England
Eastleigh, Hampshire	England
Faversham (Kent)	England
Ferndown, Wimborne Minster, Corfe Mullen and Holt (Dorset)	England
Hastings (East Sussex)	England
Grimsby, Mablethorpe, Trusthorpe, Sutton-on-Sea, Chapel St Leonards, Ingoldmells, Skegness (Lincolnshire)	England
Lowestoft and north east Suffolk	England



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Lutterworth (Leicestershire)	England
Melksham (Wiltshire)	England
North Somerset	England
Northwich, Middlewich and Winsford (central Cheshire)	England
Portishead (Somerset)	England
Ryedale (North Yorkshire)	England
Shaftesbury and Gillingham (Dorset) and Semley (Wiltshire)	England
South Bucks District (Beaconsfield, Denham, Gerrards Cross, Iver, Stoke Poges, Chalfont St Giles and Chalfont St Peter)	England
South east London/Borough of Croydon	England
Thornbury and district (Gloucestershire)	England
Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells (Kent)	England
Wallingford (Oxfordshire)	England
Wigan (Greater Manchester)	England
Ayr (South Ayrshire)	Scotland
Dundee	Scotland
Dunfermline (Fife)	Scotland
Edinburgh	Scotland
Hamilton, Larkhall, Stonehouse (South Lanarkshire)	Scotland
Kinross-shire	Scotland
Livingston, Bathgate and Linlithgow (West Lothian)	Scotland
Shotts (North Lanarkshire)	Scotland
Ballymena (County Antrim)	Northern Ireland
Enniskillen (County Fermanagh)	Northern Ireland
Newtownabbey (County Antrim)	Northern Ireland
Omagh (County Tyrone)	Northern Ireland
Merthyr Tydfil (Mid Glamorgan)	Wales
Locations within the Vale of Clwyd; Kinmel Bay, Abergele	Wales