

## Local radio multiplex licence awards: North and West Cumbria, Morecambe Bay

Ofcom has decided to award new local radio multiplex licences for each of the North and West Cumbria and Morecambe Bay areas of North West England to Bauer Digital Radio Limited and MuxCo Cumbria Limited respectively.

In considering the applications it receives for local radio multiplex licences, Ofcom is required to have regard to each of the statutory criteria set out in section 51(2) of the Broadcasting Act 1996. These are as follows:

- a) the extent of the coverage area proposed to be achieved by the applicant;
- b) the timetables proposed by the applicant for achieving the stated coverage (i.e. transmission roll-out) and for the commencement of broadcasting of the digital sound programme services proposed;
- c) the ability of the applicant to establish the proposed service and to maintain it throughout the period for which the licence would be in force;
- d) the extent to which the digital sound programme services (other than BBC services) proposed to be included in the service would cater for the tastes and interests of persons living in the area or locality for which the service is to be provided and, where it is proposed to cater for any particular tastes and interests of such persons, the extent to which those services would cater for those tastes and interests;
- e) the extent to which any such digital sound programme services would broaden the range of programmes available by way of local digital sound programme services to persons living in the area or locality for which it is to be provided and, in particular, the extent to which they would cater for tastes and interests different from those already catered for by local digital sound programme services provided for that area or locality;
- f) the extent to which there is evidence that, amongst persons living in that area or locality, there is a demand for, or support for, the provision of the proposed service; and
- g) whether, in contracting or offering to contract with persons providing digital sound programme services, television licensable content services or digital additional services, the applicant has acted in a manner calculated to ensure fair and effective competition in the provision of those services.

The legislation does not rate these requirements in order of priority, but it may be that Ofcom will regard one or more of the criteria as being particularly important in view of the characteristics of the licence to be awarded and the applications for it.

## Assessment of successful applications

### Bauer Digital Radio Limited – North and West Cumbria

In relation to section 51(2)(a) and (b), Bauer Digital Radio Limited intends to use five transmitters to provide 'outdoor' coverage to 67.3% of the major roads in the North and West Cumbria area, and 'indoor' coverage to 80.7% of adults (aged 15+). This will include coverage of Carlisle, Penrith, Workington, Whitehaven and Keswick. The service will launch by December 2020 with all of its proposed programme services.

With regard to section 51(2)(c), Ofcom considered that the detailed business plans and financial forecasts indicated that the applicant would be in a position to establish and run this multiplex service for the twelve-year duration of the licence term.

In considering the extent to which the applicant's proposals would cater for the tastes and interests of people living in the area (section 51(2)(d)), Ofcom considered that the inclusion of digital simulcasts of the existing analogue commercial radio services in the North and West Cumbria area (i.e. BBC Radio Cumbria and CFM), together with a wide range of new digital services including many popular national brands which are not currently available in the area on DAB, would enable the multiplex service to cater for local tastes and interests.

There are currently no local DAB radio services in the North and West Cumbria area. By introducing the range of services listed below, Ofcom considered that Bauer Digital Radio Limited's proposed local radio multiplex service would offer a significant breadth of choice for listeners (section 51(2)(e)). The applicant also demonstrated the popularity of the existing analogue services available in the North and West Cumbria area (section 51(2)(f)).

Although all of the proposed programme services, with the sole exception of BBC Radio Cumbria, will be provided by Bauer Radio, Ofcom was satisfied that Bauer Digital Radio Limited had, in contracting or offering to contract with providers of digital sound programme services, acted in a manner calculated to ensure fair and effective competition in the provision of those services (section 51(2)(g)).

The following commitments will be included as conditions of Bauer Digital Radio Limited's local radio multiplex licence when granted:

- The implementation by December 2020 of the five transmitters and transmission parameters proposed in the technical plan, or of a network of transmitters and transmission parameters offering broadly equivalent coverage.
- The provision of the local digital sound programme services as proposed in the application (as summarised below), with the audio characteristics proposed.

Format description	Service name	Audio provider
Local service	CFM	Bauer Radio
Classic pop hits	Greatest Hits Radio	Bauer Radio
Modern country music	Country Hits Radio	Bauer Radio
Rock music	Planet Rock	Bauer Radio
Classical music	Scala Radio	Bauer Radio
Music from the 1980s	Absolute Radio 80s	Bauer Radio

Music from the 1990s	Absolute Radio 90s	Bauer Radio
Classic rock music	Absolute Classic Rock	Bauer Radio
Laid-back hits	Magic Chilled	Bauer Radio
Soul and Motown	Magic Soul	Bauer Radio
Melodic music	Mellow Magic	Bauer Radio
Jazz, blues and soul	Jazz FM	Bauer Radio

This local radio multiplex service will also transmit BBC Radio Cumbria.

#### MuxCo Cumbria Limited – Morecambe Bay

In relation to section 51(2)(a) and (b), MuxCo Cumbria Limited intends to use four transmitters to provide ‘outdoor’ coverage to 55% of the major roads in the Morecambe Bay area, and ‘indoor’ coverage to 78% of adults (aged 15+). This will include coverage of Morecambe, Lancaster, Ulverston, Kendal and Windermere. The service will launch by December 2020 with all of its proposed programme services.

With regard to section 51(2)(c), Ofcom noted that the detailed business plans and financial forecasts indicated that the applicant would be in a position to establish and run this multiplex service for the twelve-year duration of the licence term.

In considering the extent to which the applicant’s proposals would cater for the tastes and interests of people living in the area (section 51(2)(d)), Ofcom considered that the inclusion of digital simulcasts of existing analogue commercial and community radio services in the Morecambe Bay area (BBC Radio Cumbria, Heart, Smooth Radio, and CandoFM), together with five other services, would enable the multiplex service to cater for local tastes and interests.

There are currently no local DAB radio services in the Morecambe Bay area. By introducing the services listed below, Ofcom considered that MuxCo Cumbria Limited’s proposed local radio multiplex service would offer a breadth of choice for listeners (section 51(2)(e)), with a particular focus on services which include local content. The applicant also demonstrated the popularity of the existing analogue local services available in the Morecambe Bay area (section 51(2)(f)).

Based on the evidence it submitted with its application, Ofcom was satisfied that MuxCo Cumbria Limited had, in contracting or offering to contract with providers of digital sound programme services, acted in a manner calculated to ensure fair and effective competition in the provision of those services (section 51(2)(g)).

The following commitments will be included as conditions of MuxCo Cumbria Limited’s local radio multiplex licence when granted:

- The implementation by December 2020 of the four transmitters and transmission parameters proposed in the technical plan, or of a network of transmitters and transmission parameters offering broadly equivalent coverage.
- The provision of the local digital sound programme services as proposed in the application (as summarised below), with the audio characteristics proposed.

Format description	Service name	Audio provider
Local service	Heart	Global Radio

Local service	Smooth Radio	Global Radio
Contemporary hit music	Capital	Global Radio
Children	Fun Kids Junior	Children's Radio UK
Local service	Bay Radio	Nation Broadcasting
Country music	Chris Country Radio	Country Broadcasting
Community radio service for Barrow-in-Furness	CandoFM	Furness Broadcasting Media Limited
Community radio service for North Lancs/S Cumbria	Bay Trust Radio	Bay Trust Radio

This local radio multiplex service will also transmit BBC Radio Cumbria.

### Process for assessment of applications

In June 2019, Ofcom invited applications for licences to provide local radio multiplex services in the Morecambe Bay, North and West Cumbria and Southwest Scotland areas. Three frequencies were made available, which on their own or in different combinations could be used to provide DAB coverage across part, or the whole, of these areas. A maximum of three local radio multiplex licences were available, depending on the applications received and the area(s) they proposed to cover.

By the closing date of 11 September 2019, two applications were received, as follows:

- Bauer Digital Radio Limited (to provide a local radio multiplex service for North and West Cumbria)
- MuxCo Cumbria Limited (to provide a local radio multiplex service for Morecambe Bay)

There were no applications to provide a local radio multiplex service for Southwest Scotland.

The applications were circulated among the decision makers as well as among relevant Ofcom colleagues. A copy of the non-confidential section of each application was made available for public scrutiny on the Ofcom website and public comment was invited.