
Community Radio

Four community radio licence awards: February 2020

STATEMENT:

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1. Overview

This document announces the award of four community radio licences.

The licences are for three stations serving communities in England: Melksham in Wiltshire, Thornbury in Gloucestershire, and Wimborne Minster in East Dorset; and one service in Scotland - Edinburgh.

2. Licence awards

- 2.1 During February 2020, Ofcom made decisions to award four community radio licences. The licences are for stations serving communities in Melksham in Wiltshire, Thornbury in Gloucestershire, Wimborne Minster in East Dorset, and Edinburgh in Scotland.
- 2.2 All community radio services must satisfy certain 'characteristics of service' which are specified in legislation – Ofcom was satisfied that each applicant awarded a licence met these 'characteristics of service'. In addition, each application was considered having regard to statutory criteria, the details of which are described below. In particular, this statement sets out the key considerations in relation to these criteria which formed the basis of Ofcom's decisions to award the licences. Where applicable, the relevant statutory reference (indicated by the sub-paragraph number) is noted in brackets.

Applicants awarded a licence

- 2.3 Ofcom has made a licence award to each of the following:
- Radio Melksham (Radio Melksham Limited), Melksham, Wiltshire
 - Radio Wimborne (Radio Wimborne Limited), Wimborne Minster, East Dorset
 - Sam Radio (SAM Radio Limited), Edinburgh
 - Thornbury Radio (Thornbury Media Community Interest Company), Thornbury, Gloucestershire
- 2.4 These services will be licensed for a period of five years from the date of their launch, on FM.
- 2.5 As required by law, Ofcom was satisfied that the new services would not prejudice unduly the economic viability of any local analogue commercial radio service.

Radio Melksham

- 2.6 Radio Melksham will serve the community of Melksham and its surrounding villages. Group members have experience in radio broadcasting and production (including in community radio), IT and local business, and have links with neighbouring community station Fantasy Radio (in Devizes). It proposes a low-cost volunteer-run station. As a result, Ofcom was satisfied that the applicant had demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a). The proposed service will include news and information about Melksham and the surrounding area and broaden the range of radio services in the locality (1c). A range of formal and informal accountability measures are proposed 1(f). The station will encourage volunteers from the local community and give training in broadcasting skills including interview techniques, presentations skills and news gathering (1g).

Radio Wimborne

- 2.7 Radio Wimborne will serve the people of Wimborne Minster and neighbouring villages in East Dorset. The group has gained local broadcasting experience by operating an internet radio station in the area for the last six years, and Ofcom was satisfied that the applicant had demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a). The applicant has built a network of links and partnerships with organisations in the area and will strengthen community links by highlighting community issues as well as providing a platform for local community projects and charity fundraising organisation (1e). The group has a volunteer base of over 20 people and has experience in providing access, training and support for members of the community who want to get involved in running the station (1g). The applicant provided evidence of demand and support for the service (1d).

Sam Radio

- 2.8 Sam Radio will serve the Asian community in parts of Edinburgh, with an interactive service of entertaining, informative and educational programmes. The group has experience of broadcasting locally by operating temporary radio services (S-RSLs), and Ofcom considered that the applicant has demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a). The service will broadcast Asian music, while speech output will include the discussion of issues that affect the local Asian community and will broaden the range of radio services available in the area (1b). The application set out plans for running training courses in broadcasting skills (presenting, editing, planning programmes, interviewing and so on) as well as other skills (for example basic use of IT and other modern-day technology) (1g). A range of formal and informal mechanisms for ensuring accountability are planned; such as regular meetings with people involved in running the station, feedback sessions and surveys for the target community and people will be able to elect the members of the advisory board (1f).

Thornbury Radio

- 2.9 Thornbury Radio will provide a local community radio service for the residents of Thornbury, Olveston and Tockington with local information and news. Group members have useful experience including in local broadcasting. A low-cost station operation is proposed, with free premises and run by volunteers. Ofcom was satisfied that the applicant had demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a). The applicant conducted research in the local community to ensure that the proposed service, with a strong local focus, will cater for local tastes and interests (1b) and broaden radio choice in the area (1c). The applicant has a range of social gain objectives and provided evidence of its experience in delivering community benefits, as well as links with relevant local organisations (1e). Evidence of demand and support for the proposed service was provided (1d).

3. Statutory requirements relating to community radio licensing

- 3.1 The following pages set out the statutory requirements relating to community radio licensing, and details of the licensing process. Further information about these, and detailed information relating to community radio, can be found in Ofcom's [Notes of guidance for community radio licence applicants and licensees](#).
- 3.2 In carrying out its functions, Ofcom is required to have regard to the general duties set out in section 3 of the Communications Act 2003. In addition, under section 85(2)(b) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 ("BA 1990"), it is the duty of Ofcom to do all that it can to secure the provision within the UK of a range and diversity of local radio services.

The characteristics of a community radio service

- 3.3 All community radio licensees must satisfy 'characteristics of service' requirements which are specified in Article 3 of the Community Radio Order 2004. The characteristics of community radio services are:
- that they are local services provided primarily for the good of members of the public, or of communities, and in order to deliver social gain, rather than primarily for commercial reasons or for the financial or other material gain of the individuals involved in providing the service;
 - that the service is intended primarily to serve one or more communities (whether or not it also serves other members of the public);
 - that the person providing the service does not do so in order to make a financial profit by so doing, and uses any profit that is produced in the provision of the service wholly and exclusively for securing or improving the future provision of the service, or for the delivery of social gain to members of the public or the community that the service is intended to serve;
 - that members of the community it is intended to serve are given opportunities to participate in the operation and management of the service; and
 - that, in respect of the provision of that service, the person providing the service makes himself accountable to the community that the service is intended to serve.
- 3.4 Article 2 of the Community Radio Order 2004 includes four mandatory "social gain" objectives. "Social gain" means the achievement, in respect of individuals or groups of individuals in the community that the service is intended to serve, or in respect of other members of the public, of the following objectives:
- the provision of sound broadcasting services to individuals who are otherwise underserved by such services;
 - the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion;

- the provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service; and
- the better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it.

3.5 Article 2 also includes a number of other objectives of a social nature which may be considered to represent "social gain".

Matters to which Ofcom shall have regard

3.6 There are seven matters set out in section 105(1) BA 1990 that Ofcom must have regard to when considering whether to grant a community radio licence. In summary these are:

- The ability of each applicant to maintain its proposed service over the licence period (section 105(1)(a)).
- The applicant's ability to cater for the tastes and interests of the target community (section 105(1)(b)).
- The extent to which each applicant would broaden the range of local radio services available in the area, and have a content distinct from those services (section 105(1)(c)).
- The extent to which there is evidence of local demand or support for a proposed service (section 105(1)(d)).
- The extent to which the service would deliver social gain benefits to the public or relevant community (section 105(1)(e)).
- Provisions for making the operator of service accountable to the relevant community (section 105(1)(f)).
- Provisions for allowing access by members of the public or the relevant community to the station facilities, and the provision of training in the use of those facilities (section 105(1)(g)).

3.7 In considering whether, or to whom (and on what conditions), to grant a community radio licence, Ofcom must also have regard to the need to ensure that any service provided under that licence does not prejudice unduly the economic viability of any other local commercial radio service.

3.8 Furthermore, without prejudice to the generality of that economic impact requirement, section 105(4) BA 1990 requires Ofcom to impose conditions to ensure, in effect, that any community radio service is prohibited from taking any relevant income from paid advertising and sponsorship of programmes except in the following respects:

- A 'fixed revenue allowance' totalling £15,000 per financial year of the licensee for such relevant income - this exception applies to any community radio service where that service overlaps with any local commercial radio service serving a potential audience of no more than 150,000 persons who have attained the age of 15 years or older.
- A 'fixed revenue allowance' totalling £15,000 per financial year of the licensee for such relevant income plus a proportion of the total relevant income (specified by Ofcom in

the licence), but which must not exceed 50% of the total relevant income (disregarding the fixed revenue allowance) for the licence in question in that year - this exception applies to all community radio services other than a community radio service referred to in (i) above. It should be noted that a community radio service that overlaps with any local commercial radio service serving a potential audience of no more than 150,000 persons who have attained the age of 15 years or older, which has at any time been varied pursuant to section 106(1A)(e) BA 1990, is also covered by this exception.

- 3.9 For the avoidance of doubt, programme sponsorship includes station or channel sponsorship, and commercial communications.

Process for assessment of applications

- 3.10 The Ofcom Board has delegated the discharge of certain of its functions in relation to television and radio broadcast licensing to one or more senior executives from Ofcom's Content & Media Policy Group. Each of those individuals, on their own or together, have responsibility for deciding on the award of community radio licences.
- 3.11 The decision-makers for these licence awards were Ofcom's Director, Broadcast Licensing and Programme Operations, Ofcom's Head of Radio & Broadcast Licensing Policy and Ofcom's two Principals, Broadcast Licensing.

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