
Community Radio

Six community radio licence awards: March 2020

STATEMENT:

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Contents

Section

1. Overview	1
2. Licence awards	2
3. Statutory requirements relating to community radio licensing	5

1. Overview

This document announces the award of six community radio licences.

The licences are for for stations serving communities in Magna Park and Lutterworth in Leicestershire; Chesterfield in Derbyshire; Northwich in Cheshire; Southborough in Kent; and two services for Scarborough in North Yorkshire.

2. Licence awards

- 2.1 During March 2020, Ofcom made decisions to award six community radio licences. The licences are for stations serving communities in Magna Park and Lutterworth in Leicestershire, Chesterfield in Derbyshire, Northwich in Cheshire, Southborough in Kent and two services for Scarborough in North Yorkshire.
- 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:
- Cheshire FM (Cheshire Radio Limited), Northwich
 - Coast and County Radio (Scarborough Radio Limited), Scarborough
 - Cross Counties Radio (Cross Counties Radio), Lutterworth
 - Elastic FM (Elastic FM Limited), Chesterfield
 - Radio Scarborough (Radio Scarborough Limited), Scarborough
 - West Kent Radio (West Kent Community Radio) Southborough and surrounding areas
- 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.

Cheshire FM

- 2.6 Cheshire FM is a service for people in Northwich, mid Cheshire. The directors have experience of operating commercial and community radio stations in the North West, including in Northwich, as well as acting as consultants in the radio sector. Ofcom was satisfied the applicant had demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a). The proposed service is locally-focused and has been developed through drawing on past experience in the area as well as a survey to gather information about what people want from the station. Ofcom considered that the service would cater for the tastes and interests of the target community (1b). The applicant demonstrated demand and support for the service in particular through its survey and using social media to gain support and feedback from local people (1d).

Coast and County Radio

- 2.7 Coast and County Radio will serve the community of Scarborough (town). The service has been broadcasting online and via DAB for the last seven years, while the directors have a range of experience in radio, demonstrating its ability to maintain the service (1a). It proposes to cater its service to its community, focussing on music not currently available on commercial radio and speech content on very local topics, including the coverage of local and sports events (1b). The applicant demonstrated that its service aims to provide social gain by enhancing and participating in existing and planned projects designed to make the community a better place, featuring local charitable organisations and education facilities heavily within their programming schedule, encouraging its listeners to participate in the variety of events that are being run in the local community (1e). The service currently has a large portfolio of volunteers who assist with the current online and DAB radio services, while the group have provided clear evidence of how they train their members and volunteers (both informally and accredited) in technical equipment, sound engineering and radio feature production (1g).

Cross Counties Radio

- 2.8 Cross Counties Radio is for people who live and work in Lutterworth and Magna Park. The group has built up experience of radio broadcasting in the area over a number of years. It already has a studio in place and proposes a low-cost service run by volunteers. Ofcom considered that the applicant had demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a). The applicant showed its knowledge of the area and its target community and proposes a service that will cater for their tastes and interests (1b). The applicant has relationships in place with a number of local companies and organisations which will help it to deliver its social gain objectives (1e). It has experience in managing volunteers and delivering training and has good accessibility arrangements (1g).

Elastic FM

- 2.9 Elastic FM will serve the people of Chesterfield. It will bring individuals, communities and organisations together promoting social cohesion and community dialogue. The applicant has experience of local broadcasting via the internet, podcasts and temporary FM licences, and directors bring valuable experience, for example in local business. Ofcom was satisfied that the applicant had demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a). Ofcom considered that the group had a clear set of social gain goals which are built on its experience of working with local schools, local charities and others in the target community and it provided evidence of past social gain achievements (1e). It has experience of training volunteers in broadcasting skills (1g). Regarding accountability to the target community, the applicant maintains active contact with local groups and has a range of proposals to seek and encourage feedback from a wide range of groups and individuals (1f).

Radio Scarborough

- 2.10 Radio Scarborough is for the people of Scarborough (town). The service will cater for all those who live within the town, broadcasting a variety of music and speech programming catered for the tastes and interests of the community. The applicant has demonstrated its experience of broadcasting on the internet since 2012, while the directors and management team have broad range of experience of the sector from previous roles in commercial and community radio. Ofcom was satisfied that the applicant had demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a). Ofcom was also satisfied that the service had demonstrated how it would cater the service for its target community (1b), with evidence provided on how it already does this on its online service. The service has demonstrated the relationships it has developed with local organisations and charities and satisfied Ofcom that its social gain objectives of engaging with charities to promote their events and engage the community in their work would provide social benefits for the target community (1e). The applicant demonstrated it has a clear plan for ensuring participation and access to the service, either by volunteering at the service or becoming involved in working groups to discuss the focus of the service. The service already has over 40 volunteers working for its online service and expect these numbers to grow (1g).

West Kent Radio

- 2.11 West Kent Radio is for people aged 45+ in Southborough and surrounding areas. It will promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and the importance of maintaining good personal, mental and physical health. The applicant already owns broadcasting equipment and other assets and has a well thought-through business plan for a volunteer-run service and Ofcom was satisfied that the applicant had demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a). The applicant has conducted local research and discussions with a number of organisations to help ensure that the proposed service will cater for the tastes and interests of the target community (1b) as well as broaden radio choice in the area (1c). Its social gain objectives are aligned with its charitable objects and focus on health and wellbeing. Group members have experience in delivering social gain and managing a service run by volunteers as a hospital radio broadcaster in Tunbridge Wells (1e). Accountability proposals include a newsletter which will encourage feedback, an annual survey and the opportunity to become a voting member of the charity and stand for election (1f).

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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