

Title:

Mr

Forename:

Roy

Surname:

Grimes

Representing:

Self

Organisation (if applicable):

Email:

What do you want Ofcom to keep confidential?:

Keep nothing confidential

If you want part of your response kept confidential, which parts?:

Ofcom may publish a response summary:

Yes

I confirm that I have read the declaration:

Yes

Ofcom should only publish this response after the consultation has ended:

You may publish my response on receipt

Additional comments:

I submitted a previous response including a detailed response to Q5) I have re-read the form and realize that I can not reply to section 5 as it is For programme service providers on the Exeter & Torbay local radio multiplex only!

I am therefore, re-submitting my response with my comments pasted in to section 6. Please therefore disregard my previous response.

Question 1: Do you think that allowing Now Digital to extend the coverage area of its Exeter & Torbay local radio multiplex licence to include North Devon would unacceptably narrow the range of DAB programme services available in the Exeter and Torbay area? Please explain the reasons for your view.:

I do not think the range of services in Exeter or Torbay will be narrowed as a result of the license proposals.

Question 2: Do you think that allowing Now Digital to extend the coverage area of its Exeter & Torbay local radio multiplex licence to include North Devon would be calculated to maintain or promote the development of digital sound broadcasting in the UK otherwise than by satellite? Please explain the reasons for your view.:

Question 3: Do you think that Now Digital's proposals for providing coverage of North Devon are satisfactory? Please explain the reasons for your view.:

No! I feel there is a distinct possibility of us losing services and localness in North Devon. As it currently stands, 30% of North Devon will be unable to receive DAB. With DAB in place, there are growing concerns that FM broadcasts will gradually come to an end. This would leave significant areas of North Devon without a reliable radio service.

Even if FM services continue for the foreseeable future, the content cannot hope to be genuinely local to North Devon.

Question 4: Do you consider that Now Digital has the ability to maintain its local radio multiplex service if its request is granted? Please explain the reasons for your view.:

Yes

Question 5: (For programme service providers on the Exeter & Torbay local radio multiplex only) Do you consider that there are sufficient safeguards in place to protect your rights and interests in the event that Now Digital is permitted to extend coverage to include North Devon?:

Question 6: Do you consider that there any other grounds on which Ofcom should approve, or not approve, the request from Now Digital? Please explain the reasons for your view.:

Digital services will be made up of either National or regional stations. If the application for the extension of DAB to North Devon is successful then the FM licence held by Global radio will automatically be renewed and our only 'local' service will be delivered from Exeter some 54 miles

away! Most of the broadcast content simply will not be relevant to North Devon. It is likely that North Devon will effectively become 'isolated' and left in the dark with little or no pertinent genuinely local information.

It is well documented that broadcasting in general is experiencing some difficult times at present, this has resulted in many broadcast services merging together to provide regional rather than local services. Sadly one of the casualties of the merging of regional services is the loss of a truly local provision. Mr Myers stated in his review that "Radio is important to the very fabric of our society, and local radio particularly so". He went on to describe how important 'localness' should be if we are to maintain a radio service that we can be proud of. Balancing the need for localness, whilst at the same time running a profitable radio station is understandably difficult, this has led to a profit based business plan leading to merging services such as we have recently seen in Devon. Local services have been axed to make way for a more generic, cheaper regional services. However, in rural or semi rural areas such as North Devon, there is massive public demand for a truly local service. Listeners want a local service where the presenter knows the area and can understand firsthand the impact of local road closures, or of services being closed due to weather.

At the end of the day, a commercial radio station cannot be financially viable without its listeners. Therefore the listener's needs and views must be of the utmost importance. Again the Myers report recognized the importance of the listener; "If we agree that listeners should sit at the Heart of local stations' output...such ambition must be fuelled by reality and practicality.... listeners interests should be safeguarded" In an environment of globalization and merging services, where would the listener go to for detailed, accurate and up to date information about their own local area. Regional services simply cannot deliver up to date information on things that are affecting our locality. As an example of this, since the closure of our North Devon local radio service, the merged regional service scarcely broadcasts information regarding local roads, services or what's on information for the North Devon area. We are left effectively cut off, with no voice representing our needs, and little or no information informing us of relevant news, traffic, travel or events pertaining to North Devon. If the Myers report states the importance of the listener, then why in North Devon do the listener feels rejected and cut off?

Can a balance of truly local and profitable radio be met? Where there is an audience, where there are listeners tuned in because they know that their station of choice will provide them with relevant up to date information, then without doubt the answer to that question must be yes. A radio station can only stay in profit with the backing of advertisers and sponsorship. Businesses will always vote with their feet, they will advertise where they believe they will achieve the most listeners. If it is already established and accepted in the Myers report that most listeners want local content, then advertisers are likely to support a station that provides what the listener wants. This is simply good business sense.

North Devon has tried to get its voice heard, we are crying out for a genuinely local service. Facebook petitions have resulted in thousands of people lamenting the loss of local radio, North Devon businesses our politicians and our local council have all registered their support for a truly local radio service. As stated, 'a truly local service' is not sustainable from a station based 54 miles away in Exeter.

OFCOM's own guidelines state that being local means that the listener should be confident that matters of local interest/importance will be broadcast! Did this happen during the severe weather outbreaks last winter? The answer is clearly NO! As a parent with children attending local schools and reliant on school transport, I tuned in to our 'local' Heart service hoping for information affecting our schools. What did I find? I was bombarded with information about schools and transport in South Devon, with a cursory mention of a couple of North Devon schools. On speaking to school head teachers following this, they were left clueless as to how they should inform their pupils and families about the status of their school. Many had to resort to their web pages with information; this can be a cumbersome process, especially if you require a third party to update your site. In past years, all it took was one simple phone call to Lantern FM or Heart North Devon, and the entire area was updated with important information. This genuinely local service I fear may well be a thing of the

past as far as the residents of North Devon are concerned.

Will local radio services be improved with the proposed DAB extension? The answer to that is a resounding NO! What the people of North Devon want, what we are standing up for and demanding is a genuinely local service! Why should we settle for anything less? I strongly fear that the DAB extension will be the death knell for the local services that have provided us with a lifeline in years gone by.

What a sad reflection on the state of local radio services!

Many Thanks,

Roy Grimes