

Analogue Commercial Radio Licence: Format Change Request Form

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| Date of request: | 4/12/18 |
| Station Name: | 2BR (Blackburn) |
| Licensed area and licence number: | Blackburn area AL101643 |
| Licensee: | Lancashire Broadcasting Company Ltd (part of Global Media & Entertainment Ltd) |
| Contact name: | Will Harding |

Details of requested change(s) to Format

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| <p>Character of Service</p> <p><i>Complete this section if you are requesting a change to this part of your Format</i></p> | <p>Existing Character of Service:</p> <p>A MUSIC AND INFORMATION STATION FOR 25 TO 54 YEAR-OLDS IN THE BLACKBURN, DARWEN, ACCRINGTON AND SURROUNDING AREA, FOCUSING ON LOCAL ISSUES.</p> |
| | <p>Proposed new Character of Service:</p> <p>A LOCALLY ORIENTED MAINSTREAM POPULAR MUSIC AND INFORMATION STATION FOR 15 TO 44 YEAR-OLDS IN THE BLACKBURN, DARWEN, ACCRINGTON AND SURROUNDING AREA.</p> |
| <p>Programme sharing and/or co-location arrangements</p> <p><i>Complete this section if you are requesting a change to this part of your Format</i></p> | <p>Current arrangements:</p> <p>Locally-made programming must be produced with the licensed areas of Preston (AL000323), Blackburn (AL101643), or Burnley & Pendle (AL000258).</p> <p>Programming will be shared with the Burnley and Pendle licence (AL000258), the Preston licence (AL000323) and the Blackburn licence (AL000292), subject to satisfying the character of service requirements above.</p> |
| | <p>Proposed new arrangements:</p> <p><i>Studio location:</i> Locally-made programming must be produced within the approved area of North West England.</p> |

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| | <p><i>Programme sharing:</i> All programmes may be shared between the Liverpool licence (AL207), the Manchester licence (AL033), the Preston, Leyland and Chorley licence (AL323), the Burnley and Pendle licence (AL258) and the Blackburn licence (AL101643), subject to satisfying the character of service requirements.</p> |
| <p>Locally-made hours and/or local news bulletins</p> <p><i>Complete this section if you are requesting a change to this part of your Format</i></p> | <p>Current obligations:</p> <p><i>Locally-made hours:</i> At least 10 hours a day during daytime weekdays (must include breakfast). At least 4 hours daytime Saturdays and Sundays.</p> <p><i>Local news bulletins:</i> At least hourly at peaktime weekdays and weekends. Outside peak, UK-wide, nations and international news should feature.</p> <hr/> <p>Proposed new obligations:</p> <p><i>Locally-made hours:</i> At least 3 hours a day during daytime weekdays.</p> <p><i>Local news bulletins:</i> At least hourly during daytime weekdays and peak-time weekends. At other times UK-wide, nations and international news should feature.</p> |

The holder of an analogue local commercial radio licence may apply to Ofcom to have the station's Format amended. Any application should be made using the layout shown on this form, and should be in accordance with Ofcom's published procedures for Format changes.¹

Under section 106(1A) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 (as amended), Ofcom may consent to a change of a Format only if it is satisfied that *at least* one of the following five statutory criteria is satisfied:

- (a) *that the departure would not substantially alter the character of the service;*
- (b) *that the departure would not narrow the range of programmes available by way of relevant independent radio services to persons living the area or locality for which the service is licensed to be provided;*

¹ Available at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0024/87405/The-regulation-of-Format-changes.pdf

- (c) *that the departure would be conducive to the maintenance or promotion of fair and effective competition*
- (d) *that there is evidence that, amongst persons living in that area or locality, there is a significant demand for, or significant support for, the change that would result from the departure; or*
- (e) *that (i) the departure would result from programmes included in the licensed service ceasing to be made at premises in the area or locality for which the service is provided, but (ii) those programmes would continue to be made wholly or partly at premises within the approved area (as defined in section 314 of the Communications Act 2003 (local content and character of services)).*

Only one of these five criteria need be satisfied in order for Ofcom to consent to the proposed change. However, even if Ofcom is of the opinion that the proposed change satisfies one or more of the statutory criteria, there may be reasons (depending on the particular circumstances of the case) why Ofcom may not consent to the proposed change. The additional criteria to which Ofcom will have regard when exercising this discretion can be found on our website.²

Applicants should note that, under section 106ZA of the same Act (as amended), a proposed change that *does not* satisfy the first or last of these criteria (i.e. a change that Ofcom considers *would* or *could* substantially alter the character of the service, or does not relate to the origin of locally-made programmes) must, if it is to be considered further under any of the other three criteria, be consulted upon.

In the event that Ofcom receives a request for Format change and considers that criterion (a) or (e) is *not* satisfied, it will seek confirmation from the applicant as to whether it wishes to proceed with the request (and, if so, whether it wishes to amend or replace its submission in light of the necessity to make it public).#

Please set out the statutory criterion, or criteria, set out in section 106(1A) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 that you believe is/are satisfied in relation to this Format change request, and the reasons for this.

(a) that the departure would not substantially alter the character of the service

and

(e) that (i) the departure would result from programmes included in the licensed service ceasing to be made at premises in the area or locality for which the service is provided, but (ii) those programmes would continue to be made wholly or partly at premises within the approved area (as defined in section 314 of the Communications Act 2003 (local content and character of services)).

² At https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0024/87405/The-regulation-of-Format-changes.pdf

Please provide any additional information and/or evidence in support of the proposed change(s) below. In particular, the applicant may wish to outline how they see that the proposed change fits within Ofcom’s published Format change request policy³ and also Ofcom’s Localness guidance, which includes our co-location and programme sharing policy.⁴

Proposed changes to the Character of Service

The proposed changes to the Character of Service would make the Character of Service for the 3 licences making up 2BR consistent and are being requested to facilitate the rebranding of the station to become part of Global’s Capital network of local stations.

The proposed change to the target age demographic, from 25-54 year olds to 15-44 year olds will not substantially alter the Character of Service. The station would share the same music playlist as other stations in the Capital network which, while targeted at a younger demographic, nevertheless enjoy broad appeal.

The current average age of 2BR listeners is 411 (RAJAR Wave 3 2018; 12 months) whereas that of Capital Manchester (the closest station in the Capital network to the licensed area) is 35 (RAJAR Wave 3 2018; 12 months). 35 is well within both the current and the proposed target age demographics. Moreover, Capital Manchester actually delivers a significantly higher percentage of its total listening hours from the 25-54 demographic (64% of all hours) than does 2BR (48%). This demonstrates that the station will continue to appeal to listeners in the current target demographic group and therefore that the proposed change does not amount to a substantial change to the character of service.

Our research also indicates that the current music output 2BR is not dissimilar to stations in the Capital network. During September 2018, almost half of all songs played on 2BR were also played on Capital stations.

Listeners in the licenced area can receive both Heart North West and Smooth North West on analogue radio. Heart has a target age demographic of 25-54 and Smooth targets a 50+ audience. Rock FM, with a 15-44 demographic target is, in contrast, only available to c36% of the population in the licence MCA. Amending the target age demographic to 15-44, and the rebranding to Capital, will therefore broaden choice in the licensed area.

The proposed change to the Character of Service in respect of local content, ensuring the station remains “locally oriented” in place of the current wording requiring a focus on “local issues” reflects the proposal to take advantage of the Enhanced Local News option in Ofcom’s Localness Guidance. Ofcom’s own research, as published as part of the recent consultation on the Guidance, clearly shows that local news and information is the most valued aspect of localness amongst listeners. The commitment to at least hourly local news bulletins throughout weekday daytime enshrined in the proposed new format will ensure that the local nature of the licence is maintained.

Proposed Changes to Programme Sharing, Co-location and Locally-made hours

These changes are consistent with Ofcom’s latest published localness guidelines, which require a minimum of 3 hours per weekday of locally-produced programming for stations

³ Available at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/87405/The-regulation-of-Format-changes.pdf

⁴ Available at <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/radio/localness/>

providing enhanced local news, and with Ofcom's general policy to permit a station to share its locally-made programmes with any other station in its approved area.

Locally-made programming will continue to be produced in an area approved by Ofcom.

Notes

Ofcom may approve a change under any of criteria (b) to (d) without consultation, or after a consultation of less than 28 days, if Ofcom considers that to hold a consultation at all, or for 28 days or more, would result in a delay that would be likely to prejudice the interests of the licensee. Ofcom may also remove for the purposes of consultation any confidential information submitted by the licensee.

Data Protection

We require the information requested in this form in order to carry out our licensing duties under the Broadcasting Act 1990, Broadcasting Act 1996 and Communications Act 2003.

Please see Ofcom's General Privacy Statement www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/foi-dp/general-privacy-statement for further information about how Ofcom handles your personal information and your corresponding rights

Ofcom notes on the request

Statutory requirements

This request relates to the FM licence for Blackburn held by the Lancashire Broadcasting Company Limited, currently broadcasting as '2BR'. In July 2018, Lancashire Broadcasting – formerly part of the UKRD Group – was purchased by Global Radio.

Every FM local commercial radio service is required to broadcast a certain amount of locally-made programming, which is specified in its Format. Locally-made programmes are those made within a station's licensed area or, where Ofcom has approved a wider area relating to that station, that 'approved area.'

Following changes to Ofcom's localness guidelines published in October 2018, and as part of Global Radio's plans to rebrand 2BR and integrate it into its 'Capital' network of stations, the licensee has requested the following changes to the Format of the Blackburn licence:

- To change the 'Character of Service', as set out in the application form above.
- To reduce the required number of locally-made programming hours on weekday daytimes from seven to three, and from four to none on weekend days.
- To broadcast the locally-made programming hours from anywhere within the approved area of North West England.
- To share local programming hours with the FM licences for Liverpool and Manchester (in addition to the programming sharing permissions the Blackburn licence already has with the Preston and Burnley licences).

These proposed changes would change the character of service as set out in the Format of the licence, and accordingly can be agreed only if Ofcom is satisfied in regard to one of the statutory criteria set out in section 106(1A) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 (as set out in the request, above).

If we are satisfied in relation to one of the statutory criteria, we are then able to decide whether or not to approve the request, taking account of our published policy criteria.

Assessment

Proposed change to 'character of service'

With the regard to the proposed changes to the 'Character of Service', we were satisfied in relation to section 106(1A)(a) of the Broadcasting Act 1990. In particular, we did not consider that the change in stated target demographic from 25-54 year-olds to 15-44 year-olds would substantially alter the character of the service, as we recognise that there is a weakening correlation between the target age groups specified in Formats and actual audiences, and between the age of a listener and the music they are likely to enjoy. In our view, the service required to be provided under this licence would continue to be a mainstream music station with an obligation to provide local news and information for the Blackburn, Darwen and Accrington areas.

Proposed changes to locally-made hours, programme sharing and consultation arrangements

With regard to the request to broadcast locally-made programming hours from anywhere within the approved area of North West England, Ofcom was satisfied in relation to section 106(1A)(e), on the basis that the change requested, if approved, would result in programmes included in the licensed service being made at premises with the North West England approved area.

In considering the request concerning locally-made hours and local news provision, we were satisfied in relation to section 106(1A)(a) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 – that the reduction in the number of locally-made hours would not substantially alter the character of the service. This is because the proposed new amount of locally-made programming and the associated commitment to deliver local news at least hourly throughout weekday daytime hours is consistent with our recently amended localness guidelines⁵, and in addition because we would continue to expect the licensee to provide a local service that includes, as well as the level of news specified in its Format, sufficient other local material to deliver the character of service, regardless of where the content is being broadcast from.

We were also satisfied in relation to section 106(1A)(a) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 with regard to the request to share all local programming hours with the Manchester and Liverpool licences, in addition to the Burnley and Preston licences. Again, this request is consistent with our localness guidelines, and we would continue to expect the licensee to provide a local service that includes sufficient local material to deliver the required character of service.

As a matter of general policy⁶, we are minded to approve Format change requests relating to locally-made programming and programme sharing where all the stations involved are located within the same approved area, provided we are satisfied that the stations involved will continue to meet their licence obligations to provide local material relevant to the listeners in their individual licence areas. On the basis that Global Radio is a substantial operator with significant resources, we have no reason to consider that Global Radio would not be able to deliver the localness obligations specified in these licences.

Decision

Ofcom decided to approve this Format change request from Lancashire Broadcasting Limited because we were satisfied in relation to two of the relevant statutory criteria, and for the policy reason outlined above.

February 2019

⁵ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/radio-broadcasters/localness>

⁶ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0024/87405/The-regulation-of-Format-changes.pdf

