
Connect FM (Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough)

Request to change Format

CONSULTATION:

Publication date: 26 July 2019

Closing date for responses: 23 August 2019

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1. Overview

A commercial radio station's Format sets out the type of broadcast output it is required to deliver, and forms a part of its licence. Formats may include requirements relating to a station's music output, news provision, other types of speech content, its target audience, the volume and origin of locally-made programmes, and any programme sharing arrangements; taken together, these elements encapsulate the nature and overall character of a licensed service.

When a request to change a Format constitutes a significant departure from the character of service, the request is subject to consultation. This document outlines the request received from Communicorp UK Limited ('Communicorp') with regard to the licence for Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough, which broadcasts as Connect FM, and Ofcom's preliminary view on the request to change its character of service.

What we are proposing – in brief

Communicorp plans to relaunch Connect FM as 'Smooth Radio', and wishes to change the 'Character of Service' of the Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough licence from:

"A locally-orientated music and information station aimed primarily at the Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough area"

to

"An easy listening station featuring lifestyle orientated speech, targeting an audience aged 40 plus".

We have taken a preliminary view on the request and are minded to grant it. However, we are seeking views on the request before we make a decision. The consultation closes at 5pm **on Friday 23 August 2019**.

In addition to its request to change the 'Character of Service' of this licence, Communicorp has made associated requests with regard to the requirements in the Format relating to locally-made programming hours, programme sharing and co-location arrangements. The request to change the amount of locally-made programming has been approved by Ofcom. A decision on the requests to change where that locally-made programming can come from, and to share the locally-made programming with other stations, is dependent upon Ofcom deciding to change the approved area for this licence. That issue is the subject of a separate consultation¹.

¹ Ofcom, 2019. [Consultation: Communicorp radio stations in the East Midlands and Peterborough – request to create a new approved area](#)

2. Details and background information

- 2.1 The licence for each local analogue commercial radio service contains a ‘Format’ which describes the type of programme service the licensee is required to provide. Part of that Format is a description of the ‘Character of Service’ of the station.
- 2.2 Licensees can make requests to Ofcom to change their Character of Service (‘Format change requests’) in accordance with their licence conditions and relevant statutory provisions. These are described below.
- 2.3 The service provided under the FM licence for the Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough areas of Northamptonshire was launched in March 1998 as Connect FM. The licence has a Measured Coverage Area of 156,045 adults (aged 15+).
- 2.4 The Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough licence was sold by Adventure Radio Limited to Communicorp UK Limited (‘Communicorp’) in February 2019.
- 2.5 Following its acquisition of the licence, Communicorp has submitted a Format Change Request to Ofcom to change the ‘Character of Service’ from:

“A locally-orientated music and information station aimed primarily at the Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough area”

to:

“An easy listening station featuring lifestyle orientated speech, targeting an audience aged 40 plus”.

- 2.6 Other proposed changes to the Format are summarised in the table below:

	Current Format	Proposed new Format
Locally-made hours	At least 7 hours per day during daytime weekdays (must include breakfast) and at least 4 hours per day during weekend days.	At least 3 hours per day during daytime weekdays. This request has been approved by Ofcom – see paragraph 3.2 below.
Studio location	Locally-made programming must be produced within the licensed areas of Peterborough or Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough.	Locally-made programming to be produced from anywhere within a new ‘Approved Area’ proposed by Communicorp. (This request is not the subject of this consultation – see paragraph 3.3 below.)
Programme sharing arrangements	All programmes may be shared with the Peterborough licence.	All programmes may be shared with the East Midlands licence, in addition to the Peterborough licence. (This request is not the subject of this consultation – see paragraph 3.3 below.)

Licence conditions and statutory framework

- 2.7 Conditions included in the licence pursuant to section 106(1A) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 (as amended) (the 'Act'), provide that Ofcom may consent to a change of a Format (a departure from the character of the licensed service) only where we are satisfied that at least one of the following five statutory criteria is met:
- a) that the departure would not substantially alter the character of the service²;
 - b) that the departure would not narrow the range of programmes available by way of relevant independent radio services to persons living in the area or locality for which the service is licensed to be provided;
 - c) that, in the case of a local licence, the departure would be conducive to the maintenance or promotion of fair and effective competition in the area or locality; or
 - d) that, in the case of a local licence, 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, in the case of a local licence (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)).
- 2.8 Under section 106ZA of the Act, Ofcom is required to hold a public consultation on a proposed Format change unless criterion (a) or (e) is satisfied. Where criterion (b) is relevant in the context of a Format change request for a local radio service (as here), none of national or regional analogue commercial services, local DAB services or BBC services count as 'relevant independent radio services' (by virtue of section 106(7) of the Act). Only local analogue commercial and community radio services are taken into account in considering whether the range of programmes would be narrowed.
- 2.9 The legislation leaves the decision as to whether to permit a change, even if one of the above criteria is satisfied, to Ofcom's discretion. There may be reasons (depending on the particular circumstances of the case) why Ofcom may not consent to the proposed change, notwithstanding that one of the statutory criteria is met. We have set out on our website, [criteria we use to help us judge whether a request of this kind should be approved](#). We also take account of our general statutory duties, including:
- a) our principal duty to further the interests of citizens and consumers;
 - b) our duty to secure the availability throughout the UK of a wide range of television and radio services which (taken as a whole) are both of high quality and calculated to appeal to a variety of tastes and interests (including specifically a range and diversity of

² The legislation requires Ofcom to have regard to the selection of spoken material and music in programmes when determining what the character of the service in question is.

local radio services), as well as the maintenance of a sufficient plurality of providers of different services; and

- c) our duty to have regard to the different interests of persons in the different parts of the UK, of the different ethnic communities within it and of persons living in rural and in urban areas.

3. Consideration of the request and Ofcom's preliminary view

- 3.1 Annex 5 contains Communicorp's Format change request. The request has been made on the basis that criteria (b) and (e) of section 106(1A) of the Act are both met: that the proposed changes would not narrow the range of programmes available by way of relevant independent radio services to persons living in Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough, and 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)).
- 3.2 We have agreed the locally-made hours aspect of Communicorp's request because we are satisfied in relation to section 106(1A)(a) - that the reduction in the number of locally-made hours would not, by itself, and without any additional changes to the Format being approved by Ofcom, substantially alter the character of service provided by the licensee. As a matter of general policy, we are content to approve the changes relating to locally-made programming which are consistent with our [published localness guidelines](#) on these matters. We are therefore not seeking views on this particular aspect of Communicorp's request.
- 3.3 Communicorp has also requested – under criteria (a) and (e) of section 106(1A) – changes to the Format of this licence which would enable it to broadcast the required local programming hours from any location within a proposed new East Midlands 'Approved Area', and to share all local programming hours with the service provided under the East Midlands licence (Smooth Radio) as well as with that provided under the Peterborough licence (which is also subject to a Format change consultation being held concurrently with this one). Both of these changes are dependent upon Ofcom agreeing to the request to create the new 'Approved Area', which is the subject of a further [separate consultation](#). If, following consultation, we agree to the creation of the Approved Area as proposed by Communicorp, we will make these two changes to the Format without further consultation, since they are consistent with our published localness guidelines.
- 3.4 The proposed change to the 'Character of Service' part of the Format of the Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough licence is the subject of this consultation. For the reasons that follow, we are minded to grant this part of Communicorp's request. We are seeking respondents' comments on our preliminary view.

Preliminary view

- 3.5 In Ofcom's preliminary view, the change to the 'Character of Service' requested by Communicorp would significantly affect the nature of the station's programming and target audience, which would necessitate a substantial alteration of the service's existing

published Character of Service. On that basis, we do not consider that criterion (a) in section 106(1A) is met.

- 3.6 Ofcom is therefore consulting on the 'Character of Service' change request in accordance with section 106ZA, taking particular account of Communicorp's submission that statutory criterion (b) is met.
- 3.7 For the purpose of considering whether we think that criterion (b) could be satisfied, we need to take account of the Formats of all the other local radio services broadcasting within the Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough area.
- 3.8 The Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough area is served by two other local commercial analogue radio stations in addition to Connect FM: Heart (Northampton) and Gold (Northampton).
- 3.9 Heart (Northampton) has the following Character of Service: *"A locally orientated mainstream popular music and information station for under 44s in the Northampton area"*.
- 3.10 Following Ofcom's recent approval of a Format change request for the licence for Gold (Northampton), the station's Character of Service is now: *"A classic pop hits station targeted primarily at 35-54 year-olds in the Northampton area"*. Note that this service is currently still broadcasting as Smooth Radio, but we would expect this service to have started broadcasting under its new Format as 'Gold' by the time the proposed changes to the Kettering, Corby & Wellingborough licence are implemented (were they to be approved by Ofcom).
- 3.11 Part of the Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough licence area is also served by a community radio station, Corby Radio, which has the following Character of Service: *"Corby Radio provides an informative, relevant and entertaining community radio station to the target community"*.
- 3.12 The proposed change to the 'Character of Service' for Connect FM removes the requirement for the radio service to be orientated towards the local audience and specifies the type of music content to be played. Taking account of the Formats of the other local radio services available in the area, our preliminary view is that these proposed changes would not narrow the range of programmes available to listeners living in the locality. There would still be analogue local radio services broadcasting to the Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough area (specifically, Heart and Corby Radio) that have requirements contained in their Character of Service to provide local content, so the range of available programming would not be reduced in that respect.
- 3.13 In terms of the music the station plays and the audience demographic it targets, the existing Character of Service already affords Connect FM considerable flexibility, meaning the station could already choose to play easy listening music and target a 40-plus audience if it so wished.
- 3.14 As noted in paragraph 2.13, the Format change legislation leaves to Ofcom's judgement the decision as to whether to permit a change, even if one of the statutory criteria is

satisfied (as is the case here, in our preliminary view). In our published [Format change policy guidance](#), we have stated that the time which has elapsed since a licence was first awarded is a relevant factor, as a licensee's need to adapt to audiences changing over time is understandable, whereas a change soon after award may be inconsistent with the licensing process whereby stations define their own Formats in their licence application. As a substantial period has elapsed since the Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough licence was first awarded, we recognise that audiences evolve over time and the station may need to adapt consequently. In relation to some of our other policy criteria, we considered that the original licence award was not heavily dependent on a specific commitment in the proposed Format which is now being proposed to be changed or removed, and that this request does not amount to 'Format creep' (whereby a licensee makes a series of small changes that could amount to a substantial alteration to the Character of Service). Full consideration will be given to the views of listeners and stakeholders in response to this consultation.

Conclusion

- 3.15 Accordingly, having reached the preliminary view that the requested change to the 'Character of Service' would not narrow the range of programmes by way of relevant independent radio services to persons living in Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough, and for the policy reasons outlined, we are minded to consent to Communicorp's request subject to the outcome of this consultation.

A1. Responding to this consultation

How to respond

- A1.1 Ofcom would like to receive views and comments on the issues raised in this document, by **5pm on Friday 23 August 2019**.
- A1.2 You can download a response form from <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations-and-statements/category-3/connect-fm-kettering-corby-wellingborough>. You can return this by email or post to the address provided in the response form.
- A1.3 If your response is a large file, or has supporting charts, tables or other data, please email it to emily.iverson@ofcom.org.uk, as an attachment in Microsoft Word format, together with the [cover sheet](#). This email address is for this consultation only, and will not be valid after 23 August 2019.
- A1.4 Responses may alternatively be posted to the address below, marked with the title of the consultation:
- Emily Iverson
Ofcom
Riverside House
2A Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA
- A1.5 We welcome responses in formats other than print, for example an audio recording or a British Sign Language video. To respond in BSL:
- Send us a recording of you signing your response. This should be no longer than 5 minutes. Suitable file formats are DVDs, wmv or QuickTime files. Or
 - Upload a video of you signing your response directly to YouTube (or another hosting site) and send us the link.
- A1.6 We will publish a transcript of any audio or video responses we receive (unless your response is confidential)
- A1.7 We do not need a paper copy of your response as well as an electronic version. We will acknowledge receipt if your response is submitted via the online web form, but not otherwise.
- A1.8 You do not have to answer all the questions in the consultation if you do not have a view; a short response on just one point is fine. We also welcome joint responses.
- A1.9 It would be helpful if your response could include direct answers to the questions asked in the consultation document. The questions are listed at Annex 4. It would also help if you could explain why you hold your views, and what you think the effect of Ofcom's proposals would be.

A1.10 If you want to discuss the issues and questions raised in this consultation, please contact Emily Iverson on 020 7620 6823 or by email to emily.iverson@ofcom.org.uk.

Confidentiality

A1.11 Consultations are more effective if we publish the responses before the consultation period closes. In particular, this can help people and organisations with limited resources or familiarity with the issues to respond in a more informed way. So, in the interests of transparency and good regulatory practice, and because we believe it is important that everyone who is interested in an issue can see other respondents' views, we usually publish all responses on [the Ofcom website](#) as soon as we receive them.

A1.12 If you think your response should be kept confidential, please specify which part(s) this applies to, and explain why. Please send any confidential sections as a separate annex. If you want your name, address, other contact details or job title to remain confidential, please provide them only in the cover sheet, so that we don't have to edit your response.

A1.13 If someone asks us to keep part or all of a response confidential, we will treat this request seriously and try to respect it. But sometimes we will need to publish all responses, including those that are marked as confidential, in order to meet legal obligations.

A1.14 Please also note that copyright and all other intellectual property in responses will be assumed to be licensed to Ofcom to use. Ofcom's intellectual property rights are explained further in our [Terms of Use](#).

Next steps

A1.15 Following this consultation period, Ofcom plans to publish a statement in September.

A1.16 If you wish, you can [register to receive mail updates](#) alerting you to new Ofcom publications.

Ofcom's consultation processes

- A1.17 Ofcom aims to make responding to a consultation as easy as possible. For more information, please see our consultation principles in Annex 2.
- A1.18 If you have any comments or suggestions on how we manage our consultations, please email us at consult@ofcom.org.uk. We particularly welcome ideas on how Ofcom could more effectively seek the views of groups or individuals, such as small businesses and residential consumers, who are less likely to give their opinions through a formal consultation.
- A1.19 If you would like to discuss these issues, or Ofcom's consultation processes more generally, please contact the corporation secretary:

Corporation Secretary
Ofcom
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA
Email: corporationsecretary@ofcom.org.uk

A2. Ofcom's consultation principles

Ofcom has seven principles that it follows for every public written consultation:

Before the consultation

- A2.1 Wherever possible, we will hold informal talks with people and organisations before announcing a big consultation, to find out whether we are thinking along the right lines. If we do not have enough time to do this, we will hold an open meeting to explain our proposals, shortly after announcing the consultation.

During the consultation

- A2.2 We will be clear about whom we are consulting, why, on what questions and for how long.
- A2.3 We will make the consultation document as short and simple as possible, with a summary of no more than two pages. We will try to make it as easy as possible for people to give us a written response. If the consultation is complicated, we may provide a short Plain English / Cymraeg Clir guide, to help smaller organisations or individuals who would not otherwise be able to spare the time to share their views.
- A2.4 We will consult for up to ten weeks, depending on the potential impact of our proposals.
- A2.5 A person within Ofcom will be in charge of making sure we follow our own guidelines and aim to reach the largest possible number of people and organisations who may be interested in the outcome of our decisions. Ofcom's Consultation Champion is the main person to contact if you have views on the way we run our consultations.
- A2.6 If we are not able to follow any of these seven principles, we will explain why.

After the consultation

- A2.7 We think it is important that everyone who is interested in an issue can see other people's views, so we usually publish all the responses on our website as soon as we receive them. After the consultation we will make our decisions and publish a statement explaining what we are going to do, and why, showing how respondents' views helped to shape these decisions.

A3. Consultation coversheet

BASIC DETAILS

Consultation title: Connect FM (Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough) consultation

To (Ofcom contact): Emily Iverson

Name of respondent:

Representing (self or organisation/s):

Address (if not received by email):

CONFIDENTIALITY

Please tick below what part of your response you consider is confidential, giving your reasons why

Nothing

Name/contact details/job title

Whole response

Organisation

Part of the response

If there is no separate annex, which parts? _____

If you want part of your response, your name or your organisation not to be published, can Ofcom still publish a reference to the contents of your response (including, for any confidential parts, a general summary that does not disclose the specific information or enable you to be identified)?

DECLARATION

I confirm that the correspondence supplied with this cover sheet is a formal consultation response that Ofcom can publish. However, in supplying this response, I understand that Ofcom may need to publish all responses, including those which are marked as confidential, in order to meet legal obligations. If I have sent my response by email, Ofcom can disregard any standard e-mail text about not disclosing email contents and attachments.

Ofcom seeks to publish responses on receipt. If your response is non-confidential (in whole or in part), and you would prefer us to publish your response only once the consultation has ended, please tick here.

Name

Signed (if hard copy)

A4. Consultation questions

- A4.1 Ofcom is seeking views on these two Format change requests. Ofcom may consent to a departure from the character of the licensed services if Ofcom is satisfied that at least one of the criteria in Section 106 (1A) of the Broadcast Act 1990 (as amended) is satisfied in relation to each request. These criteria are set out on page one of this consultation document.
- A4.2 In light of the considerations set out in Section 3 of this document, we are minded to consent to a departure from the character of the Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough licence on the basis that criterion (b) in Section 106(1A) of the Broadcast Act 1990 (as amended) is satisfied in respect of the Format change request, and that there are no policy grounds on which to refuse the request.

Question 1:

Respondents are invited to comment on whether they agree with Ofcom's preliminary view and to frame their views and responses with reference to, or in the context of, the statutory criteria in section 106(1A) of the Broadcast Act 1990 (as amended).

A5. Format change request from Communicorp UK Limited

Date of request:	21/05/2019
Station Name:	Connect FM
Licensed area and licence number:	Kettering, Corby & Wellingborough. AL043
Licensee:	Communicorp UK Limited
Contact name:	Colin Everitt

Details of requested change(s) to Format

<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 LOCALLY-ORIENTED MUSIC AND INFORMATION STATION AIMED PRIMARILY AT THE KETTERING, CORBY AND WELLINGBOROUGH AREA.</p>
	<p>Proposed new Character of Service:</p> <p>AN EASY LISTENING STATION FEATURING LIFESTYLE ORIENTATED SPEECH, TARGETING AN AUDIENCE AGED 40 PLUS.</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 within the licensed areas of Kettering, Corby & Wellingborough (AL043) and Peterborough (AL245).</p> <p><i>Programme sharing:</i></p> <p>All programmes may be shared between the Kettering, Corby & Wellingborough licence (AL043) and the Peterborough licence (AL245), subject to satisfying the character of service requirements above.</p>
	<p>Proposed new arrangements:</p> <p>Locally-made programming to be produced within the proposed new 'Approved Area' as set in the letter to Ofcom dated 12th February 2019.</p> <p><i>Programme sharing:</i></p> <p>All programmes may be shared in the proposed new 'Approved Area' (as set in the letter to Ofcom dated 12th</p>

	February 2019) between the Kettering, Corby & Wellingborough licence (AL043) , the Peterborough licence (AL245) and the East Midlands licence (AL277), subject to satisfying the character of service requirements above.
<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><i>Locally-made hours:</i> At least 7 hours a day during daytime weekdays (must include breakfast). At least 4 hours daytime Saturdays and Sundays.</p> <p><i>Local News:</i> At least hourly during daytime weekdays and peak-time weekends. At other times UK-wide, nations and international news should feature.</p>
	<p>Proposed new obligations:</p> <p>Locally-made hours: At least 3 hours a day during daytime weekdays.</p> <p>Local news bulletins: No change.</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.³

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;*
- (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*

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

(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.⁴

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.

(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;

*(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)). **Subject to the approval of a new approved area as defined in our letter to Ofcom dated 12th February 2019.***

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 policy⁵ and also Ofcom's Localness guidance, which includes our co-location and programme sharing policy.⁶

⁴ At https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0024/87405/The-regulation-of-Format-changes.pdf

⁵ Available at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0024/87405/The-regulation-of-Format-changes.pdf

⁶ Available at <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/radio/localness/>

a) 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:

Connect FM which broadcasts in the area of Kettering, Corby & Wellingborough, is a locally oriented music service aimed primarily at 25 to 44-year-olds. Under the existing approved programme sharing arrangement, the radio station shares all its programming content with the neighbouring Connect FM radio station covering Peterborough. This format change request seeks to change the music format to easy listening thereby increase the choice of listening in the area for the over 40's demographic.

The Kettering, Corby & Wellingborough area is served by 2 radio stations on FM: Connect FM which is aimed primarily at 25 to 44 year-olds and reaches 12%* of the area's population and Heart Four Counties, reaching 22%* of the area's population, also aimed at 25-44 year olds. In addition to the 2 FM stations Smooth Radio Four Counties radio on the AM frequency is to be rebranded to Gold Radio which will be aimed at the 35-54 age bracket, this station currently reaches just 5%* of the area's population with all production coming from London.

The two FM stations covering Kettering, Corby & Wellingborough are competing for the same 25-44 audience age bracket in Kettering, Corby & Wellingborough to the detriment of other age brackets in the area.

Gold Four Counties (Smooth) is on an AM frequency and as such considerably underperforms in audience reach compared to its FM counterparts. The poor reach of AM stations versus FM stations can be demonstrated by comparing Gold (Smooth) Radio Four Counties with the nearby Smooth branded East Midlands station on FM. Gold (Smooth) Radio Four Counties reaches just 5%* of adults aged 15+ in its broadcast area compared to the adjacent Smooth East Midlands radio station operating on FM, which has a 17%* reach of adults aged 15+.

The current FM stations overserve the 25 -44 age demographic and underserve other age brackets, narrowing the choice of listening for the Kettering, Corby & Wellingborough population as a whole. Our intention is to rebrand the Connect, Kettering, Corby & Wellingborough licence to Smooth radio which we believe will increase audience reach and choice for the over 40 age bracket and in doing so increase choice in the Kettering, Corby & Wellingborough area as a whole.

(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)).

All the programming and production for the station is currently produced in Kettering. Subject to the approval of a new approved area as defined in our letter to Ofcom dated 12th February 2019 future production will be from within the new approved area with programme sharing between the Kettering, Corby & Wellingborough licence (AL043), the Peterborough licence (AL245) and the East Midlands licence (AL277).

Local – Made Hours

The changes being requested to local made hours are consistent with Ofcom’s latest published localness guidelines.

*Source: RAJAR/Ipsos-MORI/RSMB period ending March 2019

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.

A6. Other commercial and community radio stations in the Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough licence area

Analogue commercial radio stations

[Heart \(Northampton\)](#)

[Gold \(Northampton\)](#)

Analogue community radio stations

[Corby Radio \(Corby\)](#)