

Title:

Mr

Forename:

Stephen

Surname:

Barrie

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:

What is it that we want from 'local radio'. I can't really see any dispute here - we already have enough radio stations covering the UK and providing us with news and views from around the planet. What we need from a 'local radio' is what we don't get - stuff specifically about North Devon and Torridge.

The people need to feel ownership of the station and kinship with its presenters, the non-music content being drawn from the local area and the local people. The material should be distinct from national coverage and be relevant to the local area. The listener should get a feel for the characteristics of the area and the output should be important and of specific interest

to the local population. i.e. "radio about the people by the people for the people". If I'm wrong, please let me know.

Now, as both stations are already broadcasting it is extremely easy for anyone to listen, as I have, and decide for themselves whether either or both meet these criteria.

First there is "Heart - North Devon".

The non-music content has no particular connection with North Devon or Torridge nor the people living there as the same material is broadcast throughout the UK. The listener gets no feel for the area because the area is never mentioned and the output is not of specific interest to the local people. Even the majority (about 64% when I listened) of advertising is not specific to the area covered. Recently Heart made a statement about their strong commitment to the region and supporting this by quoting the number of news stories about North Devon put out over since the beginning of May. On close inspection this amounted to approx 1.5 stories per day - the fact that they consider this to be 'strong commitment' is an indicator of their understanding of 'local radio'.

So, from a broadcasting perspective, it just ain't 'local radio'.

Perhaps we can get further insight into the philosophy of this company by looking at the website which presumably supports the station.

Again, it is primarily a UK content based site - virtually identical in all regions. The small 'Local News' and 'Devon Today' sections were (on the days I checked) almost entirely about South Devon, primarily Plymouth (a problem we also face with the regional TV channels). In the 'Events' section there was a noticeable lack of relevant material and the presenters' blogs contained nothing about North Devon or Torridge.

Their latest offers are too little & too late - the evidence is out there. Heart is not a 'local' station, it does not understand or satisfy the needs of the local area. Their past record clearly shows their real priorities - they do not and never will put the needs of the people of North Devon first.

Conversely, when we listen to "Festival fm" we find that it IS North Devon.

The studio is in Barnstaple - local people can visit whenever they wish. Many of the presenters have a history in North Devon, the non-music content is about the area, 100% of the advertising comes from local business, the considerable interaction with the local people (phone, text, Facebook, Twitter) is about the area, and the website is about the area.

In short, it is exactly what we want from a 'local radio' - stuff about us.

North Devon and Torridge may be part of the county of Devon but it is as far removed from South Devon as it is from the surface of the moon. The landscape, the climate, the culture, the industry, the occupations and the interests of the population are all peculiar to North Devon. The people of North Devon deserve a dedicated radio station which is functional and relevant to their everyday lives - local changes in weather conditions, instant updates on road closures & traffic jams, etc. We got this with 'Festival fm' because the listeners became part of the radio team and the station presenters understood the importance of interaction with the listeners.

It is not possible for anyone to look at this issue objectively and come to the conclusion that allowing Global to supply North Devon's 'local radio' station from South Devon is in the interests of the people of North Devon. It's a 'no brainer'.

I believe the people of North Devon, given a genuine opportunity to voice their opinion, would vote overwhelmingly for a 'true local radio'. I challenge OFCOM to visit North Devon and speak to the people they purport to be supporting - am I being naive, are not OFCOM supposed to be protecting our interests?

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.:

n/a

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.:

n/a

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.

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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.:

n/a

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.:

OFCOM should NOT approve the request from Now Digital.

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