
Communicorp radio stations in the East Midlands and Peterborough

Request to create a new approved area

STATEMENT

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Contents

Section

1. Overview	1
2. The approved area request	2
3. Assessment and decision	3

Annex

A1. Map of the East Midlands and Peterborough approved area	4
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1. Overview

Most local analogue commercial radio stations are required to produce a certain number of hours of locally-made programming. Under legislation passed in 2010, these stations are not only able to broadcast their locally-made hours from within their licence area, but may also broadcast from studios that are based within a wider area approved by Ofcom. These wider areas are known as ‘approved areas’. Stations can share their local hours of programming with other stations located in the same approved area.

In October 2018 Ofcom introduced, following consultation, a new set of larger approved areas in England¹ to give stations more flexibility in their broadcasting arrangements. We also said that we would consider requests from licensees to create new, bespoke, approved areas since the statutory framework allows for an approved area in relation to each local analogue service.

What we have decided – in brief

Following consultation, Ofcom has authorised a new approved area for the following FM local radio licences owned by Communicorp UK Limited (‘Communicorp’):

- East Midlands (Smooth Radio)
- Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough (Connect FM)
- Peterborough (Connect FM)

Following this decision, we have also approved Format change requests for the Connect FM services in [Peterborough](#) and [Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough](#) which will allow them to provide their locally-made programming from anywhere within this new approved area, and to share this programming with each other and also with the East Midlands service. The two Connect FM services will be rebranded as ‘Smooth Radio’ as a result.

¹ The October 2018 statement maintained the previous single approved area for Northern Ireland. In March 2019 a statement was published on the approved areas in Scotland and Wales.

2. The approved area request

‘East Midlands and Peterborough’ approved area

- 2.1 In February 2019, Ofcom received a request from Communicorp asking that Ofcom designates an approved area, which has been labelled as ‘East Midlands and Peterborough’, as an approved area for the purposes of section 314 of the Communications Act 2003, for the following FM radio licences:
- East Midlands (Smooth Radio)
 - Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough (Connect FM)
 - Peterborough (Connect FM)
- 2.2 A map of the East Midlands approved area, as proposed by Communicorp, which covers parts of the Ofcom Central, East of England, South of England and Yorkshire & Lincolnshire approved areas, is in the Annex.
- 2.3 In its request, Communicorp said the new approved area would be appropriate in relation to the three local licences concerned, based on the proposed area being smaller than the existing areas which have already been approved by Ofcom for the licences, and considerations of geographical, infrastructure and business links between the station transmission areas.
- 2.4 Ofcom’s preliminary view of Communicorp’s request was that we were minded to approve the new East Midlands approved area for the three local FM licences listed above.
- 2.5 Our preliminary view was based upon the fact that:
- the proposed new area is smaller geographically and in term of population than each of the existing approved areas in which the stations are located (as listed at paragraph 2.2).
 - the areas served by the three stations which would share this proposed new approved area (i.e. the East Midlands; Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough in Northamptonshire; and Peterborough in Cambridgeshire) have geographic links in that they are in adjoining counties with significant transport links.

3. Assessment and decision

Consultation responses

- 3.1 In our consultation published on 26 July 2019, we asked whether, for the purposes of where locally-made programming may come from, Ofcom should approve the requested area proposed by Communicorp.
- 3.2 We received no responses to the consultation.

Decision

- 3.3 We have therefore decided to approve the new area requested by Communicorp, for the reasons set out in our preliminary view in the consultation.
- 3.4 Following this decision, we have also approved Format change requests for Connect FM services in [Peterborough](#) and [Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough](#). These will allow the Connect FM services to provide their locally-made programming from anywhere within this new approved area, and to share this programming with each other and also with the East Midlands service. The two Connect FM services will be rebranded as 'Smooth Radio' as a result.

A1. Map of the East Midlands and Peterborough approved area

