



## News

<b>Type of case</b>	Broadcast Standards
<b>Outcome</b>	Resolved
<b>Service</b>	Air
<b>Date &amp; time</b>	18 March 2026, 10:00
<b>Category</b>	Commercial communications on radio
<b>Summary</b>	Material that implied a commercial arrangement was included in a local news bulletin. Given the actions taken by the broadcaster to prevent recurrence, we considered the matter resolved.

## Introduction

AIR is a community radio station serving the Weymouth area. The licence for the service is held by Air FM CIC (“AIR” or the “Licensee”).

Ofcom received a complaint about the following material broadcast during local news bulletins between 10:00 and 14:00 on 18 March 2026:

*“Weymouth’s premier Grey Ranks Amateur Boxing Club has now confirmed its Spring event. The Summer Thunderstorm Boxing Show will be held on Saturday 2 May in the Ocean Room at Weymouth Pavilion. Doors open at 6 O’clock with the first bout kicking off at 7. The night will feature 15 amateur bouts showcasing many local fighters including Grey Ranks’s own Scot Lions, amongst the rising talent. Tickets are selling fast and available through Grey Ranks Boxing and Air Dorset”.*

Ofcom considered the material raised potential issues under the following rule of the Code:

Rule 10.3: “No commercial reference, or material that implies a commercial arrangement, is permitted in or around news bulletins or news desk presentations”.

Ofcom requested comments from the Licensee on how the material complied with this rule.

## Response

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AIR did not provide a formal response to our request. However, when supplying Ofcom with a recording of the content, it also provided the following comments.

AIR said that it had carried out a full internal review and acknowledged that towards the end of the item, there was a “reference directing listeners to obtain tickets for an upcoming event”.

The Licensee explained that the inclusion of information about the boxing event in the news bulletin was intended to “support a local community and charitable initiative” and was of “local relevance”. However, it accepted that the wording used “went beyond purely editorial context and could reasonably be interpreted as promotional within a news bulletin”.

The Licensee said that this item was part of its local news coverage and confirmed there was “no commercial arrangement, payment, or sponsorship associated with the content at any stage”.

However, the Licensee recognised that including ticketing information risked “undermining the clear separation required between editorial content and promotion within news programming”. As a result, it said it had taken immediate remedial steps, which included:

- reinforcing the requirements of the Broadcasting Code with all presenters, contributors and volunteers;
- updating its editorial guidelines to prohibit calls to action, ticketing details, or any promotional language within news bulletins; and
- introducing additional editorial oversight for locally produced news content prior to broadcast.

In conclusion, the Licensee said that it remained “fully committed to delivering high quality, locally relevant news while maintaining strict compliance with Ofcom’s Broadcasting Code”. It added that it appreciated “the opportunity to review and strengthen [its] processes” and had “taken clear steps to prevent any recurrence”.

## Decision

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The Communications Act 2003 requires Ofcom to have regard to “...the desirability of maintaining the independence of editorial control over programme content”. This is particularly important in the context of news, in which audiences expect broadcasters to maintain the highest standards of editorial independence, free from any suggestion of commercial influence. Rule 10.3 therefore prohibits any commercial reference, or material that implies a commercial arrangement, in or around news bulletins (subject to specific exceptions). This is to ensure that news bulletins are not distorted, or perceived by listeners to be distorted, for commercial purposes.

In this instance, the news bulletin, which was broadcast hourly between 10:00-14:00, featured a story about a local boxing event and included the following statement: *“Tickets are selling fast and available through Grey Ranks Boxing and Air Dorset”*.

Ofcom accepted that information about a local sporting event was likely to be of interest to the listeners of a community radio station. Ofcom took into account AIR’s statement that there was “no commercial arrangement, payment, or sponsorship associated with the content”. However, Ofcom

considered that the ticketing information, which highlighted the possible limited availability of tickets and signalled where listeners could purchase them, was promotional in nature. In Ofcom's view, the promotional detail provided had the potential to imply a commercial arrangement in the news bulletin, contrary to the requirements of Rule 10.3.

Ofcom acknowledged AIR's apparent commitment to "delivering high quality, locally relevant news" while ensuring compliance with the Ofcom's Broadcasting Code. We also took into account that, when notified of the complaint, AIR recognised the compliance risks associated with presenting the story in this manner within the local news bulletins and promptly put in place measures to prevent recurrence. Ofcom's Decision is therefore that the matter is resolved.

**Decision: Resolved**