
Bauer Radio stations in the south and west of England

Request to create a new approved area

STATEMENT

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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 instead broadcast from studios that are based within a larger area approved by Ofcom. These wider areas are known as ‘approved areas’. Stations can also share their local hours of programming with other stations located in the same approved area.

Ofcom has approved an area for every local radio licence in the UK, to give stations more flexibility in their broadcasting arrangements. However, a licensee can ask Ofcom to approve or change a bespoke area, since the statutory framework allows for an approved area in relation to each local analogue service.

What we have decided

Bauer Radio has asked Ofcom to move the Shaftesbury local FM licence from the existing ‘South West England (Bauer)’ approved area into the ‘South of England (Bauer)’ approved area.

Following consultation, Ofcom has agreed this request, meaning that the ‘South of England (Bauer)’ approved area now comprises the following 13 licences: Alton & Haslemere; Andover; Aylesbury; Basingstoke; Bournemouth; Chichester; Newbury; Reading; Salisbury; Shaftesbury; Solent; Surrey & North East Hampshire, and; Weymouth & Dorchester.

Following this decision, we have also approved a Format change request for the Shaftesbury licence, currently broadcasting as ‘Greatest Hits Radio’, which will allow it to provide locally-made programming from anywhere within the ‘South of England (Bauer)’ area, and to share this programming with the services provided under the other licences which comprise the approved area listed above.

2. The approved area request

2.1 In August 2020, we received a request from Bauer Radio asking that Ofcom add the Shaftesbury licence to the **'South of England (Bauer)'** approved area, and remove it from the **'South West England (Bauer)'** approved area, for the purposes of Section 314 of the Communications Act 2003. The creation of the current 'South of England (Bauer)' approved area had been approved by Ofcom a month previously in July 2020, following consultation. If approved by Ofcom, the modified 'South of England (Bauer)' approved area would include the following FM local radio licences:

- Alton & Haslemere (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Andover (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Aylesbury (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Basingstoke (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Bournemouth (Fire Radio)
- Chichester (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Newbury (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Reading (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Salisbury (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Shaftesbury (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Solent (Wave 105)
- Surrey & North East Hampshire (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Weymouth & Dorchester (Greatest Hits Radio)

2.2 The Shaftesbury licence currently sits within the 'South West England (Bauer)' approved area. Under the proposal, the South West England (Bauer) approved area would be slightly reduced in size and would now include the following FM radio licences:

- Bath (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Bridgwater & West Somerset (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Bristol (Sam FM)
- Bristol (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Cheltenham (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Cornwall (Pirate FM)
- Swindon (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Torbay (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Warminster (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Weston-super-Mare (Greatest Hits Radio)
- Yeovil (Greatest Hits Radio)

2.3 In its request, Bauer Radio provided reasons why it believed the Shaftesbury licence would be better placed in the South of England (Bauer) area, based on listener feedback and the affinities between the station areas concerned.

- 2.4 Ofcom's preliminary view of Bauer Radio's request, as set out in our [consultation](#), was that we were minded to approve the request. This was based upon the fact that we accepted Bauer's argument that moving the Shaftesbury licence into the South of England (Bauer) approved area would link it with other stations owned by Bauer in the county of Dorset which are likely to have common listener affinities.

3. Assessment and decision

Consultation responses

- 3.1 In our consultation on Bauer’s request published on 25 September, we asked whether, for the purposes of where locally-made programming may come from, Ofcom should approve the new approved area requested by Bauer.
- 3.2 We did not receive any responses to the consultation.

Analysis and conclusion

- 3.3 In the absence of any consultation responses, we are not changing our preliminary view that we set out in the consultation.
- 3.4 Following this decision, we have also approved a Format change request from Bauer relating to the Shaftesbury licence which will allow it to provide its locally-made programming from anywhere within the ‘South of England (Bauer)’ approved area, and to share this programming with any of the licences which comprise the new approved area.