

Campbell, Mr Janyah

**Question 1: Should local radio station Capital FM (Birmingham) be permitted to make the changes to its Character of Service as proposed with particular regard to the statutory criteria as set out in the summary? (The Broadcasting Act 1990 Section 106 (1A) (b) and (d) relating to Format changes). :**

No, despite the amendment to the proposal, I do not feel the format change should be allowed to go ahead because it is effectively changing a station that was licensed as a minority station for African Caribbean communities to change into a mainstream rhythmic pop station that is already adequately provided by Radio 1 and BRMB and now even more increasingly by Heart too, as well as the various DAB services available in the area such as Choice, Kiss, Heat, BFBS and BBC 1Xtra.

I recall that 2 listener complaints led to a Content Sampling Report concluding that the level of pop and popular dance in Galaxy 102.2's output had reached the level of acceptability. This was back in November 2008. Since then, following the rebrand to Capital, there has been a further drop in specialist African Caribbean and urban music output as the rebrand led to the axing of Steve Sutherland's Saturday night (21:00-00:00) specialist urban music programme. It has also led to 3style's Friday night (23:00-02:00) local opt-out urban programme being replaced by a national Sunday early morning (02:00-05:00) programme which does not cover the same genres of music previously covered when the local opt-out existed. There has also been a gradual increase in the amount of popular dance and pop music in daytimes despite Ofcom stating that this was already at the limit in 2008, therefore I would say that the station as it is today is already operating out of format and the station has failed to take into account the concerns that this Content Sampling Report highlighted.

Ofcom stated in the above Content sampling Report that they would expect roughly three-quarters of the daytime output to sit relatively well with the label 'urban'. I believe that any format change should continue to ensure that this remains the case and the word 'rhythmic' should be replaced by the word 'urban' in the station format.

The station also appears to be doing little off-air for the community that it was set up to serve nowadays; so far there has been no mention of Black History month this year despite this always getting a mention when the station was Galaxy and broadcast from Birmingham throughout the day.

I do not agree with the proposal to cut specialist output to just 12 hours a week, especially when the current specialist output is only taking place during the early morning hours of weekends plus some dance remixes of pop songs during the overnight show on weekdays to somehow meet the current 26 hour requirement for Birmingham and 30 hour requirement for Scotland. I am certain that this change would lead to specialist shows only taking place in the early morning at weekends when no-one will hear the output so the station will sound as though there is no specialist output to the average listener. It would also allow the dance remixes on weekdays to be dropped in favour of non-stop pop hits all night long. Also the addition of programmes with specific appeal to African and Afro-Caribbean listeners to the proposal does not go far enough as it does not specify how much programming will be aimed at this group of listeners who are the primary target of the current licensed station format. I would only be happy with the new proposal if the words 'a rhythmic-based music-led service' were amended to read as 'an urban music-led service.' This would ensure that the station remains distinct to its competitors on both a local and regional/national level in the Birmingham area and would prevent the reduction of listener choice that the current proposal would bring about over time.

**Additional comments:**

I would also like to say that I am not happy with the way the complaint from a listener about Capital Scotland has been put on hold just because the station has applied for a format change request. The complaint concerns the station's output from before these proposals were made and in any case the station is still bound to be operating within its current published format so I do not see why the investigation has had to be put on hold while the consultation process is going on regarding the format change. As far as I know, a format change cannot be applied retrospectively, so the format change request whether granted or not should not affect the way a complaint is handled and the way a station is punished.

Regarding Capital Birmingham, I believe the new proposal is still not a suitable replacement for the existing format. If Global cannot operate 9 stations with very different types of format under a single brand, then perhaps they should consider dividing the Capital network up into 2 separate networks so that those with a requirement for specialist output can do so without this in London, the East Midlands, South East England and South Wales can have a true hit music station that isn't biased towards rhythmic music, and the remaining ex-Galaxy and ex-XFM stations can have a rhythmic dance/urban/rock output with proper specialist music programmes instead of just dance remixes. If Global can't run Capital Birmingham in format then they ought to sell the station off to someone who can e.g. Bauer who can convert it to Kiss without any competition issues. Even Orion would do a better job of the station.