

Name Withheld 4

Capital FM (Birmingham)
F.A.O. Paul Boon
Senior Radio Executive
Ofcom Riverside House 2A
Southwark Bridge Road
London
SE1 9HA

10 October 2011

Dear Mr Boon,

Re: Format Change Request, Capital FM (Birmingham)

I should like to object to the request by Global Radio Holdings Ltd to change the Character of Service of the Capital FM Birmingham license.

The proposed changes will leave the Birmingham area without a city-wide FM Urban Contemporary music station and result in a narrower range of programmes in the area, especially those aimed at persons of African or Afro-Caribbean origin.

The community stations which have come on air since the licensing of Buzz FM 102.4 and Choice FM 102.2 have very limited coverage and by definition are small-scale with limited reach. Indeed, in my area of Birmingham I receive no indoor FM coverage of New Style Radio and Big City Radio. As such, the Capital FM license plays an important role serving the city.

Ofcom (and the Radio Authority) has in the past acknowledged that the Birmingham license should reflect the black culture of the area. The previous license held by Buzz FM was reprimanded many times for failing to provide this, and we now appear to be in a similar situation with Capital FM Birmingham's current output.

In a previous Format Change Request

(<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/broadcast/radio-ops/formats/galaxies.pdf>) Ofcom notes the following: "We would make special mention of the Galaxy station based in Birmingham. This station has always – even before it became a Galaxy station – carried a strong remit to reflect the black culture of the area. Notwithstanding the points made within the letter of support from Global we do not agree with the implication that this remit can be carried out solely through the station's music – and, therefore, will be expecting the Galaxy station in Birmingham to be reflecting this part of their coverage in output other than simply dance music during locally made hours."

In Ofcom's November 2008 Content Sampling Report

(<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/broadcast/radio-ops/sampling/galaxy1022.pdf>) Ofcom again found that under the Galaxy 102.2 brand that "the Birmingham station must retain its African, Afro-Caribbean and urban points of difference, which the information and speech output does help establish. However, we conclude that while the station is at present

operating within its Format, that would no longer be the case if pop and dance tracks encroach further.” Capital FM is clearly defined as a popular-music based station, rather than one specialising in Urban genres such as Soul, Reggae, Soca, Rn’B, Blues and Gospel. The removal of the current requirements for urban music would leave listeners with less choice.

The proposed new character of service would not require the station to cater for urban contemporary black music during daytime hours. In fact, the reference to “at least 12 hours of identifiable specialist music programmes” only makes a casual reference to include something for listeners of African or Afro-Caribbean origin (as little as one or two songs a week are required if adhering strictly to the proposed change)

Attached is a leaflet provided by Chrysalis Radio when it took over the Birmingham license from Choice FM. At that time, the new owners went to great lengths to ensure specialist programmes would continue. They stated:

Q: Will there still be specialist programming featuring Reggae, Soca and Gospel?

A: Yes. In fact, we’re planning to increase the amount of specialist programming on the station.

Capital FM’s new proposal would remove any requirement to play these genres.

Ofcom should reject the proposed change and instead enforce the current Format, perhaps by comparing the output to that of Global Radio’s Choice FM station in London (which appears to have a similar Character of Service as the Birmingham license, yet has very different output to Capital FM), perhaps modify the Character of Service to make specific references to Afro-Caribbean genres such as Reggae, Soul and Gospel and the amounts which must be played, or by re-advertising the license to allow another commercial organisation to provide the Character of Service which was originally intended for Birmingham.

I do hope that Ofcom rejects the proposed change for reasons detailed above.

Yours sincerely,

NAME AND ADDRESS WITHHELD

Encl.

Choice 102.2 FM... Your Questions Answered

You may have heard recently that Choice 102.2 FM has been sold by its original owners, Soul Media, to Chrysalis Radio. This information leaflet explains Chrysalis Radio's plans for the station in more detail.

Who are Chrysalis Radio?

We are part of the Chrysalis Group, the U.K. Media and Music Company. We first became involved in radio here in Birmingham, where we launched 100.7 Heart FM. We also now own stations in London, Bristol, Manchester, Leeds and Newcastle.

Why has Chrysalis bought Choice 102.2 FM?

We believe Choice 102.2 FM has the potential to be a great radio station, and as a successful public company, we have the ability and resources to invest in the programmes, facilities and marketing needed to achieve this.

What will change at Choice 102.2 FM

Whilst the general character of the station's programming will stay the same, we'll be talking to listeners more about what they want to hear and increasing our community activity. We'll also be bringing in one or two major specialist DJ names to improve the range of programmes, and will be setting up a training academy to help people get into the radio business. We're also planning to build a new state-of-the-art studio complex for the station.

However, the biggest change you'll notice on-air will be a new name for the station, Galaxy 102.2.

Why are we changing the name to Galaxy 102.2?

We already operate Galaxy stations in other parts of the country, all of whom play a similar mix of R&B, soul and dance music to Choice 102.2 FM. When Choice 102.2 FM becomes part of this network of Galaxy stations it will be able to attract more advertisers, particularly national ones, which in turn will allow us to put more money back into programming and the community.

We plan to introduce the new name in January next year.

What will happen to the current DJs on Choice 102.2 FM?

They'll still be on the station, along with one or two new names. Incidentally, once the new studios are completed, they'll sound even better!

Will all my favourite programmes on Choice 102.2 FM disappear?

No. Chrysalis has told the Radio Authority (the body which governs commercial radio) that we will continue to operate the station under its existing "Promise of Performance". This guarantees both the types of music that we will play during the day, and specific specialist programmes.

We're also planning to strengthen our local news output, and we'll be continuing our evening bulletin of news of special interest to our Afro-Caribbean listeners.

What music will the station play in the future?

Regular listeners to Choice 102.2 FM already enjoy a mix of R&B, Dance, Soul and Reggae. This will continue under the Galaxy name, and we'll be introducing continuous research into what listeners like to ensure that we get it right.

Will there still be programmes featuring Reggae, Soca and Gospel?

Yes. In fact, we're planning to increase the amount of specialist programming on the station.

Will Galaxy 102.2 care about the community?

Yes, we believe that a successful radio station must be involved with the community it serves. We will publicise local events and help charities and community groups. We are also planning an "Academy" to teach young people radio skills, and give some of them their first "break" into the media. It's a great way to give something back to the City we serve.

Chrysalis Radio would like to hear from you if you have any comments to make or any further questions. Please write to:

Paul Fairburn, Chrysalis Radio, 1 The Square,
111 Broad Street, Birmingham, B15 1AS.