

James Vertigan
51 Maldon Road
London W3 6SZ

FAO ANDREA JACKSON
Exeter and Torbay Consultation
Ofcom
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA

8 June 2011

Dear Ms Jackson,

I am writing to you regarding Ofcom's proposals to extend coverage of the current Exeter and Torbay DAB multiplex into North Devon. I wish to vote 'no' to this proposal and have the current FM licence re-advertised to make it fair to all interested applicants, my reasons are explained in this letter.

I live in London, but have regularly visited the North Devon area all my life as I've had family there, so I know the area very well and have always tuned into the local radio service there, until recently.

Having read the consultation, and Ofcom's localness guidelines, I strongly disagree that what Now Digital Limited intend to provide in North Devon from the current output of the Exeter and Torbay multiplex constitutes a 'local' radio service for North Devon.

Also, some of North Devon's rural areas are shielded from reception of the proposed transmitter sites at Huntshaw Cross near Great Torrington, Barnstaple and Okehampton. Currently the ILR licence for North Devon transmits the same output on two FM frequencies, one from the transmitter at Huntshaw Cross with a relay on another frequency for the coastal resort of Ilfracombe.

From what I am led to believe, Ofcom's proposals would leave Ilfracombe with no local radio service at all when analogue radio is finally turned off as this transmitter has not been included in the proposed multiplex network.

Indeed, because of the topography of the area, Ilfracombe struggles for reception of BBC Radio Devon in some parts as this station doesn't have a relay for that area unlike Lantern FM (now Heart Devon) has.

These reception problems are not exclusively restricted to Ilfracombe though, as some other areas also find reception of some radio services difficult due to the local terrain and power restrictions placed on services. Digital radio in these areas would fare no better as local DAB multiplexes are quite low in power and because of its proximity to the coast, areas like North Devon are also subject to restricted reception so clearance can be given to operate on certain digital 'blocks' that will not cause interference to broadcast services in neighbouring countries such as Ireland or France.

The broadcasts of the commercial national and BBC national DAB multiplexes from Huntshaw Cross give a rough example of what reception an independent local multiplex would provide in the area, some areas struggle with these currently. Also, no matter how many transmitters you have in a multiplex broadcast chain, not every area is going to be able to receive a useable signal because of the hilly terrain. In a similar vein, reception of the major mobile phone networks in rural North Devon proves this.

The main town of Barnstaple is some 40 miles from the county city of Exeter, where the current 'local' independent radio service covering North Devon is broadcast from following Global Radio's

Tel: 020 8932 1995
Mobile: 07522 604 148
Email: jver10@aol.com

**James Vertigan
51 Maldon Road
London W3 6SZ**

decisions to merge the Heart branded stations. This is a ridiculous distance for a radio service to be called local.

Proper local radio broadcast from the local area and from people who know the areas they are serving is a must at times of emergencies like adverse weather and power cuts, particularly in large rural areas like North Devon, and this country's weather in recent winters has proved this. In the past, before being merged into a countywide service, Lantern FM were always very happy to provide up to date information from organisations and listeners about problems such as these.

Indeed, I know many who could receive the low powered broadcasts chose to tune to the RSL Festive FM in Barnstaple for news of school closures following heavy snowfall around the 2010 Christmas period, those involved worked extremely hard to put this service together and it was greatly supported by the local community and just proves that local radio produced in North Devon for North Devon works and is what is needed.

Having listened to the incumbent North Devon licence holder's output following the merging of the local stations into one countywide service, I do not believe the programming they are providing is what I would deem a local service, as it would appear North Devon is largely being forgotten about in local news and travel news inserts, with very little mention of what is happening, they are being pushed out by goings on in Exeter and Plymouth. This alienates listeners in North Devon.

Also, when networked programmes are broadcast from Heart's studios in London for the majority of the day, my feeling is this hardly constitutes a local feel to a radio station serving the North Devon area at all as these presenters will know next to nothing about North Devon, particularly as some of these networked programmes are fronted by minor celebrities who have probably never even visited the area.

About the only things local to North Devon during these networked programmes are the advertisements which are sent to the relevant transmitters from the main studio, but judging by the regulator's guidelines, Ofcom doesn't seem to class this as a local part of the output.

I am sure people in North Devon will also not want the 'genre focused' stations that are also broadcast on the multiplex as these are not relevant to the people of North Devon and seem a waste of bandwidth to me as they will get very few listeners in the area, the majority of these other services appear to just be relayed networks and automated jukeboxes from London. Also, I believe the proposed version of Capital FM on the multiplex will actually be a relay of the South Coast (Southampton) service which until recently was known as Galaxy, Southampton is even further from North Devon than Exeter is!

Yours Sincerely,



James Vertigan

**Tel: 020 8932 1995
Mobile: 07522 604 148
Email: jver10@aol.com**