

## **Desi Radio response to Ofcom's Future of Radio consultation**

We would like to take the chance in particular to respond to two of the points raised in the Future of Radio Consultation issued recently by Ofcom they are set out below:

**6.9\*: It is important for a community radio station not to receive all of its funding from a single non-commercial source. However, it may be that there is a case for increasing or removing the current maximum percentage limit on funding from a single non-commercial source. Ofcom welcomes views as to what the appropriate limit should be.**

The Panjabi Centre of which Desi Radio is a major project, is embedded in the community, and through the means of culture, language, practical activity it strives to engage with, build pride, confidence and success in our community, through operating training, organising cultural activity and events. These objectives are absolutely apparent in the way that Desi Radio sounds, operates and conducts itself.

At Desi Radio we are in the enviable and rare position of being approached by small, local businesses that are attracted to Desi Radios success, targeted programming and no doubt our low cost advertising. As Moira Goatley reported in her DCMS report 'Looking to the Future' Desi has to turn business away and may have unwittingly contributed to the demise of a number of small enterprises in our area.

Very many of the business's that do or desperately wish to advertise with us are small, very local and sometimes fragile, they are also very definitely part of the local community, a walk along Broadway or The Green in Southall would confirm these facts to anyone.

We believe that the current 50% limits that pertain to single sources of income should be raised significantly, in our case this would stabilise our financial base, allow more small local businesses to advertise and would reduce our need to turn to the public purse for funding which is grossly oversubscribed. It crucially, in turn would allow us to extend the range and delivery of our social gain objectives.

We feel that the debate about the viable future of Community Radio has focussed heavily on sources and limits of income, whilst this has been one of the defining factors of Community Radio, the ability to be able to deliver social gain objectives is crucial.

There are whole ranges of social gain objectives that others and we carry out. The regulator has the power, indeed the obligation to look at the ways in which Community Radio carries out its commitments; it should have the confidence to ease financial restrictions and free the sector to deliver these successes.

**6.10: It would be possible to take into account volunteer time when assessing the turnover of a community radio service. Ofcom welcomes views on this issue and on how the value of such input could be calculated.**

Desi Radio also observes the critical role volunteers play in the success of Community Radio; we feel strongly that this valuable role should indeed be valued. Recently figures show that our volunteer's time has a value of £201,713 per annum, the CMA using European Social Fund figures calculated this on our behalf.

Volunteer time is already 'counted' in many areas of the voluntary and community sector in the UK, we urge Ofcom to introduce a mechanism that allows volunteer time to be financially recognised in the funding mix that applies to Community Radio.

Ms Amarjit Khara

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## **Notes**

**The Panjabi Centre** exists to raise awareness of Panjabi language and culture, disseminate information and build capacity within and for the Panjabi community in the UK.

**Desi Radio** is a 24/7 community radio service broadcasting on 1602am in West London, Sky channel 0169 and on-line, the service features a wide variety of Panjabi music, news, guest interviews, community notices and information, drama and events programming. Volunteers, who are supported by a small staff team, run the service; Desi Radio is a project of The Panjabi Centre.