

# Minutes of the Ofcom / sector representative bodies

**Virtual meeting held on 4 November 2025**

---

## **In attendance**

Ofcom staff

**Welsh Community Radio Network (WCRN)**, Chair

**Cornwall Community Media Network**, Representatives

**Community Media Association (CMA)**, Chair and Representatives

**UK Community Radio Network (UKCRN)**, Chair

**Local DAB Association**, Chair

## **1. Welcome and quick round of intros**

- New attendees from CMA, Ofcom and the Local DAB Association were welcomed.
- It was explained that the purpose of the meeting is to exchange updates on our respective activities that support the sector and explore themes of relevance to the sector.

## **2. Ofcom update on licensing priorities**

- It was confirmed that work is underway to publish a consultation on radio licensing priorities in early 2026 – expected to be in January. This will overlap with the next Plan of Work (PoW) allowing stakeholders to contribute to both processes. The timing should enable a seamless transition between the completion of the SSDAB programme (expected to be in the summer of 2026) and any new initiatives we decide upon post-consultation.

## **3. Round table update from representative bodies**

- The group heard updates on recent/forthcoming activities from each of the representative bodies.

#### WCRN

- It was heard that the sector meeting held in Barry in September provided an opportunity for Welsh stations to share experiences and collaborate on future initiatives. The meeting followed Welsh Government support which has also enabled the creation of a report into the state of the sector.
- The session on the Community Radio Fund delivered by the Panel Chair was well received. It was agreed that this will be relayed to the Panel Chair.
- It was heard that WCRN and working closely with the Cornwall Community Media Network.

#### Cornwall Community Media Network

- It was heard that the current focus is on:
  - The 2026 volunteer recruitment drive which includes taster sessions and bootcamp with a view to filling various roles within the sector.
  - Preparations for the Community Radio Day in collaboration with the UKCRN/WCRN which will feature community news outlet, a dedicated news website.
- Work is also underway to exploring collaborative ways to support attract revenue streams that will benefit all six services in the area.

#### UKCRN

- An update was provided on the Public Interest News Forum.
- It was heard that one service has secured LDRS licence (BBC funded Local Democracy Reporter Scheme). This means that a BBC funded journalist is supporting local news reporting within community radio. The intention is to use this experience to support other services in future applications.
- An update was provided on the October 2025 National Conference which:
  - Offered 20 bursary spaces.
  - Included workshops, sessions i.e. a panel on future of community radio in collaboration with representative from CMA
  - Featured the Community Radio awards
  - Launched Community Radio Week due to take place in February 2026 inspired by the CHAOS Group's Community Radio Day. The week will be made up of themed days. CMA welcomed a conversation on ways to collaborate on this event.
- It was confirmed that videos of the sessions will be available to the sector in the coming weeks.

#### CMA

- It was confirmed that following the May 2025 AGM, Terry Lee has stepped down and Vijay has formally been appointed Chair of the CMA.
- An update was provided on the CMA festival in collaboration with BBC Salford to celebrate '20 years of Community Radio'. It was heard that the focus was on attracting a younger audience and Ofcom recognised university partnerships as a pathway to support sector sustainability.

- Highlights of the festival included:
  - A funding session which was led by a bid writer/funding officer and gave stations in attendance ideas of projects that attract funders in addition to diversity and wellbeing sessions
  - Speakers giving an overview of the direction of the sector
  - An interview with Jason Hardy from the BBC about his career and predictions about the future of community radio
  - AI session focussed on embracing the opportunities that it could bring – it was noted that AI may help with processes like compiling content but the need to be cautious from a compliance perspective.
  - The ‘CMARadio’ to enable people who couldn’t attend to access the conference
- It was agreed that CMA would review recordings of sessions and share a summary/findings with Ofcom, particularly in relation to AI.
- Following the increase in funding for the Community Radio Fund, the CMA ran three zoom sessions open to the whole sector. Just under 100 people signed up for the sessions. Each session featured the Community Radio Panel Chair, followed by a detailed analysis of the questions in the Community Radio Fund form, and finished with the views of a previously successful applicant.

#### Local DAB Association

- It was heard that the Local DAB Association, currently made up of approx. 50 members across the country, launched in early 2025 to champion Small-Scale DAB, address issues that arise and to support collaboration between small mux operators.
- It was noted that areas of challenge include:
  - 40% rule
  - Cost of PRS/PPL
  - Innovation
  - Financial
  - Research/limitations of RAJAR for smaller services
- It was suggested that CMA, UKRN and Local DAB Association continue discussions about the Real Audience Measurement System (RAMS), and other areas of potential mutual interest.

## 4. Sustainability of the Community Radio Sector

- General discussion in light approach of 20-year anniversary of the sector and need for succession planning.
- The following was noted in relation to succession planning and the future of the sector:
- The importance of promoting cross generational working / skills sharing alongside attracting younger people
  - Intergenerational projects and training was noted as a potential way to address the ongoing challenge of volunteer recruitment, especially for older licences.
  - Building projects with social gain attracts funding and building relationship with funding bodies – so potential need for more stations to adopt this

- Need for more uptake of the [Wavehill report on Measuring Social Gain in Community Radio](#)

## 5. Social Gain Research

- It was noted that services have not engaged with the report on [Measuring Social Gain in Community Radio](#) so still room for work for all to promote. Reference was made to the length of the report and it was suggested that sector-wide sessions or AI could be utilised as an aid to make the report more accessible.
- Next steps are subject to funding but could include pilot projects or mechanisms for the sector to share social gain project ideas that could attract funding.
- It was heard that the on-air social gain element has been trialled by one service (via logging of on-air interviews) demonstrating £21,000 of social impact which could be attractive for funders to match.
- It was noted that ideally funding should be for the delivery of the output and that being able to demonstrate on-air social gain element is useful to demonstrate the benefit of community radio services.
- Ofcom encouraged sector bodies to work together to assist services to engage with [the report](#), to utilise the Toolkit and to share experiences of others who have used the tools.

## 6) Funding restrictions and KC simplification

- Sector bodies were asked to share initial reflections of the impact of work in these areas. It was noted that:
  - complaints have reduced and complaints are being positioned from the perspective of the overall character of service
  - Services have been receptive to changes despite initial confusion once benefits were noted
  - The challenge is how to assess compliance in the context of social gain
- Sector bodies have a role to play in reaching out to services/having conversations with members on how to deliver social gain and KC compliance

## 7) Community Radio Fund

- An update was provided on the Fund, the current round, and the rationale for the introduction of the Minimal Financial Assistance question. It was explained that services must now confirm they haven't received more than £315,000 in public subsidies over the current and previous two financial years.
- It was noted that the recent round saw huge demand and the amount requested exceeded funds available.
- The importance of reading grant agreements and understanding requirements was reiterated in the context of mitigating risk of misspends and the time commitment required to recoup misspent funds.
- It was confirmed that Ofcom is currently undergoing a recruitment process to appoint an External Panel Member who will commence on 1 April 2026.

## 8) Media Act Part 6

- An update was provided on the implementation of Part 6 of the Media Act which aims to ensure audiences have access to online streams of licensed radio services through voice assistance.
- It was heard that a consultation and statement was published earlier this year on the principles and methods setting out the approach for deciding which voice assistance platforms fall within scope.
- It was heard that a consultation is currently open to determine the application of principles and methods which recommends to the Secretary of State that Amazon's Alexa, Google Assistance and Siri should fall into scope. The consultation deadline is 11 December.
- It was agreed that the link to the consultation will be shared with the group to provide opportunities for comment.
- It was heard that Code of Practice for Part 6 is also being developed which sets out a series of recommendations that designated voice assistants can follow in order to be compliant with the requirements. Stakeholder engagement is currently underway to gain an understanding of the industry and to inform this consultation will be launched in Spring 2026.
- It was agreed that Ofcom will contact representative bodies to understand the extent to which Community Radio services are available through voice assistance and how they are available.

## 9) AOB and close

- It was confirmed that Ofcom will explore the possibility of holding a series of stakeholder meetings in summer 2026. In response to this it was suggested that we should engage with Sector Bodies beforehand with a view to collaborating.