

Statement on the Award to Rock Radio

The advertised FM local commercial radio licence for an area within west central Scotland was awarded on 25 October 2016 to RockScot Limited (Rock Radio). Four applications were received:

- Caledonia Holdings Ltd (GO 96.3)
- Original 96 Glasgow Limited (Original 96 Glasgow)
- Radio Clyde Limited (Clyde Rocks), and;
- RockScot Limited (Rock Radio).

West central Scotland licence award decision

Ofcom considered the four licence applications against the four statutory local licence award criteria specified in section 105 of the Broadcasting Act 1990, which are set out in full in the second part of this statement.

In considering the four applications in relation to the statutory criteria, the decision makers were informed by input from the Ofcom Advisory Committee Scotland.

The Glasgow area within west central Scotland is a mature commercial radio market, having five established local analogue commercial radio services each covering a wide geographical area and six smaller community radio services within the advertised licence area. In the light of the nature of this market, Ofcom considered that –

- Section 105(b) – the extent to which a proposed service would cater for local tastes and interests; and
- Section 105(c) – the extent to which a proposed service would broaden listener choice,

were particularly important when considering the characteristics of the licence to be awarded and the applications for it.

Firstly, in considering the ability of the applicants to maintain their proposed services, Ofcom took account of the fact that the licence is for a service designed to provide coverage of a relatively large area (the adult population within the measured coverage area is estimated to be in excess of one million adults), but that this advantage was tempered by the degree of competition for both listeners and revenue which a new entrant operating within the licensed area would face. Ofcom however considered that each applicant company was able to draw upon adequate levels of financial support and operational experience, as required. Rock Radio's forecasts were modest by comparison to those of some of the other applicants and known data about existing services, reflecting its ambition to serve a niche market not fully exploited by the established local commercial radio competitors. Rock Radio also drew on first-hand experience of operating the former Paisley licence under the same name.

In considering the extent to which the Rock Radio service would cater for the particular tastes and interests of those living in the licensed area, Ofcom recognised the local appeal towards the wider rock music genre, which manifested itself in the research conclusions of

more than one applicant. In considering the four applications Ofcom also considered that the argument for a new service providing a distinct music proposition would better suit this market, and that this outweighed the argument for a service which, for example, sought to extend or build upon the familiar music and speech content such as that already delivered by the existing local commercial broadcasters. In addition, Rock Radio's proposal to serve rock music fans of all ages (rather than target a specific age demographic, for example) was balanced by the applicant's proposal to provide a music radio service that would be distinctive.

Ofcom considered that Rock Radio's proposed degree of niche programming of rock and other guitar-based music, together with the promise of a playlist driven heavily by Glasgow's live music scene, would broaden musical choice in the licensed area.

Finally, while each applicant produced evidence of demand for their proposed service by conducting bespoke market research, the decision makers considered that Rock Radio had articulated the clearest case in support of its proposals, due in part to its distinctive programming proposition. In addition, Ofcom noted that Rock Radio had garnered a significant level of support through an influential social media campaign.

The section below sets out the statutory requirements relating to analogue commercial radio licensing. The public versions of the four applications may be found at:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/manage-your-licence/radio-broadcast-licensing/radio-licence-awards-process/west-central-scotland>

Statutory requirements relating to the specific local licence award criteria

In considering the applications it receives for local commercial radio licences, Ofcom is required to have regard to each of the statutory criteria set out in section 105 of the Broadcasting Act 1990. These are as follows:

- (a) the ability of each of the applicants for the licence to maintain, throughout the period for which the licence would be in force, the service which he proposes to provide;
- (b) the extent to which any such proposed service would cater for the tastes and interests of persons living in the area or locality for which the service would be provided, and, where it is proposed to cater for any particular tastes and interests of such persons, the extent to which the service would cater for those tastes and interests;
- (c) the extent to which any such proposed service would broaden the range of programmes available by way of local services to persons living in the area or locality for which it would be provided, and, in particular, the extent to which the service would cater for tastes and interests different from those already catered for by local services provided for that area or locality; and
- (d) the extent to which there is evidence that, amongst persons living in that area or locality, there is a demand for, or support for, the provision of the proposed service.

The legislation does not rate these requirements in order of priority, but it may be that Ofcom will regard one or more of the criteria as being particularly important in view of the characteristics of the licence to be awarded and the applications for it.