
Community Radio

Four community radio licence awards: December 2019

[Four community radio licence awards: December 2019](#) – Welsh translation

STATEMENT:

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1. Overview

This document announces the award of four community radio licences.

The licences are for stations serving communities in England (in Shaftesbury, Dorset), Scotland (in Shotts, Lanarkshire) and Wales (one in Merthyr Tydfil and one in Towyn, Conwy).

2. Licence awards

- 2.1 During November and December 2019, Ofcom made decisions to award four community radio licences. The licences are for stations serving communities in England (in Shaftesbury, Dorset), Scotland (in Shotts, Lanarkshire) and Wales (one in Merthyr Tydfil and one in Towyn, Conwy).
- 2.2 All community radio services must satisfy certain 'characteristics of service' which are specified in legislation – Ofcom was satisfied that each applicant awarded a licence met these 'characteristics of service'. In addition, each application was considered having regard to statutory criteria, the details of which are described below. This statement sets out the key considerations in relation to these criteria which formed the basis of Ofcom's decisions to award the licences. Where applicable, the relevant statutory reference (indicated by the sub-paragraph number) is noted in brackets.

Applicants awarded a licence

- 2.3 Ofcom has made a licence award to each of the following:
- Alfred (Alfred Radio Limited), Shaftesbury, Dorset
 - Listen Lanarkshire (Getting Better Together Limited), Shotts in Lanarkshire
 - Merthyr Radio (The 3Gs Development Trust), Merthyr Tydfil County Borough
 - Sound Radio (Sound Radio Limited), Towyn (Conwy) and surrounding areas
- 2.4 These services will be licensed for a period of five years from the date of their launch, on FM.
- 2.5 As required by law, Ofcom was satisfied that the new services would not prejudice unduly the economic viability of any local analogue commercial radio service.

Alfred

- 2.6 Alfred will provide a service for the community of Shaftesbury in Dorset and the surrounding rural area. The applicant has members with experience both in broadcasting and editorial roles, demonstrated by their current provision of local news and features on its website. It proposes operating a low-cost station run by volunteers, which will be solely focused on speech-based content aimed at an older demographic. The applicant demonstrated how the service would cater to local tastes and interests (1b) by tailoring their proposed Key Commitments to accommodate feedback from their community, which was acquired by completing extensive consumer research prior to their application. The applicant provided some evidence of demand and support for their proposed unique service (1d), which will not be tied to a studio and will broadcast material direct from within the community. It has social gain objectives, for example the formation of a “think tank” to consider how to tackle social inclusion (1e) and demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a).

Listen Lanarkshire

- 2.7 Listen Lanarkshire serves the ex-mining communities of Shotts and surrounding villages. The applicant is a registered charity and already runs an online radio station. It has identified funding from a variety of sources, some of which is already secured. Ofcom was satisfied that the applicant had demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a). The programme service has a local focus in daytime with a broader Scottish appeal at night, catering to the tastes and interests of the target community (1b). The applicant company has 17 years' experience in providing a range of local facilities and will work with a variety of partners, such as local schools, youth groups, tenants' and residents' forums and sports clubs to bring social gain, such as training, to the target community (1e). The applicant, Getting Better Together, is a local charity organisation, who have a clear vision of how a community radio service will benefit the local residents. A steering group of people who live and work in the area will work with the board and station staff to ensure accountability and that the community focus remains (1f).

Merthyr Radio

- 2.8 Merthyr Radio will provide an inclusive local radio service for people in the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough area. The applicant has experience in running a not-for-profit company and has made links with existing radio services, in addition to forming a sub-group of members with interest in radio. Ofcom was satisfied that the applicant had demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a). The applicant proposes to have a varied music policy and a focus on life in the Merthyr area, with engagement with local businesses (1b). The applicant has existing links with the community and proposes a range of social gain objectives that will benefit the local area (1e). As an existing charity, the applicant provides well-evidenced information on how it will ensure accountability to its target community (1f).

Sound Radio

- 2.9 Sound Radio is for the communities of Kinmel Bay & Towyn, Abergele, Rhyl and surrounding towns and villages in the Vale of Clwyd. Members of the applicant group have experience of working in community radio and for the past two years have run a local online radio service. It has low set up costs, for which funding is secured, and already owns broadcasting and transmission equipment. Ofcom was satisfied that the applicant had demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a). A locally-focussed service is proposed with some Welsh language output. The proposals are built on the group's experience of broadcasting locally and cater for local tastes and interests (1b) as well as broadening choice locally (1c). The applicant demonstrated demand and support for its proposed service (1d).

3. Statutory requirements relating to community radio licensing

- 3.1 The following pages set out the statutory requirements relating to community radio licensing, and details of the licensing process. Further information about these, and detailed information relating to community radio, can be found in Ofcom's [Notes of guidance for community radio licence applicants and licensees](#).
- 3.2 In carrying out its functions, Ofcom is required to have regard to the general duties set out in section 3 of the Communications Act 2003. In addition, under section 85(2)(b) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 ("BA 1990"), it is the duty of Ofcom to do all that it can to secure the provision within the UK of a range and diversity of local radio services.

The characteristics of a community radio service

- 3.3 All community radio licensees must satisfy 'characteristics of service' requirements which are specified in Article 3 of the Community Radio Order 2004. The characteristics of community radio services are:
- that they are local services provided primarily for the good of members of the public, or of communities, and in order to deliver social gain, rather than primarily for commercial reasons or for the financial or other material gain of the individuals involved in providing the service;
 - that the service is intended primarily to serve one or more communities (whether or not it also serves other members of the public);
 - that the person providing the service does not do so in order to make a financial profit by so doing, and uses any profit that is produced in the provision of the service wholly and exclusively for securing or improving the future provision of the service, or for the delivery of social gain to members of the public or the community that the service is intended to serve;
 - that members of the community it is intended to serve are given opportunities to participate in the operation and management of the service; and
 - that, in respect of the provision of that service, the person providing the service makes himself accountable to the community that the service is intended to serve.
- 3.4 Article 2 of the Community Radio Order 2004 includes four mandatory "social gain" objectives. "Social gain" means the achievement, in respect of individuals or groups of individuals in the community that the service is intended to serve, or in respect of other members of the public, of the following objectives:
- the provision of sound broadcasting services to individuals who are otherwise underserved by such services;
 - the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion;

- the provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service; and
- the better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it.

3.5 Article 2 also includes a number of other objectives of a social nature which may be considered to represent "social gain".

Matters to which Ofcom shall have regard

3.6 There are seven matters set out in section 105(1) BA 1990 that Ofcom must have regard to when considering whether to grant a community radio licence. In summary these are:

- The ability of each applicant to maintain its proposed service over the licence period (section 105(1)(a)).
- The applicant's ability to cater for the tastes and interests of the target community (section 105(1)(b)).
- The extent to which each applicant would broaden the range of local radio services available in the area, and have a content distinct from those services (section 105(1)(c)).
- The extent to which there is evidence of local demand or support for a proposed service (section 105(1)(d)).
- The extent to which the service would deliver social gain benefits to the public or relevant community (section 105(1)(e)).
- Provisions for making the operator of service accountable to the relevant community (section 105(1)(f)).
- Provisions for allowing access by members of the public or the relevant community to the station facilities, and the provision of training in the use of those facilities (section 105(1)(g)).

3.7 In considering whether, or to whom (and on what conditions), to grant a community radio licence, Ofcom must also have regard to the need to ensure that any service provided under that licence does not prejudice unduly the economic viability of any other local commercial radio service.

3.8 Furthermore, without prejudice to the generality of that economic impact requirement, section 105(4) BA 1990 requires Ofcom to impose conditions to ensure, in effect, that any community radio service is prohibited from taking any relevant income from paid advertising and sponsorship of programmes except in the following respects:

- A 'fixed revenue allowance' totalling £15,000 per financial year of the licensee for such relevant income - this exception applies to any community radio service where that service overlaps with any local commercial radio service serving a potential audience of no more than 150,000 persons who have attained the age of 15 years or older.
- A 'fixed revenue allowance' totalling £15,000 per financial year of the licensee for such relevant income plus a proportion of the total relevant income (specified by Ofcom in

the licence), but which must not exceed 50% of the total relevant income (disregarding the fixed revenue allowance) for the licence in question in that year - this exception applies to all community radio services other than a community radio service referred to in (i) above. It should be noted that a community radio service that overlaps with any local commercial radio service serving a potential audience of no more than 150,000 persons who have attained the age of 15 years or older, which has at any time been varied pursuant to section 106(1A)(e) BA 1990, is also covered by this exception.

- 3.9 For the avoidance of doubt, programme sponsorship includes station or channel sponsorship, and commercial communications.

Process for assessment of applications

- 3.10 The Ofcom Board has delegated the discharge of certain of its functions in relation to television and radio broadcast licensing to one or more senior executives from Ofcom's Content & Media Policy Group. Each of those individuals, on their own or together, have responsibility for deciding on the award of community radio licences.
- 3.11 The decision-makers for these licence awards were Ofcom's Director, Broadcast Licensing and Programme Operations and Ofcom's four Principals, Broadcast Licensing.

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