
Community Radio

Three community radio licence awards: July 2020

STATEMENT:

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1. Overview

This document announces the award of three community radio licences.

The licences are for stations serving communities in Northampton, Northamptonshire.

2. Licence awards

- 2.1 On 16 July 2020, Ofcom made decisions to award three community radio licences. The licences are for stations serving communities in Northampton, Northamptonshire.
- 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. In particular, 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:
- Inspiration FM (Inspiration Radio Ltd), Northampton
 - Embrace (Creativity Media Services (Northampton) Ltd), Northampton
 - Revolution Radio (Revolution Radio Limited), Northampton
- 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.

Inspiration FM

- 2.6 Inspiration FM will broadcast a radio service that seeks to serve the underrepresented ethnic minority community in Northampton with the specific aim of promoting social inclusion. The service has been broadcasting for over 24 years, ten of which have been as an Ofcom licensed community radio station, which demonstrated its ability to maintain the service (1a). It intends to continue to cater for the tastes and interests of its existing listener base by focusing on music and speech output that is targeted at the community it intends to keep serving (1b), which also broadens the range of services that are available to listeners in Northampton (1c). The applicant demonstrated the vast demand and support it had acquired in this licence process, with programmes of work already agreed with local organisations to continue to facilitate and improve upon the significant role they play in the community (1d). Inspiration FM demonstrated the role it has been playing in providing social gain to its target community since it was first awarded a licence, in particular by highlighting the existing schemes they have in place with regards to accredited training that are offered to volunteers of the service in media skills, which has resulted in many volunteers acquiring paid positions within the radio sector (1e and 1g).

Embrace Radio

- 2.7 Embrace Radio is for all members of the community within Northampton, regardless of their ethnic background. The service has a successful online presence, while their directors demonstrated a broad range of essential skills such as radio engineering, history of running successful RSL licences along with sales and marketing experience, which all contributed to demonstrating its ability to maintain the service (1a). The applicant demonstrated how it intends to cater for the tastes and interests of the community it will serve by completing research and vox pops to identify the output which would be most useful for listeners, such as local news and information (1b). By facilitating local news regularly on the service, the applicant demonstrated its aspirations to work with local organisations whose primary purpose is to provide support to the residents of Northampton. Further, it demonstrated that it will be an important facilitator in these networks, bringing them (and local not-for-profit-organisations) more prominence in the local area which, in turn, will provide more social gain for the community (1e). The applicant demonstrated how it will be accountable to the community it intends to serve by explaining its intention to set up 'The Community Voice', which intends to facilitate listener engagement, including how listener feedback will be reported up the management chain and how this feedback will be reflected in the output of the service (1f).

Revolution Radio

- 2.8 Revolution Radio will serve the diverse ethnic communities of Northampton, but also intends to appeal to the wider mainstream audience to facilitate links with marginalised communities. The directors of the company all have extensive radio experience in both the commercial and community sectors, while their management team have a range of skills and experience that were essential in demonstrating their ability to maintain the service (1a). The applicant will dedicate specific programmes to broadcast music and speech output, which will appeal to a range of diverse communities within their area, while the ambition of the service is to promote social cohesion by providing a service that caters for a wide target demographic. Further, the applicant demonstrated how they had engaged in the community by completing research to demonstrate both how their service will cater for its target community and will broaden the range of services in the area (1b and 1c). The applicant provided significant evidence that their service will result in social gain to the target community (1e), such as the provision to promote social inclusion and recognition of different cultural identities, among many other aspirational targets to promote inclusion. The plans outlined by the applicant also demonstrated its commitment to education and training of staff and volunteers, with one director having significant experience in delivering a range of training which focuses on radio presenting, broadcast journalism, audio production, web development, sales, IT, presentation, photography and video skills. The applicant also demonstrated its intention to work with local school and media students at the University to provide practical and relevant experience, which highlighted how the service will provide access to training and facilities (1g).

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 Principal, Broadcast Licensing and Programme Operations.

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