

Small-scale radio multiplex licence

Application form – Part A (public)

Name of applicant (i.e. the body corporate that will hold the licence):

Niocom Associates Ltd (Niocom)

Multiplex licence area being applied for (note this must be a small-scale multiplex area currently being advertised by Ofcom):

Manchester



Proudly extending listener choice for Manchester since 2015

2. Extent of proposed coverage area

- 2.1 Provide a summary, fully consistent with the more detailed information about transmission sites supplied separately in Part B, of the coverage area proposed to be achieved by your technical plan. This should include a description of the target area you are seeking to serve within the advertised licence area, and also any areas you are aiming to serve outside the advertised licence area for this small-scale radio multiplex service. (You may refer to your coverage prediction in the response you provide):

Area Description

Manchester is a densely populated city, with a built-up centre falling within a relatively small geographical area confined within the M60 motorway.

Manchester and neighbouring Salford have continued to re-invent themselves over the past 10 years – becoming a contemporary metropolis with modern landmark buildings, thriving art and cultural scenes, fine dining and nightlife. The shopping too has come a long way with department stores now including Harvey Nichols and Selfridges, plus Louis Vuitton, Hermes, Barbour, Vivienne Westwood, Armani and DKNY.

There's world class performing arts at the Manchester Arena, the Palace, Opera House and Lowry theatres, major sporting events and festivals, the renowned Halle Orchestra at the state-of-the-art Bridgewater Hall and two of the Premiership's finest in Manchester United and Manchester City.

The skyline is now dominated not just by the 169-metre Beetham Tower but also the nearby Deansgate Square development where the 201-metre south tower has become the UK's tallest building outside London.

All of which explains why this northern light is widely recognised as the coolest city in Britain. It's an accolade that will be even more deserved in 2021 as the city emerges from COVID with the opening of Manchester Airport's £1 billion Terminal 2 extension.

Outside the city centre, the orbital towns of Stockport, Oldham, Bolton, Bury, and Wigan have all undergone unprecedented change in recent years, benefiting from improved communications and transport – notably the ever-expanding Metrolink tram network. Huge numbers of commuters drive in and out of the city centre each day so we attach great importance to ensuring that our signal is solid along all the arterial routes and around the M60 orbital motorway.

Coverage Objectives

Since the Ofcom trial began Niocom has established the Manchester DAB multiplex as a vibrant and compelling repository of new and interesting radio formats. Many of these are community services targeting specific areas within the city. It is important, therefore, that the DAB signal is strong and robust across the entire polygon.

Our transmission objectives for the permanent licence are as follows:

- Delivery of a reliable, consistent and high-quality DAB service to as much of the indoor population of the Manchester Polygon as possible;
- Working to the original DCMS/Ofcom objective to make DAB affordable for community radio, small independent commercial stations and start-up services.
- Achieving the above within a sustainable, long-term business plan.

The site we chose for the trial served us well. At launch in September 2015 Manchester One was, at 80 metres, the 8th tallest building in the city. Now it has been relegated to 30th position.

The construction of Manchester’s new generation of ‘super towers’ has, surprisingly, created as many challenges as it has opportunities. Whilst offer greater choice for antenna locations, these tall buildings present challenges for low-power radio frequency propagation creating areas of transmission shadows or ‘black spots’..

In light of the scale of change to Manchester’s skyline we decided to completely re-visit our transmission plans with the objective of providing solid coverage in the cluttered city centre whilst maintaining a strong signal throughout the densely populated area within the M60 orbital motorway.

Coverage Proposal

Accordingly, we have settled on a three-site SFN configuration centred on City Tower – the 123 metre office block in the city centre already hosts Digital One, BBC and Global/Bauer DAB transmitters and should eliminate any risk of ACI or hole punching as provides unobstructed omni-directional coverage from the heart of the city. Supporting City Tower will be two satellite TX locations - Ellison House in Ashton-under-Lyne (to provide supplemental coverage in densely populated east of the polygon) and Rountree House near Oldham (for improved reception in the north of the polygon). We have also identified a fourth site for coverage enhancement at a future date (see Future Planning annexe)

Both Ellison House and Rountree House are also being proposed by an applicant for the adjacent Oldham & Rochdale polygon. If awarded the licence we would use the common sites for a coordinated installation of equipment and for ongoing support.

2.2 Provide summary details of the sites required to achieve this coverage by completing the table below (add additional rows as required):

Site Name	NGR	Antenna (agl)	Antenna type and bearing	New/existing antenna	ERP
City Tower	SJ842981	120m	Dipole, 90deg ETN	New	35W
Ellison House	SJ932985	35m	OMNI - Colinear	New	50W
Rountree House	SD915045	55m	2-ele Yagi 220deg ETN	New	50W

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2.3 Please provide a coverage prediction map for the whole transmitter network you are proposing to build within 18 months if you are awarded a licence. The map should show the 63 dB μ V/m field strength and the advertised small-scale DAB licence area contour.

[Small-scale DAB licence areas in GIS format](#) are available on the Ofcom website.

A full coverage prediction map for the whole transmitter network is included in the annex. It shows the 63 dB μ V/m field strength (as well as the 54 dB μ V/m and 38dB μ V/m contours).

The ward-level population tables (2011 Census) indicate that at 63 dB μ V/m field strength;

- the number of people falling outside the polygon does not exceed 30% of the total population within the advertised licence area; and
- the proposed coverage does not overlap more than 40% of the population within the relevant local radio multiplex service's licensed area.

In proposing a SFN, Niocom has designed the network with a combination of directional/non-directional antennae and variable power levels to minimise any significant interference above both 38 dB μ V/m and 29 dB μ V/m to other proposed licences with the north west Macro area as well as small-scale DAB areas outside of the Macro area.

Specifically, with regard to frequency blocks 10B and 11C, the network has been designed to ensure that interference does not exceed 29dB μ V/m in these local multiplex areas: 10B - Derbyshire LRMS and East Wales; 11C - Birmingham LRMS, Isle of Man and South Yorkshire LRMS.



2.4 Please provide the following details of the prediction software used for your coverage assessments:

Provide the name and version of the prediction tool used.	ATDI HTZ Communications v22 6.9 x64
Detail the terrain model used by the software and its resolution.	DTM: Ordnance Survey terrain data – 50 metre resolution (DSM+DTM)
Detail the ground cover (clutter) data used by the software and its resolution.	Infoterra clutter data to 50m resolution
What propagation algorithm has been used?	Model pre-set – Fresnel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diffraction geometry – Deygout 94-2 • Subpath attenuation – coarse integration • FZ fraction 0.8 • Earth radius (sea and land) - 8,500km
Where multiple sites are proposed, describe what methodology has been used to assess the network (SFN) gain	Power sum
If these predictions have not used Ofcom-provided population data, state what population data has been used and its source.	Ofcom-provided population data has been used along with that from the 2011 Census which is included within ATDI's modelling software
Have your predictions been generated by a commercial organisation? If so, by whom?	Coverage predictions have been generated by Viamux using HTZ Communications software from ADTI.

3. Ability to establish the proposed service

Applicant's details

3.1 Name of applicant (i.e. the body corporate that will hold the licence):

Niocom Associates Limited

3.2 Company registration number stated on Companies House (if applicable):

08354576

3.3 For UK registered companies, the address of the applicant's registered office stated on Companies House. For non-UK registered companies, the principal office address:

20 Crewe Road, Sandbach, Cheshire, England, CW11 4NE

3.4 If a UK registered company, is the **current** Memorandum and Articles of Association document available on the Companies House website?

Yes

Ownership and control of company which will hold the licence

Details of officers

3.5 Please complete the following table, expanding it, if necessary, to provide the following details for each director or designated member of the applicant (i.e. the body corporate that will hold the licence):

Full name of individual	Correspondence address ¹	Country of residence	Other officerships held (and nature of the business concerned)	Other employment
David Duffy	20 Crewe Rd, Sandbach, Cheshire CW11 4NE	UK	Niocom Associates Ltd (Manchester small-scale DAB trial licensee) Niocast Digital Ltd (small-scale DAB operator) Viamux Ltd (small-scale DAB solutions provider) Cheshire Radio Ltd (not-for-profit awardee of the Mid Cheshire analogue licence and small scale DAB applicant) Manchester Community Radio Alliance Ltd	None
John Evington	20 Crewe Rd, Sandbach, Cheshire CW11 4NE	UK	Niocom Associates Ltd (Manchester small-scale DAB trial licensee) Niocast Digital Ltd (small-scale DAB operator) Viamux Ltd (small-scale DAB solutions provider) Cheshire Radio Ltd (not-for-profit awardee of the Mid Cheshire analogue licence and small scale DAB applicant)	None

¹ This should be the same address as is held and published by Companies House.

			Manchester Community Radio Alliance Ltd	
Manchester Community Radio Alliance Ltd	20 Crewe Rd, Sandbach, Cheshire CW11 4NE	UK	Niocom Associates Ltd (Manchester small-scale DAB trial licensee)	None

Details of participants

3.6 Complete the table, expanding it, if necessary, to list all bodies or individuals which hold or are beneficially entitled to shares, or who possess voting powers, in the applicant (i.e. the “participants”). If you are unable to provide a complete answer to this question in relation to beneficial owners, please state whether you have any reason to suspect the existence of any beneficial owners.

(If parts of this question are not applicable to the applicant – for example, because the applicant does not have shareholders – please respond “N/A” in the relevant parts of the table.)

Full name of participant (existing and proposed)	Number of shares	Total investment (£s)	Total investment (%)	% of voting rights
D Duffy	2450	2450	49	50
J Evington	2450	2450	49	50
H Duffy ¹	50	50	1	0
J Evington ¹	50	50	1	0
Comments				
¹ Non-voting class of shares				

Details of relationships of control

3.7 Complete the following table, expanding it, if necessary, to list any bodies corporate which are controlled by the applicant, any director of the applicant, any person/body corporate with control over the applicant, or any body corporate controlled by a person/body corporate controlling the applicant. Please include bodies corporate under joint control – i.e. which are controlled acting together in concert with third parties (e.g. because of a shareholder’s agreement):

(If this question is not applicable to the applicant please respond “N/A” in the table.)

Full name of body corporate	Address	Person/body controlling the entity (i.e. the applicant itself or its associate)
N/A	N/A	N/A

Details of persons who control the applicant

- 3.8 Complete the table, expanding it, if necessary, to list all persons/bodies corporate who control the applicant, or control any person/body corporate with control over the applicant. Please include persons or bodies that control the applicant (or body corporate with control over the applicant) jointly i.e. acting together in concert with third parties (e.g. because of a shareholder’s agreement). Please note that some of this information may repeat information provided above on shareholders and other participants in the applicant:

(If this question is not applicable to the applicant please respond “N/A” in the table.)

Full name of person/body corporate	Address	Person/body controlled by the entity (i.e. the applicant itself or its associate)
N/A	N/A	N/A

- 3.9 Complete the following table, expanding it, if necessary, to list other bodies in which any individual listed in response to question 3.8 is a director or designated member:

(If this question is not applicable to the applicant please respond “N/A” in the table.)

Full name of individual	Name of body in which individual is a director or designated member
N/A	N/A

- 3.10 Complete the following table, expanding it, if necessary, to list all bodies corporate which are controlled (including jointly controlled) by any body corporate listed in response to question 3.8:

(If this question is not applicable to the applicant please respond “N/A” in the table.)

Full name of body corporate listed in 3.8	Body corporate controlled
N/A	N/A

3.11 In relation to each body corporate identified in response to question 3.8, complete the table, expanding it, if necessary, to list all bodies which hold or are beneficially entitled to shares, or who possess voting powers, in the body corporate concerned (i.e. “participants”). You may, but are not required to, exclude from this table any bodies listed in response to question 3.8. If you are unable to provide a complete answer to this question in relation to beneficial owners, please state whether you have any reason to suspect the existence of any beneficial owners.

(If this question is not applicable to the applicant please respond “N/A” in the table.)

Name of body corporate identified in response to question 3.8	N/A			
Full name of participant	Number of shares	Total investment (£s)	Total investment (%)	% of voting rights
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Comments				

Involvement of the applicant in specified activities

3.12 Please state below whether the applicant, or any individual or body corporate identified in questions 3.5 to 3.11 is, or is involved in, any of the below, and the extent of that interest.

Activity/involvement	Yes or No	Please state who is involved; the name of the body/individual/agency they are involved with; and the extent of their involvement
A local authority	No	N/A
A body whose objects are wholly or mainly of a political nature, or which is affiliated to such a body	No	N/A
A body whose objects are wholly or mainly of a religious nature; ²	No	N/A

² Please refer to Sections 3 to 5 of Ofcom’s religious guidance note at: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0028/88219/Guidance-for-religious-bodies.pdf for details on how we determine the eligibility of religious bodies to hold certain broadcasting licences.

An individual who is an officer of a body falling within (b) or (c);	No	N/A
A body corporate which is an associate (as defined in paragraphs 1(1) and 1(1A) of Part I of Schedule 2 to the Broadcasting Act 1990) of a body falling within (b) or (c);	No	N/A
An advertising agency or an associate of an advertising agency	No	N/A

Details of applications, licences and sanctions

3.13 Please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the following questions about the applicant (i.e. the body corporate that will hold the licence):

(a) Is the applicant a current licensee of Ofcom?

No

(b) Has the applicant ever held an Ofcom broadcasting licence before?

Yes

(c) Has anyone involved in the proposed service held an Ofcom broadcasting licence or been involved in an Ofcom-licensed broadcast service before?

Yes

(d) Does the applicant control an existing Ofcom licensee?

No

(e) Is the applicant controlled by an existing licensee or by any person who is connected (within the meaning of Schedule 2 to the Broadcasting Act 1990) with an existing licensee (i.e. as a "participant")?

No

(f) Has the applicant – or any person(s) controlling the applicant - made any other application to Ofcom (or its predecessor broadcast regulators – the Independent Television Commission and the Radio Authority) for any licence which has since been surrendered by the licensee or revoked by Ofcom (or one of its predecessor regulators)?

No

(g) Has the applicant – or any person(s) controlling the applicant - made any other application to Ofcom (or its predecessor broadcast regulators – the Independent Television Commission and the Radio Authority) for any licence which has since been surrendered by the licensee or revoked by Ofcom (or one of its predecessor regulators)?

No

(h) Is the applicant – or any person(s) controlling the applicant – subject to any current or pending investigation by any statutory regulatory or government body in the United Kingdom or abroad in respect of any broadcast-related matter?

No

(i) Has the applicant – or any person(s) controlling the applicant – ever been subject to a statutory sanction for contravening a condition of a broadcasting licence in the UK or any other jurisdiction?

No

3.14 If the response to any of the questions (a) to (i) in 3.14 above is ‘yes’, please provide the details, expanding the table where necessary:

	Licence number(s) (if known)	Details (Dates)	Details (Licensed Areas)
(a)			
(b)	DP101065	2015 - 2016	Manchester Business Radio
(b)	SSDABWT005	2015 - Current	Multiplex - Trial Manchester
(c)		2004 - 2009	Swansea & S Wales Local Multiplex
(c)		2002 - 2009	Bradford & Huddersfield Local Multiplex
(c)		2004 - 2009	Stoke on Trent Local Multiplex
(c)		2002 -2009	Central Scotland Multiplex
(c)	AL100192BA/2	1991 - 2000	Signal Radio Ltd
(c)	AL100192BA/2	1992 - 2006	Imagine FM Ltd
(c)	AL100806BA/2	1996 - 2000	Wire FM - Warrington
(c)		2000- 2009	Signal 1 Stoke on Trent
(c)		2000- 2009	Signal 2 Stoke on Trent
(c)		2000- 2009	Imagine FM Stockport
(c)		2000- 2009	Wish FM Wigan and St Helens
(c)		2000- 2009	Swansea Sound
(c)		2000- 2009	Wave Swansea

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(c)		2000- 2009	Valleys Radio - S Wales Valleys
(c)		2000- 2009	Q96 Paisley
(c)		2000- 2009	Wave 102 Dundee
(c)		2000- 2009	Wire FM - Warrington
(c)		2000- 2009	The Wave Blackpool
(c)		2000- 2009	The Pulse Bradford
(c)		2000- 2009	Pulse Classic Gold Bradford
(c)		2000- 2009	Peak FM Chesterfield
(c)		2000- 2009	The Wolf Wolverhampton
(c)		2000- 2009	Tower FM Bolton and Bury
(c)	CR102895	2006 - 2008	Cheshire FM
(c)		2019 - Current	Cheshire Radio Ltd
(c)		2006 - 2008	Original 106 FM
(c)	AL203	2008 - 2010	Dune FM
(c)	AL323	2010 - 2011	Central Radio
(d)			
(e)			
(f)			
(g)			
(h)			
(i)			

3.15 Please provide any further information you hold, relating to the past conduct of the applicant or those individuals listed, in regulatory matters or in matters going to honesty and/or compliance, which may be relevant to Ofcom’s consideration of whether or not the applicant is fit and proper to hold a broadcast licence. If the applicant or the form signatory fails without reasonable excuse at this point to declare any matter of which Ofcom subsequently becomes aware, and which we consider to be relevant to the applicant’s eligibility to hold a licence, we will take it into account in determining the question of whether the applicant/licensee remains fit and proper to hold a licence.

If you have no information to provide, please respond “N/A”.

N/A

3.16 Has the applicant – or any person(s) controlling the applicant – ever been convicted of an unlicensed broadcasting offence?

No

If yes, please provide the following details:

Full name	Date of conviction/action (dd/mm/yy)	Penalty
N/A	N/A	N/A

Financial and business plan

- 3.17 Please provide a high-level estimate of the costs you believe will be required to establish the multiplex service.

As the incumbent and 'continuity applicant', Niocom plans to consolidate the success of the existing multiplex operation that it has established over the past six years. Niocom will deliver this in the following ways:

1. Provide full continuity through a seamless transition from the trial to the permanent multiplex – for services and listeners.
2. All nine reserved slots will be guaranteed FREE from a carriage fee to C-DSP licensed programme services for the duration of their licence;
3. All C-DSP services will be eligible for membership of Manchester Community Radio Alliance Ltd (MCRA). MCRA is a company limited by guarantee that will be a forum for bringing together ALL of Manchester's disparate community broadcasters and provide them with a collective voice and seat on the board of Niocom; and
4. All existing services on the trial multiplex will be offered a slot on the multiplex with NO INCREASE in their carriage fee GUARANTEED for the next 12 months.

These steps will ensure that there is no financial impediment for OFCOM-licensed community broadcasters who have obtained a C-DSP licence to step up to DAB+. It will also provide all of them with a collective voice on the board of the multiplex operating company. Most importantly we can offer all those services that are currently on the multiplex the promise of continuing – which is important given their:

1. Commitment and participation in the DCMS trial;
2. Financial investment in their programme services;
3. Loyal listener base that they have established; and
4. For the many listeners who will otherwise be deprived of services they have come to love.

Capital Investment - £30,000

Our core goal has always been to offer service providers a low cost, easy to access, high quality digital broadcast platform and to ensure its long-term sustainability. To achieve this, the capital investment we are making in the SFN has been carefully weighed to ensure there are sufficient funds to meet the needs of expanding the coverage area with additional equipment and yet being confidently able to afford the commitments in our business plan, made above. This principle has guided the number and choice of transmission sites – to keep the capital and operational cost of transmission to a minimum.

The main capital investment is in the choice of multiplexing & transmission supplier. We have selected Viamux to provide the professional services (project management, site

surveys, network design, configuration, installation and training) and the multiplexing/transmission equipment.

Operating Costs - £52,830

Transmission

The ongoing costs associated with transmission (rental, rates, electrical power consumption, internet provision) are the single most important ongoing operating expenditure for a multiplex company. Our selection of transmission sites is a cost-effective choice that balances delivering the largest audience whilst ensure carriage fees remain attractive to service providers – free to C-DSP licensees and fixed for 12-months for existing services.

Technical Support & Maintenance – viamux.co.uk

Niocom established Viamux Ltd in 2017 to provide in-house technical support and for maintaining the multiplex and transmission equipment. Provision will be by way of an annual support & maintenance contract.

Small-Scale DAB Management Software – optimux.co.uk

We will continue to use Optimux - the low-cost cloud-based control panel – that was developed in a partnership with the Trial Birmingham. Optimux simplifies the management and monitoring of a small-scale DAB network. Optimux has already allowed us to implement cloud encoding - making it quick, easy and cheap to add new services to a multiplex. It also provides invoicing and direct debit collection to streamline the payment of carriage fees. Optimux also monitors the multiplex and immediately alerts us to any issues and notify service providers regarding their audio.

Administration

The usual administration costs with operating a business of this size are included (insurance, legal and accountancy services) as is the annual Ofcom licence fee.

Funding

The company is currently funded through equity, cash at bank and shareholder working capital investment. It is trading profitably with a positive cashflow. We will continue the successful multiplex operation by providing existing community and commercial broadcasters as well as new entrants with a reliable digital broadcast platform on both affordable and flexible terms.

3.18 Please indicate how the costs outlined in 3.17 (above) will be met, under the following headings:

a) Share capital

The company is capitalised at £5,000

b) Loan stock

The company has sufficient cash at bank to fund this project. It will be underwritten by a shareholder working capital investment loan of £30,000. We anticipate this loan being repaid within 3 years. Further funding is available, if required.

c) Leasing/HP facilities (capital value)

There is no requirement for Leasing/HP facilities.

d) Bank overdraft

There is no requirement for a Bank overdraft.

e) Grants and donations

There is no requirement for grants or donations.

f) Other (please specify)

None

3.19 Expanding the table if necessary, please list the providers of the funding which will be used to establish the service, and the amount of funding that each will provide. For incorporated investing shareholders, please provide a copy of the most recent statutory accounts if they are not currently available on Companies House.

Name of shareholder or investor	Percentage of shares held (if applicable)	Amount of funding provided (£)
David Duffy	49%	£15,000
John Evington	49%	£15,000

3.20 All of the funding identified above should be confirmed. If any funding has not been confirmed, or if there are any pre-conditions before the funding is released which have not yet been met, provide an explanation of what needs to be done, the dates by which it needs to be carried out, and any steps the applicant needs to take to ensure the funding is confirmed and/or released.

All required funding is confirmed and available. Evidence that sufficient funds are available to each investing shareholder is available on request.

Relevant expertise and experience

- 3.21 Please provide details of who will be responsible for the day-to-day general management of the multiplex service (for example, dealing with programme service providers and contractual matters). Please also briefly state their previous relevant experience. (Note that any individuals or contractors who cannot be identified at this stage can instead be included in the confidential section (Part B) of the application form.)

Experience

Niocom has operated the small-scale DAB multiplex in Manchester, since 2015. Having also run successful trials in Dublin and Cork, we are amongst the most experienced operators of small-scale DAB.

Management

Launching, establishing and maintaining a DAB multiplex requires technical competence, operational expertise, financial stability, and an aptitude to manage third party relationships successfully. We believe Niocom continues to demonstrate its competence in each of these areas.

With our experience, Niocom will continue in the day-to-day general management of the Manchester multiplex service - managing commercial, financial and operational matters – as it has done for the past six years.

- Launched within 90 days of award;
- Near flawless reliability of 99.8% uptime sustained over 6 years;
- Established Viamux to provide in-house support and maintenance services;
- Built a sustainable business that is profitable and remains affordable for service providers;
- Managed third party relationships successfully with long-term retention of service providers;

For the past six years, Niocom's day-to-day management of the Trial Manchester small-scale DAB multiplex has included, but was not limited to;

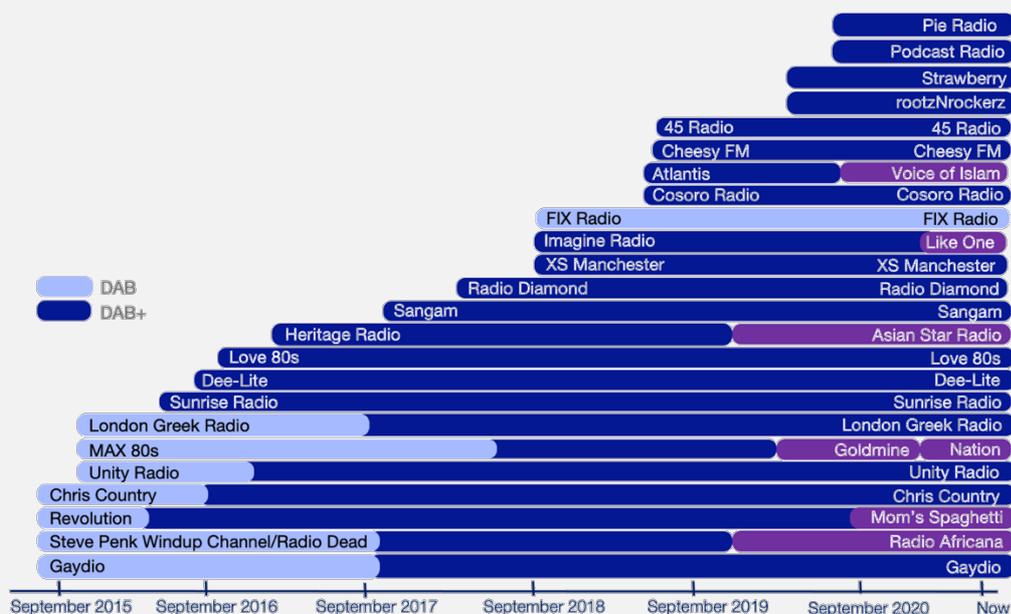
- supporting, maintaining and upgrading the multiplex system hardware & software;
- recruiting new services to ensure that the multiplex is always full;
- negotiating carriage agreements;
- invoice management and payment collection;
- working with programme services to ensure DSPS and regulatory licence compliance, and
- bringing a diverse and targeted range of complementary formats to Manchester.

Background

We started out with six services – three of which (Gaydio, Chris Country and Revolution/Mom’s Spaghetti) remain with us to this day. A fourth, Unity Radio, joined soon after launch and has stayed loyal throughout.

Along the way we have always worked hard to retain services by providing a reliable DAB solution backed up by friendly, professional customer service. As the images below demonstrate, most services have remained on the multiplex for well over a year. Many of them for three or four years. 18 months in to the trial we gathered very positive feedback via an online client survey. In March 2017 93% of service providers were ‘Very’ or ‘Quite’ satisfied with the overall small-scale DAB experience. The single highest rated element was ‘Customer Service’ with a ‘Very Satisfied’ score of 87%.

Early in 2016 we began the process of upgrading our services to the more efficient DAB+ standard. Interestingly, our survey highlighted an extremely positive response with 86.7% of respondents reporting that they were ‘Very’ or ‘Quite’ satisfied with the sound quality.

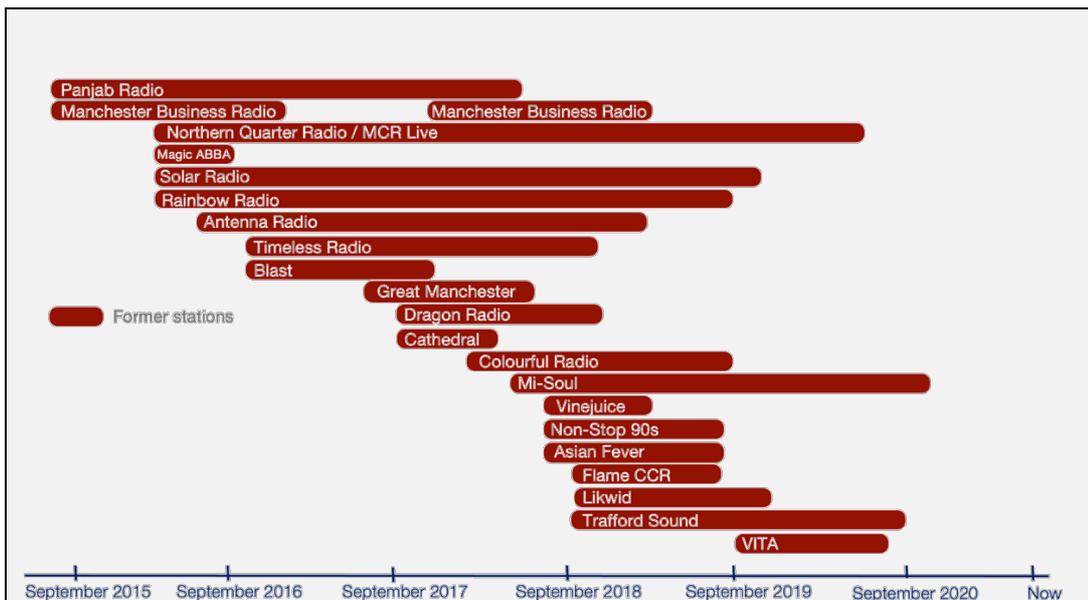


Careful consideration has been given to the selection of formats on the multiplex by way of offering diversity, encouraging innovation and avoidance of any ‘soundalikes’ of services readily available elsewhere.

We also welcomed special event services like Manchester Cathedral Radio at Christmas and Bauer’s ‘Magic ABBA’ a short term station promoting the group’s live event in Manchester.

Whenever services have decided to move on we have always replaced them immediately ensuring that there was never any unused capacity on the multiplex.

The image below shows the level of ‘churn’ on the multiplex since launch and the efficient, timely manner in which we have added replacement services:



Once the full-time licence has been awarded we believe that more service providers will feel able to make a commitment to DAB. Right from the outset, we encountered reluctance from the city’s community radio sector to embrace DAB. We fully support, therefore, Ofcom’s vision that small-scale DAB should be the future platform for community radio. As an unparalleled incentive, we are offering the reserved space to nine of Manchester’s C-DSP licensees free of charge for the duration of their licence period.

DSP

- 45 Radio
- Asian Star Radio
- Cheesy FM
- Chris Country
- Cosoro Radio
- Delite Radio
- Fix Radio
- Hope FM
- Like One
- London Greek Radio
- Love 80s Manchester
- Mom's Spaghetti
- Nation Radio UK
- Pie Radio
- Podcast Radio
- Radio Africana
- Radio Diamond
- Radio Sangam
- rootz N'rockerz
- Strawberry Radio
- Sunrise Radio
- Voice of Islam
- XS Manchester

C-DSP

- All FM
- Gaydio
- Legacy Radio
- North Manchester FM
- Oldham Community Radio
- Salford City Radio
- Tameside Radio
- Unity Radio
- Wythenshawe FM

Sector Participation

Niocom has also taken a leading role in advancing the aims and objectives of the small-scale DAB sector over the past 6 years - participating in DCMS and Ofcom DAB planning meetings as well as parliamentary consultations. During 2019 Niocom also ran a series of highly successful UK-wide small-scale DAB workshops in Belfast, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Sheffield, Watford and Cardiff. The 20 workshops were attended by over 180 people from 80 applicant groups.

Technical & Operational Experience

Niocom Digital also founded Viamux – which supplies professional services and small-scale DAB solutions. Niocom is co-founder of Optimux – a software platform specifically developed, in 2020, for the day-to-day management of small-scale DAB multiplexes. Coming out of our experience of running one of the first UK small scale trials, Optimux equips small-scale DAB licensees with an easy to use dashboard for managing, monitoring and reporting on all aspects of a multiplex network as well as providing invoicing and direct debit collection to simplify the payment of carriage fees. Every aspect of the day-to-day management of a small-scale multiplex has been incorporated into Optimux.

Viamux will be responsible for the launch of the multiplex and Niocom for its subsequent day to day operation; in particular:

- Overseeing bit rate variations, enhancements or projects required by service providers, such as EPG provision, temporary services and data developments.
- Working with service providers and the transmission subcontractor to maximise multiplex functionality and efficiency.
- Monitoring and fault reporting, ensuring that the output of all service providers is correctly logged and compliant with legislation and codes.
- Developing new revenue streams.

Niocom will oversee any multiplex re-configurations and these will be undertaken in line with our policies and contractual agreements with service providers. Niocom will provide ongoing financial management of the multiplex; accounts, IT, admin, legal, customer service and technical support.

Team

All members of the wider team share a track record of successfully establishing and operating radio stations as well as local and small-scale DAB multiplexes. The combined experience of the stakeholders as multiplex operators and service providers demonstrates these capabilities and give us an excellent understanding of what is required across the cities of Manchester and Salford – good coverage, service reliability and easy access for programme providers at an affordable and realistic price.

Key Personnel

John Evington

John's radio career began in Manchester at the now legendary Piccadilly Radio when, at the age of 18, he became a full-time member of the presentation team. During a two-year tenure as host of the twice-weekly 'Rock Relay' show, John recorded and produced specials with many of the world's leading names in rock and some of these were syndicated across the Independent Radio Network via the IBA's programme-sharing scheme. When he left Manchester in 1981 to develop his career around the UK, John always held out hope that he'd one day return to the city where his journey in radio began.

Over the next 32 years John's career saw him progress from presenting on local and regional radio to the BBC's national 'flagship', Radio 2, as weekend early show host during a three-month sabbatical. This was followed by a record-breaking 22 years at Signal Radio in Stoke-on-Trent where he was the first voice on air, later becoming Programme Director and Group PD for the Wireless Group plc. With responsibility for 17 local stations across England, Scotland and Wales, John remained in that role for four years.

In 2013, he returned to Manchester, teaming up with David Duffy to form 'The Radio People', a boutique consultancy specialising in management coaching, content creation and assistance with licence applications for commercial and community radio.

In the early years of the new millennium heritage ILR stations were increasingly being subsumed by the radio 'Giants', Global and Bauer, into national formats such as Heart, Capital, Smooth and Hits Radio. Early in 2015 Ofcom invited applicants to take part in a ten-location trial for the newly-conceived small-scale DAB system using open-source technology. John saw this new platform as an exciting opportunity to provide a launchpad for new formats and innovative creative thought.

Having successfully applied to Ofcom for a trial licence in Manchester, John conceived and developed the concept of a formatic 'Ecosystem', designed to enrich listener choice and grow the digital listening share whilst minimising any impact on existing national and local services. Over the six years of the trial some 60 service providers participated in the scheme with five of the original services remaining on the multiplex from Day One.

John continues to work closely with David Duffy now focused entirely on small-scale DAB. Niocom's sister company, Niocast Digital has recently been awarded the small-scale DAB licences for Edinburgh and Cardiff.

David Duffy

David relocated from Essex to Manchester thirty years ago. Having worked for commercial radio station Essex Radio, he helped local group Warrington Festival of Music Radio (WFMR) operate a number of RSLs during the early and mid 90s. WFMR was rebranded Wire FM in preparation for applying to the Radio Authority for the Warrington commercial radio licence - which it won, in 1997. David was a founding director of Wire FM.

In 2004 he established community radio station Cheshire FM and served as its first Chief Executive from launch. In 2008 he led a group in the acquisition of Southport commercial radio station Dune FM and later acquired Preston's Central Radio.

In 2013 David established Niocom Associates to provide professional consultancy services to the radio sector. In 2015 Niocom was awarded one of the ten trial small-scale DAB trial licences (Manchester) which has now been running successfully for over six years.

In 2017 David co-founded Viamux to develop low-cost DAB solutions for small-scale DAB operators. The Irish State Broadcaster, RTÉ had expressed interest in the DCMS trials and, after visiting the Niocom-run trial in Manchester, ordered two ODR systems from Viamux. The company went on to work with ComReg, Ireland's communications regulator, to operate a DAB multiplex in Cork - the first independent small-scale DAB multiplex trial in Ireland.

In 2019 David & John ran a series of 20 workshops across the UK designed to provide practical help and advice to stations, groups and individuals interested in applying for and launching their own small-scale DAB multiplex. Consequently, Viamux is increasingly recognised as the leading small-scale DAB solutions provider and is working closely with many applicants - bringing expertise and experience to their DAB projects.

We believe that this highly experienced team has all the relevant expertise and local knowledge to deliver all aspects of launching and running a successful small-scale operation.

3.22 Please provide details of who will be carrying out the installation and on-going maintenance of your multiplexing / transmitter equipment (or the name of your proposed transmission and multiplex provider if you intend to use a third-party organisation for these services). Please also briefly state their previous relevant experience. (Note that any individuals or contractors who cannot be identified at this stage can instead be included in the confidential section (Part B) of the application form.)

Function	Responsible party	Previous experience
Installation of transmission equipment	Viamux	Viamux is a leading supplier of small-scale DAB solutions. Viamux was established in 2017 by the Niocom team - who have been operating the successful Trial Manchester small-scale multiplex for the past six years. Viamux has installed systems in the UK & Republic of Ireland. More info: www.viamux.com 
Ongoing maintenance of the transmission equipment	Viamux	
Installation of the Multiplexing equipment	Viamux	
Day-to-day technical management and maintenance of the multiplexing equipment (if different from response to question 3.28 above)	Viamux	

Timetable for coverage roll-out

3.23 Please tell us how soon after licence award you expect your multiplex service to become operational and achieve the coverage you are proposing:

Niocom intends to launch the new multiplex in less than 6 months from award of licence. As Niocom already operates the Trial small-scale DAB multiplex, we intend to build the new SFN in parallel with running the current multiplex and then seamlessly switch from one to the other overnight on the appointed launch date.

Upon award Niocom will immediately advance negotiations regarding the proposed transmission site(s). Following the procedure set out in Ofcom’s Technical Policy Guidance, we will also liaise with other radio multiplex licensees on any impact our proposed transmitters might have. Once completed, Niocom will seek agreement from Ofcom for the proposed technical plan – mindful that the coverage proposed in our application is an award criterion and that any change will need to deliver broadly equivalent coverage.

Niocom will send final site details to Ofcom for clearance and evidence of liaison and agreement with those other radio multiplex licensees. Given the time taken to co-ordinate services we recognise the importance getting the final transmitter plans to Ofcom as quickly as possible.

Our timeline then focuses on the following key stages:

- Building and installing the DAB multiplex and transmission chain;
- Finalising carriage agreements with the service providers;
- Commissioning and testing the transmitter equipment for compliance with Ofcom's Digital Radio Technical Code; and
- Providing Ofcom with evidence of compliance with the licence and the Digital Radio Technical Code

Viamux has confirmed the availability of all the equipment and services to meet our timescales.

- 3.24 In addition, please provide, as an annex to be submitted with this application, an outline project plan with timeline (e.g. a Gantt chart or similar) showing the high level activities and tasks leading up to the launch of your multiplex service.

The GANTT chart (included in the annex) sets out the precise, key stages in the implementation of the multiplex together with the timeline. As mentioned in 3.23, we will continue operating the current multiplex whilst simultaneously building and installing the new single frequency network. Once ready we will then seamlessly transition from one to the other and decommission the trial multiplex.

4. Involvement of C-DSP providers; demand or support from programme providers

Involvement of C-DSP providers

4.1 Is the applicant body proposing to provide its own C-DSP service on the multiplex?

NO

4.2 If the answer to the above question is 'yes', please provide a name and brief details of this proposed service. If the service is already licensed by Ofcom, the licence number should be provided:

N/A

4.3 If the answer to the above question is 'no', please provide details of any participant in the applicant body that is proposing to provide a C-DSP service on the multiplex. In this context, a "participant" refers to a person who holds or is beneficially entitled to shares in the applicant or possesses voting power in the applicant. If the service is already licensed by Ofcom, the licence number should be provided. Please refer to the nature of the participation (e.g. shareholding or agreement in relation to voting power):

- Oldham Community Radio - CR000032BA/3
- Legacy Radio - CR000164BA/4
- All FM - CR000023BA/3
- Wythenshawe FM - CR000024BA/3
- Unity Radio - CR000187BA/3
- Tameside Radio - CR000033BA/2
- Salford City Radio - CR000035BA/2
- North Manchester FM - CR000165BA/5
- Gaydio - CR000186BA/2

All the above 9 services have expressed their interest in being on the multiplex. They would, therefore, be eligible to participate in Manchester Community Radio Alliance Ltd (MCRA). MCRA has been established to bring together and give collective voice to Manchester's many community radio stations. MCRA is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and benefits from a corporate directorship of Niocom Associates Ltd with a seat on the Board. Member community stations will take it in turn to chair MCRA and represent the interests of the community sector at board meetings, with full voting rights.

Demand or support from programme providers

- 4.4 Please provide in the table below (expanding the table if necessary) the names of providers (or prospective providers) of community or local digital sound programme services who have expressed their demand or support for the provision of the proposed multiplex service in the area to be served by the multiplex service. For reasons of transparency, the response to this question must be answered below and should not be provided as a separate annex. The evidence of the demand or support, such as signed heads of terms or emails, should be provided as a confidential annex, and relate only to the specific multiplex being applied for.

The following services are either incumbent on the present Manchester Trial multiplex or have expressed interest in joining the multiplex in the longer term.		
Name of service provider and station name (if known)	Proposed C-DSP or DSP	Nature of evidence of support provided
All FM	C-DSP	Email
Gaydio	C-DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Legacy	C-DSP	Email
North Manchester FM	C-DSP	Email
Oldham Community Radio	C-DSP	Email
Salford City Radio	C-DSP	Email
Tameside Radio	C-DSP	Email
Unity Radio	C-DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Wythenshawe FM	C-DSP	Email
45 Radio	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Asian Star Radio	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Cheesy FM	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Chris Country	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Cosoro Radio	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Delite Radio	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Fix FM	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Hope FM	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Like One	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email

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London Greek Radio	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Love 80s Manchester	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Mom's Spaghetti	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Nation Radio UK	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Pie Radio	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Podcast Radio	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Radio Africana	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Radio Diamond	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Radio Sangam	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
rootz'n'rockerz	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Strawberry Radio	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Sunrise Radio	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
Voice of Islam	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
XS Manchester	DSP	Incumbent Service - Email
A further 44 services have expressed interest in joining the multiplex over recent months and are on the current 'waiting list'.		
Travel.Radio	DSP	Email
Care Radio	DSP	Email
The Buzz Manchester	DSP	Email
R360 Radio	DSP	Email
Ocean Gold	DSP	Email
Romanian Language Station	DSP	Email
Lymm Radio	DSP	Email
House Party Radio	DSP	Email
My Tameside	DSP	Email
We Are Vibe	DSP	Email
Life Radio	DSP	Email
Windrush Radio	DSP	Email
Oxygen Radio UK	DSP	Email
Pride Radio	DSP	Email
Awaz FM Community Radio	DSP	Email

Small-scale radio multiplex licence: Application form (Part A)

African Community Radio	DSP	Email
Konnect	DSP	Email
www.nonstopoldies.com	DSP	Email
Speaker Radio Manchester	DSP	Email
Greek Beat	DSP	Email
DAB Asian Radio	DSP	Email
Country & Irish	DSP	Email
Redwall Radio	DSP	Email
Rathergood Radio	DSP	Email
Retro Mix	DSP	Email
The Groove	DSP	Email
Made In Manchester	DSP	Email
Radio Yorkshire	DSP	Email
Starpoint	DSP	Email
Diva Radio	DSP	Email
Reform Radio	DSP	Email
Skylab Radio	DSP	Email
Classic Rock Radio	DSP	Email
Radio Mast Asia	DSP	Email
Visitor Information Radio	DSP	Email
Sonderradio	DSP	Email
OneLuvFM	DSP	Email
Radio Sovereign Solid Gold	DSP	Email
Classic Hits	DSP	Email
The Beat	DSP	Email
Vibe Wigan	DSP	Email
Eruption Radio	DSP	Email
Radio Top	DSP	Email
Classic One	DSP	Email

5. Fair and effective competition

- 5.1 Please detail the measures that have already been taken, and will be taken before and during the licence period, to demonstrate that, in contracting or offering to contract with programme services providers, the applicant has acted in a manner calculated to ensure fair and effective competition in the provision of such services:

As the incumbent operator of the small-scale DAB trial, Niocom's first responsibility is to the current service providers (fair) and the waiting list of services (effective competition). To ensure fairness we asked existing services if they wish to continue. If any of the services had declined then we would have reverted to the waiting list that we maintain. This process respects that the existing services have:

- Committed and participated in the DCMS trial;
- Invested financially in their programme services;
- Established a loyal listener base; and
- Many listeners who would otherwise be deprived of services they have come to love.

The new multiplex licence also requires that 9 slots are reserved for C-DSP licence holders. Niocom took the decision, from the outset, to offer this capacity to Manchester's Ofcom-licensed community radio stations FREE OF CHARGE for the duration of their licence. Nine stations accepted.

To give representation and voice to community radio in Manchester, Niocom has established Manchester Community Radio Alliance Ltd (MCRA). MCRA is a company limited by guarantee with a seat on the Board of Niocom. Our intention is for MCRA to be a forum for ALL of Manchester's disparate community broadcasters and provide them with a collective voice on the multiplex Board. All C-DSP licence holders will be eligible for membership.

Ethos

Niocom remains conscious of its responsibility to ensure fair and effective competition, at all times. We continue in our belief that when competition works well, service providers are motivated to maximise audience share and are better able to secure funding on the basis of their service offering - its uniqueness, its audience and the value it delivers. Alongside established brands, competition delivers greater choice for listeners and a better outcome for the public. It also ensures the long-term sustainability of service providers. Constrained only by capacity, our small-scale DAB platform will remain accessible to new entrants – a place where innovative formats will be encouraged and nurtured.

Proven

The shareholders in Niocom bring together a track record of successfully establishing radio stations and small-scale DAB multiplexes. Niocom has successfully operated the Trial Manchester multiplex for the past six years providing a platform for existing community and commercial services as well as creating a 'launch pad' for a large number of new programme services.

Our unique approach has been to foster a healthy and vibrant radio 'ecosystem' – not only embracing existing commercial and community stations but also new entrants, pop-ups and experimental concepts. Niocom's experience of running the small-scale DAB multiplex in Manchester led to the introduction of a 'format matrix' which has proved to be highly successful in ensuring a balanced range of services rather than a preponderance of any particular genre. Niocom will continue to deliver unprecedented choice for listeners in a carefully controlled, transparent way. Our ambition is to always ensure that our multiplex enriches the listener experience by complementing, rather than competing with, local and national ensembles.

Leadership

An award of this licence to Niocom ensures that the multiplex continues to be operated by experienced individuals who have successfully implemented and operated this DAB multiplex for six years. Niocom is committed to small-scale DAB and has the financial stability to support that ambition. Our wider team is hugely experienced and well resourced, with significant practical digital radio expertise.

Delivery

Niocom continues to deliver a high quality and reliable multiplex. We have openly discussed our transmission plans, carriage terms and indicative fees. Niocom has always engaged with potential service providers in an open, non-exclusive manner and will continue this practice through the duration of this licence. All Service Providers will enter into a new Carriage Agreement - the key terms of which are identical for all. With the exception of Reserved capacity where slots are 48kbps, Carriage fees are pro-rata to capacity contracted.

6. Declaration

- a) I hereby apply to Ofcom for the grant of a licence for the small-scale radio multiplex licence described above and declare that the information given in this application form is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, correct.
- b) I further declare and warrant:
- i) that the applicant is not a disqualified person within the meaning of that expression as defined in Part 2 of Schedule 2 to the Broadcasting Act 1990, as amended, or as a result of a disqualification order under section 145 of the Broadcasting Act 1996;
 - ii) that having made all reasonable enquiries neither the applicant nor any person controlling the applicant, as result of the grant to me of the licence, breach any requirement of Schedule 14 to the Communications Act 2003 with regard to the accumulation of interests in broadcasting services or to the restrictions on cross-media interests;
 - iii) that the applicant is not disqualified by virtue of the provisions of section 143 (5) of the Broadcasting Act 1996 in relation to political objects and the provisions of section 144 (3) of the Broadcasting Act 1996 in relation to the provision of false information or through the withholding of information with the intention of misleading Ofcom; and
 - iv) that no director or person concerned directly or indirectly in the management of the Licensee is the subject to a disqualification order as defined by section 145 (1) of the Broadcasting Act 1996.
- c) I understand that Ofcom reserves the right to revoke the licence (if granted) if at any time any material statement made to Ofcom is found to be false and to have been by the applicant or any member or officer thereof knowing it to be false. I also understand that under sections 144 and 145 of the Broadcasting Act 1996, the provision of false information could incur a criminal conviction and a disqualification from the holding of a Broadcasting Act licence. I further certify that, to the best of my knowledge, any matters which might influence Ofcom's judgement as to whether the directors and substantial shareholders involved in this application are fit and proper persons to participate in a radio licence, have been made known to Ofcom.

Full name (BLOCK CAPITALS) of the person authorised to make the application of behalf of the applicant:

DAVID DUFFY

Date of application:

1st SEPTEMBER 2021

I am authorised to make this application on behalf of the applicant in my capacity as Company Director.