
Small-scale radio multiplex licence

Application form – Part A (public)

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

Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd

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

Stoke & Newcastle

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):

The urban area of Stoke-on-Trent & Newcastle-under-Lyme lies on the upper valley of the River Trent at the south-west foothills of the Pennines, with the Peak District to the north-east. The elevation varies from 96 to 250 metres (315 to 820 ft) above sea level. The conurbation is bounded by the lowlands of the Midlands to the south.

Stoke-on-Trent is the only polycentric city in the UK comprising six large towns which run in a rough line from north to south along the A50. The six Stoke-on-Trent towns are Stoke, Fenton, Longton, Tunstall, Burslem and, the largest, Hanley. Although the city is named after the original town of Stoke, and the City Council offices are located there, the city centre is usually regarded as being in Hanley, which had earlier developed into a major commercial centre.

It is broadly equidistant to Manchester and Birmingham and merges into the neighbouring borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme to the west, which is administered separately.

Newcastle borough is situated in a valley alongside the Lyme Brook. Its suburbs are intertwined with those of the larger neighbouring city. Newcastle town centre is less than 4 miles (6 km) from Stoke-on-Trent City Centre and about 17 miles (27 km) north of the county town of Stafford.

Our proposition is founded on three principles:

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

The undulating nature of the terrain renders blanket coverage unattainable due to the sheer number of relay transmitters this would require. Accordingly, we are proposing a two-location SFN arrangement will enable us to deliver a robust and reliable DAB platform to the majority of households across the Polygon area. Coverage is good across the centre and west of the city and across the most populous parts of Newcastle but there are some areas of relative weakness to north and east. We intend to continue to explore ways in which we may be able to improve coverage in Kidsgrove which is shielded by the 195m (640ft) Harecastle Hill near Goldenhill, the highest district in Stoke-on-Trent. Here, we find ourselves facing the same challenge as the canal-building civil engineers of the late 18th

century whose solution was the construction of what was then the World’s longest tunnel.

To the south of the polygon, Longton, Trent Vale, Blurton and Weston Coyney are shielded by the 200m ridge to the east of Fenton, site of the 6 Towns Viewing Point. Again, we hope to be able to improve coverage over time.

Overspill is mainly across the generally flat, sparsely populated rural area to the west and falls well below the permitted limit.

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 height (m agl)	Antenna type proposed with bearing	New or existing antenna	ERP (W)
High Lane	SJ812477	15	OMNI -Colinear	New	100
Fenton	SJ902450	40	OMNI -Colinear	New	100

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 dBµV/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.

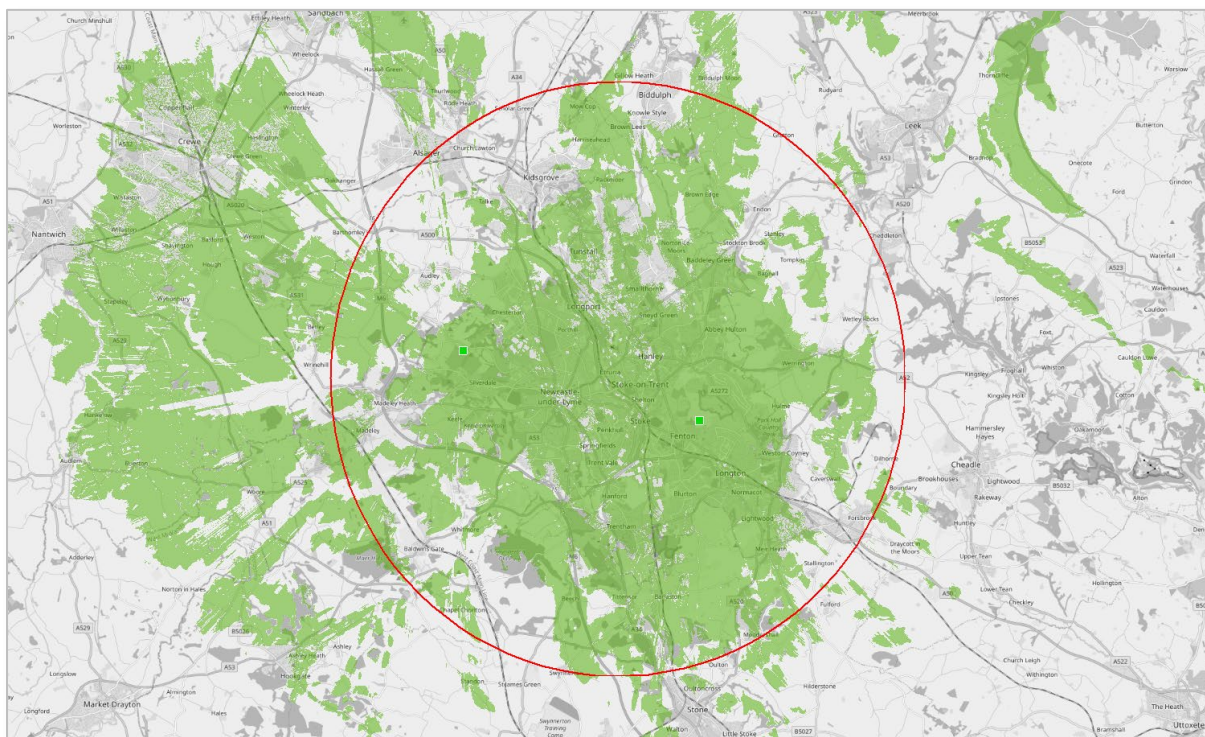
A full coverage prediction map for the whole transmitter network is included in the annex. It shows the 63 dBµV/m field strength (as well as the 54 dBµV/m and 38dBµV/m contours).

The ward-level population tables (2011 Census) indicate that at 63 dBµV/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.

The network has been designed to minimise any significant interference above 38 dBµV/m to other proposed licences with the north west Macro area as well as small-scale DAB areas outside of the Macro area (Burton-on- Trent, Wolverhampton and Telford & Shrewsbury small- scale DAB licence areas being excluded)

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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):

Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd

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

13177367

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:

Redroofs, High Lane, Alsagers Bank, Stoke-On-Trent, England, ST7 8BS

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
Robert Lythgoe	Redroofs, High Lane, Alsagers Bank, Stoke-On-Trent, England, ST7 8BS	UK	Director: HIT MIX RADIO LIMITED (Ofcom-licensed Community Radio Station)	None
Chris Hurst	Redroofs, High Lane, Alsagers Bank, Stoke-On-Trent, England, ST7 8BS	UK	Director: Silk FM Ltd and Dee 106.3 Ltd (commercial radio stations). Director: Muxco North East Wales and West Cheshire Ltd (DAB local multiplex operator) Director: Wigan and St Helens DAB Ltd; Preston DAB Ltd; Warrington, Widnes & Runcorn DAB Ltd; Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd; Cheshire East DAB Ltd; Edinburgh DAB Ltd; Cardiff DAB Ltd; South Birmingham DAB Ltd; Leeds DAB Radio Ltd; and Sheffield & Rotherham DAB Ltd (Small-scale DAB multiplex applicants)	None
Niocast Digital Ltd	20 Crewe Rd, Sandbach, Cheshire CW11 4NE	UK	Corporate Director: Liverpool DAB Ltd; Preston DAB Ltd; Warrington, Widnes & Runcorn DAB Ltd;	N/A

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

			Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd; Edinburgh DAB Ltd; Cardiff DAB Ltd; South Birmingham DAB Ltd; Leeds DAB Radio Ltd; and Sheffield & Rotherham DAB Ltd (Small-scale DAB multiplex applicants)	
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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
Hit Mix Radio Ltd	50	50	33.33	33.33
Ronald Smith	25	25	16.66	16.66
Chris Hurst	25	25	16.66	16.66
Niocast Digital Ltd	50	50	33.33	33.33
Comments				

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
An individual who is an officer of a body falling within (b) or (c);	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.

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?

No

(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)			
(c)	CR100399BA/2	2015 - CURRENT	Hit Mix Radio Ltd
(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
(c)		2000- 2009	Valleys Radio - S Wales Valleys
(c)		2000- 2009	Q96 Paisley

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(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	Peak FM Chesterfield
(c)		2000- 2009	Tower FM Bolton and Bury
(c)		2000- 2009	Juice FM - Liverpool
(c)		2000- 2009	Talk 107 Edinburgh
(c)		2000- 2009	Central Radio
(c)	CR102895	2006 - 2008	Cheshire FM
(c)		2006 - 2008	Original 106 FM
(c)	AL203	2008 - 2010	Dune FM
(c)	CR000034BA/3	2009 - 2017	Pure FM - Stockport
(c)	AL323	2010 - 2011	Central Radio
(c)	DP101065	2015 - 2016	Manchester Business Radio
(c)	SSDABWT005	2015 - Current	Multiplex - Trial Manchester
(c)	DL000094BA/5	Current	Multiplex - NE Wales and W Cheshire
(c)	AL100840BA/2	Current	Silk FM
(c)	AL000274BA/3	Current	Dee 106.3
(c)	DP000165BA/2	Current	Dee on DAB and Love 80s – Liverpool & Manchester
(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.

Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd will establish a 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. A confidential spreadsheet that sets out detailed income and outgoings with a 36-month cash flow forecast.

Capital Investment - £36,000

Our core ambition is to be able 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 has been carefully weighed to provide sufficient funds to meet the needs of establishing the platform and to ensure carriage fees are attractive and sustainable for service providers over the longer term. This principle has guided the number and choice of transmission sites – to keep both 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 - £34,780

Transmission

The 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 ensuring carriage fees remain attractive to service providers.

Technical Support & Maintenance

Ongoing technical support for maintaining the multiplex and transmission equipment will be provided by Viamux (by way of an annual support & maintenance contract).

Small-Scale DAB Management Software

We will also subscribe to Optimux - a low-cost cloud-based control panel that simplifies the management and monitoring of a small-scale DAB networks. For a low-cost monthly fee, Optimux will allow us to implement cloud encoding - making it quick, easy and cheap to add new services to a multiplex. It will also provide us with invoicing and direct debit collection to streamline the payment of carriage fees. Optimux will also monitor the multiplex and will immediately alert us to any issues and notify service providers regarding their audio.

Administration

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

VAT

We expect for turnover to remain below the VAT registration threshold which will mean all carriage fees will be free from VAT. We expect many service providers will not be VAT registered and that an uplift of 20% would be a very real additional cost to them and a possible impediment to them participating in small-scale DAB.

Funding

The company will be funded through a combination of equity and primarily a shareholder working capital loan. We will establish a 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 £150

b) Loan stock

A working capital investment loan of £36,000 will be provided by the shareholders. 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 (£)
Hit Mix Radio Ltd	33.33%	£12,000
Ronald Smith	16.66%	£6,000
Chris Hurst	16.66 %	£6,000
Niocast Digital Ltd	33.33 %	£12,000

- 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.)

Background

This group's association with Stoke-on-Trent & Newcastle dates back to 1983

Collaboration

Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd is a strongly local applicant group with collaboration at the heart of its ethos. It brings together partner organisations and individuals that make unique contribution by way of relevant skills and/or knowledge:

- Hitmix – the Ofcom-licensed community radio station in Newcastle-under-Lyme which has been successfully operating since November 2015.

- Niocast Digital – which has operated the small-scale DAB multiplex in Manchester, since 2015. Having also run successful trials in Dublin and Cork, Niocast is one of the most experienced operators of small-scale DAB.
 - Niocast director, John Evington, was Programme Director at Stoke-on-Trent’s commercial station, Signal Radio, for 22 years.
- Chris Hurst and Ronald Smith – who own and operate two locally focused commercial radio stations in neighbouring Cheshire – Chester’s Dee 106.3 and Silk FM in Macclesfield; two DAB-only services Love 80s Liverpool and Love 80s Manchester; and owns 33% of the North East Wales and West Cheshire Multiplex
 - Chris Hurst is a former Managing Director of Signal Radio, Stoke-on-Trent.

General Management

With its experience, Niocast Digital will lead the day-to-day general management of the multiplex service - managing commercial, financial and operational matters.

Launching, establishing and maintaining a DAB multiplex requires technical competence, operational expertise, financial stability, and an aptitude to manage third party relationships successfully.

For the past five years, Niocast Digital’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; and working with programme services to ensure DSPS and regulatory licence compliance.

Sector Participation

Niocast has also taken a leading role in advancing the aims and objectives of the small-scale DAB sector over the past 5 years - participating in DCMS and Ofcom DAB planning meetings as well as parliamentary consultations. During 2019 Niocast 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

Niocast Digital also founded Viamux – which supplies professional services and small-scale DAB solutions. Niocast 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 Niocast 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.

Niocast will oversee any multiplex re-configurations and these will be undertaken in line with our policies and contractual agreements with service providers. Niocast 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 in the Stoke and Newcastle area – good coverage, service reliability and easy access for programme providers at an affordable and realistic price.

Key Personnel

Robbie Benson

Robbie Benson was born in Newcastle-under-Lyme and has lived there all his life. Working over the years in all aspects of entertainment in and around Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire, Robbie identifies with the needs of the local people and understands the aspirations and ambitions of this great area.

In 2014 Robbie successfully applied for a community radio licence for Newcastle-under-Lyme and surrounding areas. The Hitmix was launched on 107.5fm on 28th November 2015 – a historic event for Newcastle which had never had its own radio station before. Using experience gained over the years on various on-line and FM radio stations, coupled with commitment and dedication, Robbie has created a high quality and well-loved local radio station with new listeners coming in each day.

The natural progression is a move to small-scale DAB and Robbie is keen to be a key member of the consortium which aims to introduce the new platform to Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke on Trent.

John Evington

Having worked and lived in Stoke-on-Trent for more than 20 years, John knows the area well and understands the unusually high propensity for Stoke and Newcastle people to support local media. Now that the legendary 'Signal' brands have been subsumed by Bauer's national services and with the continuing downscaling of BBC local radio, John sees a huge opportunity for small-scale DAB to act as a catalyst for the renaissance of truly local radio.

John's 43-year career has been spent entirely in radio, at local, regional and national level. Starting out as a presenter at Manchester's first commercial station, Piccadilly Radio, he went on to develop his craft at Centre Radio in Leicester before joining Stoke-on-Trent's Signal Radio in 1983 as launch Breakfast presenter and Head of Music. After a stint as weekend Breakfast host for BBC Radio 2 John returned to his commercial roots at Signal, where he became Programme Director, leading his team to deliver unrivalled audience figures. John developed new community-focused concepts such as 'Signal Action', the 'Signal Walkathon' and 'Signal Comes to Town'. He also devised the UK's first adult alternative format, 'ECHO 96' and re-launched the core station as 'Signal 1' on FM and 'Signal 2' on AM. Ultimately, John was promoted to Group Director of Programmes for Signal's parent company, Wireless Group plc, with responsibility for 17 local stations in England, Scotland and Wales, remaining in that role for four years.

In 2006 John was head-hunted by the Canadian media giant, CanWest, to lead the launch team at the south coast's regional adult alternative station, Original 106. He later teamed up with David Duffy to form The Radio People consultancy and, in 2015, successfully applied for the small-scale DAB Trial licence in Manchester.

Most recently John has been focusing on the small-scale DAB opportunity providing a launchpad for new formats and innovative creative thought. He conceived and developed the concept of a formatic 'Ecosystem' for the new small-scale tier designed to enrich listener choice and grow the digital listening share whilst minimising any impact on existing national and local services.

John continues to work closely with David Duffy in running their joint companies.

David Duffy

David Duffy's involvement in radio dates back to 1981 working with independent commercial radio station Essex Radio. In later years he went on to be a founding director of Wire FM, the commercial radio station in Warrington. In 2004 he established community radio station Cheshire FM and served as its first Chief Executive from launch until 2008. In 2008 he led a group in the acquisition of Southport commercial radio station Dune FM. The station was returned to profitability and successfully sold to a local group in 2010. The group also acquired Preston's Central Radio which was successfully sold to UKRD in 2011.

In 2013 David established Niocom Associates to provide professional consultancy services to commercial and community radio stations. In 2015 Niocom was awarded one of the ten trial small-scale DAB trial licences (Manchester) which has now been running successfully for over five years. In 2017 he co-founded Viamux to develop low-cost DAB solutions for small-scale DAB operators. Viamux's first customer was the Irish State Broadcaster, RTÉ. Viamux 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 Viamux 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. 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.

Chris Hurst

Chris Hurst has worked in commercial radio for over 30 years. He's been a director and Ofcom licence holder for over 23 years. Chris was the Local Radio Managing Director of the LSE quoted Wireless Group PLC with responsibility for 10 local stations and 3 local multiplexes until it was acquired in 2002 by LSE quoted UTV Media PLC he continued in the position until 2009 at which point he had responsibility for 17 analogue radio stations, 7 digital stations and 4 local multiplexes. In 2009 he took a shareholding in Dee 106.3 Ltd and became its CEO a position he continues to hold. The Dee Radio Group went on to acquire Silk FM Ltd.

Chris is a strong believer and supporter of DAB and the Dee Radio Group has launched digital services Dee on DAB, Love 80s Liverpool and Love 80s Manchester. Love 80s Manchester broadcasts on the small-scale trial multiplex in Manchester and is the only small-scale service in the UK that publishes RAJAR. The Dee Radio Group co owns the local multiplex for NE Wales and West Cheshire and Chris is a director of the holding company Muxco NE Wales and West Cheshire Ltd.

Chris was a consultant general manager of community station Pure 107.9 between 2009 and 2017 during which time Pure successfully applied for a grant to establish the Great Manchester Community Radio Alliance which ran for a number of years.

Chris is actively engaged in the radio industry as a whole and sits on the RadioCentre Advisory Group.

Chris attended Harvard Business School in 2005.


Ron Smith

Ron has had a long and successful business career having held a significant number of senior executive positions in a variety of sectors. In addition, Ron has always strongly supported local organisations in the community where he lives.

Ron was Chairman of the radio licence applicant that successfully won the licence for Chester. Ron remains the Chairman and a significant shareholder of Chester's Dee 106.3 which has gone on to become the Dee Radio Group holding the FM licence in East Cheshire - Cheshire's Silk 106.9 and DSP licences Dee on DAB, Love 80s Manchester and Love 80s Liverpool.

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. It was established in 2017 by the Niocast Digital team - who have been operating the successful Trial Manchester small-scale multiplex for the past six years. Viamux have installed systems in the UK & Republic of Ireland. More info: www.viamux.com  the small-scale DAB solution specialists
Ongoing maintenance of the transmission equipment	Viamux	
Installation of the Multiplexing equipment	Viamux	
Day-to-day technical management and maintenance of the multiplexing equipment	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:

Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd intends to launch the multiplex in less than 6 months from award of licence.

Upon award Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd 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, Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd 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.

Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd 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 of 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 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.

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):

- **Hitmix Radio – Ofcom licence number CR000158BA/4**

Hitmix Radio is a 33.3% shareholder and a corporate director in the applicant group.

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.

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

Name of service provider and station name (if known)	Proposed C-DSP or DSP	Nature of evidence of support provided
The HitMix	C-DSP	Heads of Terms
45 Radio	DSP	Heads of Terms
6 Towns Radio	TBC	Heads of Terms
Blue Sky Radio	DSP	Heads of Terms
Love 80s	DSP	Heads of Terms
Care Radio	DSP	Heads of Terms
Cheesy FM	DSP	Heads of Terms
Churnet Sound	DSP	Heads of Terms
Asian Sound Radio	DSP	Emails
Rise	DSP	Emails
Zest	DSP	Heads of Terms
Like One	DSP	Heads of Terms
Like Pop	DSP	Heads of Terms
Ay Up Duck Radio	TBC	Heads of Terms
Life Radio UK	DSP	Heads of Terms
Love 90s	DSP	Heads of Terms
Retro Zest	DSP	Heads of Terms
Asian Air Radio	DSP	Heads of Terms
Madchester Radio	DSP	Heads of Terms
Mom's Spaghetti	DSP	Heads of Terms
Radio Sangam	DSP	Heads of Terms

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:

Ethos

Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd is conscious of its responsibility to ensure fair and effective competition, at all times. We believe 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 Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd bring together a track record of successfully establishing radio stations and local & small-scale DAB multiplexes. Niocast Digital has successfully operated the Trial Manchester multiplex for the past five 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.

The coming together of Hit Mix founder, Robbie Benson and the combined 37 years’ market experience of former Signal Radio MD and PD, Chris Hurst and John Evington, makes this an exciting, potent and achievable proposition.

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. Niocast’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. Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd will 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 Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd ensures that the multiplex is operated by a locally-led community radio company supported by experienced individuals who have successfully implemented and operated DAB multiplexes. All stakeholders are committed to small-scale DAB and have the financial stability to

support that ambition. Our team is hugely experienced and well resourced, with significant practical digital radio expertise and unrivalled local knowledge.

Delivery

Launching a small-scale DAB platform is a significant undertaking and we have been encouraged by the number of positive responses to our plans. We have openly discussed our transmission plans, carriage terms and indicative fees. Stoke & Newcastle DAB Ltd has engaged with potential service providers in an open, non-exclusive manner and will continue to do so throughout the duration of this licence. Each service provider will enter into a Carriage Agreement - the key terms of which are identical for all service providers. All fees charged will be pro-rata to capacity contracted by each service provider.

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:

CHRIS HURST

Date of application:

1st SEPTEMBER 2021

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