

Local radio multiplex licence award: Channel Islands

The local radio multiplex licence for the Channel Islands was awarded by Ofcom on 18 October 2019 to Bailiwick Broadcasting Limited.

In considering the applications it receives for local radio multiplex licences, Ofcom is required to have regard to each of the statutory criteria set out in section 51(2) of the Broadcasting Act 1996. These are as follows:

- a) the extent of the coverage area proposed to be achieved by the applicant
- b) the timetables proposed by the applicant for achieving the stated coverage (i.e. transmission roll-out) and for the commencement of broadcasting of the digital sound programme services proposed;
- c) the ability of the applicant to establish the proposed service and to maintain it throughout the period for which the licence would be in force;
- d) the extent to which the digital sound programme services (other than BBC services) proposed to be included in the service would cater for the tastes and interests of persons living in the area or locality for which the service is to be provided and, where it is proposed to cater for any particular tastes and interests of such persons, the extent to which those services would cater for those tastes and interests;
- e) the extent to which any such digital sound programme services would broaden the range of programmes available by way of local digital sound programme services to persons living in the area or locality for which it is to be provided and, in particular, the extent to which they would cater for tastes and interests different from those already catered for by local digital sound programme services provided for that area or locality
- f) the extent to which there is evidence that, amongst persons living in that area or locality, there is a demand for, or support for, the provision of the proposed service; and
- g) whether, in contracting or offering to contract with persons providing digital sound programme services, television licensable content services or digital additional services, the applicant has acted in a manner calculated to ensure fair and effective competition in the provision of those services.

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

Assessment of successful application

In relation to section 51(2)(a) and (b), Bailiwick Broadcasting Limited intends to use three transmitters to provide 'outdoor' coverage of 93.4% of the licensed area of the Channel Islands, and 81.9% 'indoor' coverage. This will include coverage in each of Jersey, Guernsey and Alderney. The service will launch in October 2020 with all of its proposed programme services.

With regard to section 51(2)(c), Ofcom noted that the detailed business plans and financial forecasts indicated that the applicant would be in a position to establish and run this multiplex service for the duration of the licence term.

In considering the extent to which the applicant's proposals would cater for the tastes and interests of people living in the area (section 51(2)(d)), Ofcom considered that the inclusion of digital simulcasts of the existing analogue commercial radio services in the Channel Islands (i.e. BBC Radios Jersey and Guernsey, Island FM and Channel 103) together with a wide range of new digital services, would enable the multiplex service to cater for local tastes and interests to a significant extent.

There are currently no local DAB radio services in the Channel Islands. By introducing the very large number and range of services listed below, Ofcom considered that Bailiwick Broadcasting Limited's proposed local radio multiplex service would offer a significant breadth of choice for listeners (section 51(2)(e)). The applicant also demonstrated the popularity of the existing analogue services available in the Channel Islands (section 51(2)(f)).

The following commitments will be included as conditions of Bailiwick Broadcasting Limited's local radio multiplex licence when granted:

- The implementation by October 2020 of the three transmitters and transmission parameters proposed in the technical plan, or of a network of transmitters and transmission parameters offering broadly equivalent coverage (which must include Alderney).
- The provision of the local digital sound programme services as proposed in the application (as summarised below), with the audio characteristics proposed.

| Format description | Service name | Audio provider |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Music and information for over 60s | Angel Radio | Angel Radio Ltd |
| Classic pop hits | Bailiwick Radio Classics | Lighthouse Media (CI) Ltd |
| Upbeat pop music | Bailiwick Radio Hits | Lighthouse Media (CI) Ltd |
| Jersey local service | Channel 103 | Channel 103 Ltd |
| Contemporary hit radio | CHR | |
| Country music | Chris Country Radio | Country Broadcasting Ltd |
| Pop and rock music from the 1980s | Crown 80s | Nation Broadcasting Ltd |
| Melodic easy listening | Crown Easy | Nation Broadcasting Ltd |
| Broad music from 1980s to today | Crown Radio | Nation Broadcasting Ltd |
| Rock music | Crown Rock | Nation Broadcasting Ltd |
| Programmes for the LGBT community | Gaydio | Gaydio CIC |
| Guernsey local service | Island FM | Island FM Ltd |
| Children's programmes | Little Radio | Little Radio Ltd |
| Rolling news and information | News Radio UK | News Radio UK Ltd |
| Album music | Radio Caroline | Peter Moore |
| Chill-out music | Skylab Radio | Skylab Radio Ltd |
| Tourist information | Visitor Radio | Visitor Radio Ltd |
| Community radio | Community radio | Unconfirmed |
| Capacity reserved for local broadcasts | Access Radio | Unconfirmed |
| Adult contemporary | Confidential | Confidential |
| Contemporary hit radio | Confidential | Confidential |
| Melodic hits | Confidential | Confidential |

This local radio multiplex service will also transmit the BBC Radio Guernsey and BBC Radio Jersey services, as well as digital simulcasts of the BBC Radio Jersey and BBC Radio Guernsey AM services.

Process for assessment of applications

The Channel Islands local radio multiplex licence was advertised in April 2019. By the closing date of 17 July 2019, three applications were received, as follows:

- Bailiwick Broadcasting Limited
- Small Digital Planet Limited
- Tindle MuxCo Channel Islands Limited

The application was circulated among the decision makers as well as among relevant Ofcom colleagues. A copy of the non-confidential section of the application was made available for public scrutiny on the Ofcom website and public comment was invited.