

## Ofcom Advisory Committee for Wales

### Consultation Response - Localness on Commercial Radio: Further consultation on approved areas in Scotland and Wales.

Publication date: **26 October 2018**

Closing date for responses: **30 November 2018**

#### Introduction

In our original response to the Ofcom Commercial Radio Localness consultation, which closed in August this year, we supported the idea of Wales being recognised as one unified territory which we suggested was consistent with the concept of reporting news for the nation. We argued that creating a single area for Wales offered an opportunity to encourage stations in Wales to produce cohesive news that serves the Welsh national interest. We still believe that reporting national news for Wales remains a high priority. However, after further reflection, we are concerned that creating a single approved area for Wales has some potentially unforeseen consequences that would not be in the interests of listeners, particularly in north Wales.

#### ACW Response to the Consultation Question:

***“Do you agree with our revised proposals for approved areas in Scotland and Wales? If not, please specify any alternative proposals you think should be considered (if any) and explain the reasons and/or evidence which support your view.”***

We note in Ofcom’s statement regarding the localness consultation that other respondents favoured two approved areas covering North Wales and South Wales as this would prevent any local stations in North Wales from being able to broadcast their locally-made programming from Cardiff. We recognise that there are significant cultural and linguistic differences between the northern and southern parts of Wales. A centre such as Caernarfon in north West Wales, which is served by Capital FM (Caernarfon) is around 200 miles and a four-hour drive away from Cardiff. It is also worth noting that in the case of Global’s AM services, Smooth Radio North Wales and Cheshire and Smooth Radio South Wales, where effectively there is already one approved area covering the whole of Wales, the company has opted to provide both stations’ locally-made programming entirely from Cardiff.

On reflection, we therefore acknowledge that there is a risk that Global or any subsequent owner could also decide to broadcast all the locally-made output for its FM stations in north Wales from Cardiff if one approved area for commercial FM radio covering the whole of Wales was established by Ofcom. Such an outcome would not, in our view, serve the interests of listeners in north Wales.

We therefore welcome Ofcom’s revised proposal in this consultation to divide Wales into two new approved areas – North Wales and South Wales. According to the consultation document, the proposed North Wales area would constitute the existing ‘North & Mid Wales’ approved area, while the South Wales approved area would merge the existing ‘South Wales’ and ‘West Wales’ approved areas.

**ACW**

**November 2018**