



Shire Sounds Community Radio CIC

2 Church Walk

Kettering

Northamptonshire

NN16 0DJ

Thursday 4th February 2021

RE: Ofcom's Plan of Work 2021/22

We note with disappointment that Ofcom have no plans to carry out any analogue FM community licensing in 2021/22.

Shire Sounds is a local online only community radio station for Kettering for the under-40 audience. Kettering is not served by any other community radio station, and there is no local radio station for the under 40 population. Smooth FM (was Connect FM) transitioned to an over-40 audience when they carried out their format change from Connect FM to Smooth Radio. Heart Northants (was Northants 96) does not cover Kettering due to the topography and Ofcom's own MCA maps clearly show this.

With the coronavirus pandemic the under 40's have been disproportionately affected and we run employability skills training, especially for those who are marginalised in society. Using radio as a means of engaging with these people is far more successful than perhaps a "traditional" college course and has been commended by several local education providers who we work in partnership with. Most of our management committee is formed of people who work in education and several years previous experience in radio, making us ideally placed to provide such a service.

We have strong support from community leaders, including our local MP, Town Council, and several other local radio stations. We have been invited to take part in several events, such as Kettering Christmas Light Switch-on, Northamptonshire Food Festival, KettFest and the Kettering Teenage Market to name a few. We have also teamed up with many local businesses to support and grow them in the community, as-well-as offer them free advertising for charity or local events.

Our service is viable, sustainable and in very high demanded.

SSDAB is unsuitable as the marginalised youngsters cannot afford DAB radios and are likely to have better access to internet radios via smartphone for digital listening. However analogue FM transmission is simple, effective and low cost, and will provide an essential way for our audience to listen to us in their cars. It is widely accepted that young drivers are not generally driving in brand new cars (with DAB radios) due to the high insurance premiums therefore drive older second-hand cars with FM only radios fitted.

There is clearly a frequency available for a localised FM service in our area as it is relatively rural, surrounded by hills and has no existing community stations which are using the spectrum.

We therefore ask Ofcom to carry out a small licensing round for areas which used to have a local radio station (such as we did with Connect FM, which used to cover the younger audience), but no longer has. Furthermore, our area has no existing community station either.

Thank you for taking the time to read this response,
I look forward to hearing from you soon.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charlie Stone".

Charlie Stone

Shire Sounds Community Radio CIC – North Northamptonshires's Community Radio Station

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