

Your response

Question	Your response
<p data-bbox="204 495 775 528">Do you have any comments on our proposals?</p>	<p data-bbox="809 495 1374 633">Bedford is a large town, with a population of almost 175,000 (in 2019, according to the Office for National Statistics), but it is currently ill-served by broadcast media.</p> <p data-bbox="809 674 1385 1061">The town is, for some reason, in the Look East/Anglia television region, despite having relatively little in common with the East. While some Bedfordians do commute east to Cambridge, Bedford's commuters predominantly travel south to London and Luton, or west to Milton Keynes. Bedford is also much more of a multi-cultural town than the likes of Norwich and Ipswich, with 28.5% of its population from a black or minority ethnic community in the 2011 Census.</p> <p data-bbox="809 1102 1350 1346">While Bedford is of course within the BBC Three Counties Radio catchment area, its coverage on the station is often squeezed by the larger conurbations in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. (Commercial local radio effectively no longer exists.)</p> <p data-bbox="809 1386 1378 1630">The town's diversity is recognised by its sole existing FM radio licence holder, in2beats, an urban music station for 14-35-year-olds. While that station does a decent job serving its target audience, it is predominantly youth-music-based and carries little in the way of local news or community-based current affairs.</p> <p data-bbox="809 1671 1366 1776">It is clear there is a need for a true community radio station to properly serve Bedford and its satellite towns such as Kempston.</p> <p data-bbox="809 1816 1385 2027">Bedford Radio, operated by a Community Interest Company, aims to be that station. It has built up its resources and local presence over the past couple of years, is currently broadcasting online in a limited manner (having launched during the coronavirus restrictions)</p>

and has a fully equipped town centre studio ready to use when Covid restrictions permit.

However, Bedford Radio cannot grow meaningfully without the profile accorded by either an FM or DAB licence.

Ofcom has yet to indicate a timescale in which the Bedford DAB licence will be advertised.

Accordingly, I believe it fair and reasonable in the circumstances for Ofcom to offer a second FM licence in Bedford during 2021-2 to enable Bedford Radio to provide the town and its surrounding areas with a true community-focused station that could play a vital role in the post-coronavirus regeneration of the town.

Bedford Radio has a vastly different target audience and mission from in2beats and would not directly compete with the already well-established in2beats for audience or advertisers.