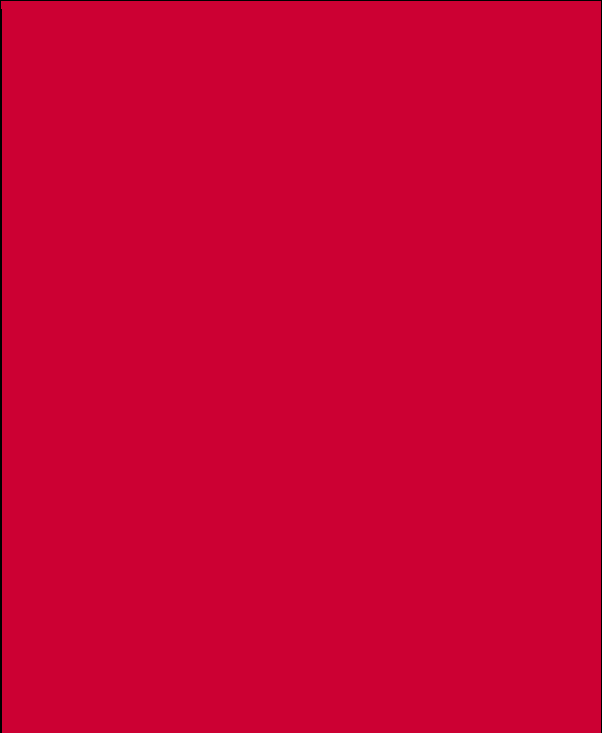


Your response

Question	Your response
	<p>Confidential? – N</p> <p>Do you agree that for the purposes of where locally-made programming may come from, Ofcom should approve the ‘South of England (Bauer)’ area in relation to the 12 local licences listed in Section 2 of this document? If you do not agree, please give reasons.</p> <p>I strongly disapprove of the Bauer initiative for a number of reasons.</p> <p>The West Sussex Hampshire border area is very often overlooked in terms of local news, business, events and sports. It is invariably dominated by its much bigger towns and cities that sit outside the reach of Spirit FM (Portsmouth and Southampton to the west, Brighton to the east and Guildford and Crawley to the North).</p> <p>By allowing the merger of Spirit FM into a South of England or national co-operative will only amplify this disconnect and disenfranchise all the listeners, businesses, community groups and sports club that depend on receiving and providing information to a local audience.</p> <p>Furthermore, as we come out of lockdown it is evident that the Government wants to control infection rates on a local level therefore this emphasises the need to have local broadcasters that can invest the time to reach local communities; something a regional or national station could never achieve. We may be past the current outbreak but it is likely that the Covid pandemic will remain for a number of years and is likely to not be the last such outbreak given that SARS and MARS are previous infections that we were fortunate enough to contain. As such why would the Govt and Ofcom want to further dismantle local broadcasters?</p>



Finally, as we come out of Lockdown, we are going to face a severe recession. As such many local business will be dependent on the support of a local customer base and Spirit FM is a vital part of this local economic infrastructure. Even pre covid a large part of the Spirit FM reach covered seaside towns such as Bognor, Littlehampton and Selsey which the government had already identified as areas of lower economic and social growth. By the integration of Spirit FM into regional/national station the population and businesses will feel further isolated and abandoned. With a high percentage of hospitality businesses in the area that have already been massively impacted by the virus the outlook is already bleak and a decision to approve the Bauer plan would be another nail in the coffin of this areas ability to recover and prosper.