

Consultation response form

Consultation title	Bauer Radio stations in the south of England
Full name	Christopher Rogers
Contact phone number	
Representing (delete as appropriate)	Self / Organisation
Organisation name	
Email address	

Your response

Question	Your response
	<p data-bbox="719 448 970 479">Confidential? – Y N</p> <p data-bbox="719 517 1382 689">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 data-bbox="719 730 1353 797">No, I do not agree with the changes proposed in this application.</p> <p data-bbox="719 837 1366 1133">Although the application states <i>“Please note that the request for this change provides for future flexibility and does not imply that all stations will co-locate and share programming.”</i> it has been announced that Bauer, intend to merge almost 50 local radio stations across the country into their 'Hits Radio' brand and in doing so, remove virtually all of the local nature of these stations.</p> <p data-bbox="719 1223 1385 1630">I am personally responding in support of my local station, Spirit FM. Spirit FM is an important part of our local area, making considerable contribution to the community, both as a source of local news and information, and through their support of local charity, local events and local business. The reach into the community extends far further than just the broadcast radio programs, with many thousands of pounds raised for charitable causes each year, in addition to supporting local communities through publicising events and attending events.</p> <p data-bbox="719 1720 1366 1975">The proposals for Spirit FM involve rebranding the station to 'Greatest Hits Radio' and changing the format to broadcast networked programming for the vast majority of the time, with only a 'regional' drive-time show on weekday afternoons, which will be localised to the 'approved area' applied for, so hardly local.</p>

Destruction of independent local radio stations by such large corporate entities is having a devastating effect on Local Radio - smaller stations are being bought up to obtain the licenses and broadcast frequencies and using them to create large national networks which claim to provide local radio, but in reality provide nothing more than regional advertising outlets with a token content of music and news reports to keep people listening.

Many of these stations, including Spirit FM, only exist because of hard-fought campaigns to gain approval of FM broadcast licences for these local areas in the past when regulation was much stronger and it is wrong that a large company can now simply come in and completely change the format and purpose of these stations, depriving local communities of the local service that the licences were originally granted to allow.

It has been especially evident how important a local resource such as Spirit FM is in these difficult times. Having a radio station we can tune into to get the latest local news and information broadcast by presenters who are in and who understand the local area has been vitally important. And as Spirit always have, they have gone beyond being a broadcaster and have supported the local area with a number of initiatives throughout the Coronavirus period, from raising funds for local food banks to simpler things like running the weekly Virtual Pub Quiz to help keep us entertained and boost morale in lockdown.

Due to the number of similar local stations involved, this is a resource that will be lost to many communities in all areas of our country, and represents a great loss that will be felt across the nation.

There is an active Facebook group which has been started to 'Save Spirit FM' which currently has 1,100 members and a petition being run which has almost 3,600 signatures, so there is a real strength of feeling

locally which is against this. I am aware of similar campaigns for other stations affected by this move.

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/571085170455628>

Petition: <https://www.change.org/p/bauer-media-save-spirit-fm>

Bauer have already proven themselves to be acting in pure self-interest over this matter, by attempting to keep this consultation quiet from the affected listeners, and even dismissing a popular Spirit presenter for his involvement with the petition and support campaign.

These proposals represent a clear and present danger to valuable local resources, and will pave the way for changes which completely defeat the purpose of the original licence issues and must be denied.