

heart
96-103
more music variety

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Dear Andrea

DAB in North Devon: Response from Heart Devon

I am writing in response to Ofcom's consultation on DAB in North Devon on behalf of Heart Devon. Heart is a network of local radio stations across the UK and in Devon we broadcast in Barnstaple, Exeter & Torbay, Plymouth and South Hams.

Heart's parent company, Global Radio, has invested significant sums in digital radio and Heart North Devon is one of the very few stations in the Heart network which is not currently available on DAB as well as FM. We strongly support Now Digital's request to extend the coverage area of its Exeter and Torbay local radio multiplex to cover North Devon and we have confirmed to Now Digital that we will fund the lion's share of the cost of expanding the existing network into North Devon if the request is granted.

Heart is a very popular and successful radio station in North Devon. We have been broadcasting in North Devon since 1992, first as Lantern and since 2009 as Heart. More than one in three adults in North Devon - some 50,000 people - tune in to Heart every week.

We are committed to providing relevant local content to listeners in North Devon. There have been more than 70 separate news items about North Devon broadcast in the last few weeks on Heart Devon, and this summer we are running split news bulletins for North Devon to support the area at its busiest time.

Over the past 10 months we have supported and been present at over 23 local events in North Devon, including most recently Oceanfest, where we were the media partner as well as Bideford Carnival, Torrington Carnival, UK Farm Olympics, Barnstaple Christmas Lights, South West Chocolate Festival, Elephant Day, Hartland Abbey Country Fair and the North Devon District Hospital Trick or Treat. We estimate

total attendance at these events to be over 75,000 people and the response we receive at the events is overwhelmingly positive. Here are some of the comments we have received from local people about why they listen:-

- "Great music and entertaining chat"
- "Cheerful, wakes me up"
- "Topical chatter that's relevant to events around Devon"
- "I do think it's a great improvement on Lantern FM"
- "Love the variety of music"
- "Easy listening, always good fun"
- "Matt and Caroline in the mornings are comical"
- "Great to start the mornings to"

We will continue to support local events. During July we are Media Partners to the 17th Annual Atlantic Watersports Games 2011. This is the first time the Atlantic Games have come to Britain and we are expecting 50,000 people to visit the Games in Bideford, Westward Ho, Saunton Sands, Croyde Bay and Riverford Lakes during the week of water sport activities.

Heart is also a key partner for local companies, helping them promote and grow their businesses. In the last month alone, we have worked with local businesses and employers such as Petroc College, Cowlings Estate Agents, RHS Rosemoor, North Devon Hospice, Safer North Devon Partnership, North Devon Plus, Planet Bike, Cornwall Farmers, Stagecoach Buses, RGB Builders, The Big Sheep Tourist Attraction, Barnstaple Town Centre Management Company and Westcountry Wedding Boutiques. A strong, successful local commercial station with big audiences makes an important contribution to the local economy.

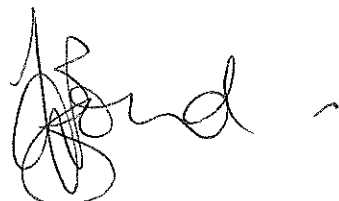
We are also proud to support local charities and community initiatives. Children's Hospice UK is Heart's charity partner this year and the Heart network ran a nationwide appeal, raising over £330,000. In North Devon our local presenters spent the day at the Little Bridge House hospice in Fremington and this summer we will be presenting the hospice with a Mini, paid for by Heart listeners. Heart is also a partner of Radio in Schools, an independent, not for profit organisation that offers a safe podcasting platform to allow schools, children and a new generation of listeners to get their voice heard in their own communities. As part of this long-standing partnership we recently visited West Croft Junior School in Bideford in North Devon to introduce the initiative.

The proposal to extend local DAB into North Devon will increase choice for radio listeners in North Devon and provide an opportunity for new broadcasters to enter the market. Despite some misleading claims made about FM being switched off, I believe that local people support digital radio. To coincide with Ofcom's consultation we ran an on-air competition in North Devon to win a digital radio. We received over 800 entries from listeners in North Devon.

We urge Ofcom to grant Now Digital's request to enable local digital radio to launch in North Devon.

I set out our responses to the specific questions in the consultation below.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara Bond', with a small flourish at the end.

Sara Bond
Managing Director, Heart Devon