

## Statement

A request from GMG Radio to change the formats of both Real Radio South Wales and Real Radio North and mid Wales was discussed by the Radio Licensing Committee on 2 August 2010.

GMG's request was to share all programmes between the two stations, effectively to create a new national service for Wales, and to allow them to co-locate. The request was also to reduce the amount of locally-made programming required to be provided under each licence from the current 10 hours each weekday to seven hours each day, in return for a commitment to provide local news bulletins at least hourly during weekday daytimes and peaktimes at weekends. A final, related, request was made to replace in both Formats the existing requirement to include "regional information" with an obligation to include "information about Wales"

GMG applied for these various Format changes in accordance with Ofcom's published localness guidance. In particular, the guidance that certain 'regional' analogue stations may no longer have to provide bespoke regional programmes for their individual licensed areas, providing the combined service which results, is made available nationally on DAB. In relation to the South Wales and North & Mid Wales licences, 'national' is taken to mean all local and/or regional DAB multiplexes which provide coverage in Wales. In addition, due to the specific needs of the nations, the guidance states that regional stations in Wales should continue to provide at least seven hours a day of programming from within Wales.

Ofcom determined that the request would have substantially altered both stations' characters of service (see point a. below), and therefore in accordance with the statutory requirements the proposed changes were subject to a public consultation which ran for four weeks.

There were four responses to the consultation. Non-confidential responses may be found, along with the consultation document, at:

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/realradio/>

Ofcom has the ability to consent to Format changes under conditions included in each local analogue commercial radio licence, in accordance with Section 106 (1A) of the Broadcasting Act 1990, if it is satisfied that at least one of the following criteria is met:

- a. The departure would not substantially alter the character of the service
- b. The change would not narrow the range of programmes available in the area by way of relevant independent radio services
- c. The change would be conducive to the maintenance or promotion of fair or effective competition, or
- d. There is evidence that, amongst persons living in the affected areas, there is a significant demand for, or significant support for, the change.
- e. That the change would result from programmes in the licensed service ceasing to be made at premises in the area, or those programmes would continue to be made wholly or partly at premises within an area approved by Ofcom

In this case, the Committee was satisfied that, in respect of each licence, the change would not narrow the range of programmes in the area by way of relevant independent radio

services (section 106(1A)(b)) because all aspects of each station's Character of Service, apart from the area of editorial coverage, will remain unchanged. In particular, the Committee felt that any loss of 'regional information' from both services would be balanced by the gain in information about Wales, and that therefore the overall range of programmes would not be narrowed. In addition, as noted above, the request was consistent with Ofcom's published localness guidance, and therefore the Committee felt able to agree to the request.