

GENERAL DETAILS

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Organisation Gateway FM

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Gateway FM broadly welcomes the approach suggested by the DCMS. Clearly, failure to allow a successful station to continue serving its community would deprive that community of the continuing social gain benefits to which community radio is pledged. We would oppose any move to ask stations to show that they have e.g. one year's running costs in the bank, deeming the fact of a station's survival for five years evidence of its ability to survive. We agree that serious breaches of broadcast regulations should generally weigh strongly against licence renewal, but incline to the view that less serious breaches should not automatically disqualify a station, unless their number indicates culpable negligence. We consider it only reasonable that stations, having invested considerable resources of time, effort, community commitment and cash into even securing a licence in the first place, should be able to plan their future with some confidence that having met their key commitments and conducted themselves appropriately, should be able to apply for a licence extension at minimal cost and inconvenience.
2. Gateway FM concurs with Radio Regen in considering the 50% limit to be irrational and that it should be lifted, subject to protection of station and public interest from the potential exertion of undue influence by a major funder. We agree that a 'flagging' system obliging a licensee to notify Ofcom when a funder/client seeks to (or becomes) a 50%+ funder should prove a sufficient safeguard. Such a measure would not require Ofcom to approve every such notification but should generate an additional declaration in the Annual Ofcom Report stating that the majority funder has not exerted, or attempted to exert, undue influence on the output of the station. With reference to the 50% rule on commercial revenue, Gateway FM views a quota as essential to the maintenance of the non-commercialised, social gain nature of the sector. We believe that to lift it would devalue the sector and permit stations to become little more than small ILR stations under the guise of CR and providing no other social gain than that many people like to listen to them (the argument for pirate operators). We concur with Radio Regen's view that should DCMS seek to lessen the quota we would again propose a 'flagging' system that would require substantial extra detail from the licensee on its delivery of social gain.
3. i We concur with the CMA in considering that the rule prohibiting the licensing of a CR station if it would overlap with an existing

local radio service whose MCA is less than 50,000 adults should be lifted.

3. ii

We agree with the CMA's response on this issue and would further emphasise that the protection of commercial stations implied by the current measures alluded to in 3.i) and 3.ii) is completely unjustifiable in the light of the 'relaxed' attitude to commercial radio licensing being currently proposed (e.g. from the Myers Report and in certain parts of Digital Britain). If commercial stations – of any size - continue to be permitted to change formats, co-locate or significantly reduce their locally-originated output, then protectionist measures that stifle community radio in their erstwhile areas cannot possibly be acceptable.