



Community radio: third round of licensing

Guidance on timetable, frequency availability and
application procedures

Statement

Publication date:

1 April 2011

Contents

Section		Page
1	Community radio licensing: third round	1

Annex		Page
1	Regional map	5
2	Areas: descriptions and information on FM frequency availability	6

Community radio licensing: third round

What is community radio?

- 1.1 Community radio stations are radio services which provide community benefits and run on a not-for-profit basis. Generally stations are focused on broadcasting to and involving their own particular community - either everyone in the broadcast area or a community of interest (such as a particular ethnic group, age group or interest group). Stations involve local volunteers in providing the service, and bring community benefits such as training and community news and discussion. They generally have a small coverage area (usually up to a 5km radius).
- 1.2 Community radio is a separate tier of radio, different from both commercial radio and BBC radio, and each station is separately owned. Most stations can carry advertising and sponsorship, but there is a limit on how much income stations can take from this source. More information on the requirements and rules is in Ofcom's 'Notes of Guidance for Community Radio Licence Applicants and Licensees'
<http://licensing.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/radio/community/thirdround/notesofguidance.pdf>
Licences can be applied for only when applications are invited, and Ofcom is now opening a licensing round.

Regions and timetable

- 1.3 Ofcom first invited applications for community radio licences in 2004 and finished this round of licensing in 2006. A second round of licensing started later in 2006, and finished in August 2010. In total Ofcom has awarded 228 community radio licences.
- 1.4 To help consider whether to conduct a third round of licensing, in April 2010 Ofcom invited groups interested in applying for a community radio licence to let us know by sending an 'expression of interest'. Around 270 such expressions have been received from all over the United Kingdom. This continuing high level of interest has persuaded us to conduct a third round of community radio licensing (subject to the availability of suitable frequencies). We have used these expressions of interest, along with our knowledge of FM spectrum availability, to help us plan the next round of licensing. (The submission of an 'expression of interest' does not form part of the licensing scheme, and it is not taken as a binding promise on the part of its author to apply for a licence. Equally, an invitation to apply for a community radio licence is not limited only to those who have previously submitted an 'expression of interest')
- 1.5 Ofcom has, as for the second round of licensing, decided to invite applications for the third round on a region by region basis. We have decided on these 'regions' (nations in some cases) attempting to minimise the potential risk of licensing decisions made in one region affecting our ability to license services in another. Potential applicants should note that there are large parts of the UK, notably in and around major conurbations, for which there are no suitable FM frequencies available. More information is given in paragraphs 1.8-1.14, and Annexes 1 and 2.
- 1.6 The timetable overleaf sets out the regions, and the order in which we intend to invite applications. Specific dates are given only in respect of the first area (with an indication of the period within which we may invite applications for subsequent

regions). The number of applications received for each region, as well as other administrative priorities, will affect the ongoing timetable. We will publish the timetable on our website and update it with the actual dates for each region as soon as we are able to. For each region, the period between the invitation to apply and the closing date will normally be 12 weeks. This may occasionally be extended, for example if the dates include a holiday period, and for the first region in lieu of advance notice of the opening of the licensing round. A map showing the regions is in Annex 1. A table at Annex 2 gives a description of each area (listing the counties and unitary authorities where appropriate).

	Region	Expected date for inviting applications	Closing date for applications
1	South west England and Wales	Friday 1 April 2011	Thursday 21 July 2011*
2	Scotland	End of 2011	12 weeks after opening date
3	Northern Ireland	First half of 2012	12 weeks after opening date
4	Northeast England and Cumbria	Second half of 2012	12 weeks after opening date
5	Yorkshire and the Humber and the north west of England	First half of 2013	12 weeks after opening date
6	West Midlands, East Midlands (including Lincolnshire) and the east of England	Second half of 2013	12 weeks after opening date
7	South east England	First half of 2014	12 weeks after opening date

*An extra four weeks has been added to the usual 12 weeks between invitation and closing date, in lieu of notice of the starting of a third licensing round.

- 1.7 As in the previous round, applicants should not expect all decisions in one region to be announced before the closing date for the next region has passed. There will be occasions when the assessment of the applications in one region is not completed before the closing date for the next region (there will be 'overlaps').

Frequency availability

- 1.8 Ofcom has awarded a large number of community radio licences in its first and second rounds of licensing. Identifying suitable FM frequencies in some areas has been difficult and, as stated when we invited expressions of interest, there are many parts of the UK where we will not be able to invite applications for FM licences due to the lack of suitable frequencies.

- 1.9 Separately, we have received feedback from a number of existing community radio licensees that a small coverage area threatens their sustainability. In particular, it can affect their ability to attract support from potential funders or advertisers for example. (In the past we have offered licences with a frequency that can only support a coverage area of less than a 5km radius). As a result Ofcom does not wish to offer licences that will put operators in a similar situation in future, if at all possible.
- 1.10 Therefore, we do not intend to accept applications for broadcasting on FM in areas where there are no suitable frequencies to support a community radio station with a radius of around 5km. Our work in identifying such areas is ongoing and has not been completed at the time this document is published.
- 1.11 For each region, when we invite applications, we will state the parts of that region for which we will not accept applications for services on FM. We are inviting applications for the first region alongside the publication of this document (see paragraph 1.22). For elsewhere in the UK, we are able now to give an indication of where we expect currently not to be able to accept FM applications, but full and final details will not be available until applications are invited. Please see the map at Annex 1, and Annex 2 for a list of the areas that we have so far identified for which no suitable FM frequencies are currently available.
- 1.12 It should be noted that from time to time a radio station (commercial or community) may cease broadcasting and surrender its licence (or have its licence revoked for some reason). When this happens we may decide to offer the frequency(ies) associated with that service for community radio services. Potential applicants should note therefore, that the availability of frequencies may change from time to time.
- 1.13 A limited number of medium wave (AM) frequencies may be available in some areas. However, medium wave frequencies are also generally heavily used and suffer from a significantly greater level of interference at night. Ofcom has not carried out a full frequency audit of these resources for community radio. Therefore in some locations it may not be possible to identify any suitable frequencies for either FM or AM services.
- 1.14 In light of all these matters, there will be no guarantee of a suitable frequency being available for any applicant in any part of any particular region. All applications would be made on that basis.
- 1.15 Potential applicants for community radio licences are also advised to note Ofcom's coverage policy for community radio services (http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/radio/coverage/pp_def/).

Services that may overlap with small commercial stations

- 1.16 In the first two rounds of community radio licensing the legislation in place (the Community Radio Order 2004) prevented Ofcom from licensing any service that would overlap¹ with an existing commercial radio service with fewer than 50,000 adults (aged 15+) in its measured coverage area. This restriction was removed by the Community Radio (Amendment) Order 2010. As a consequence in its third round of licensing Ofcom will consider applications from applicants whose proposed service overlaps with such commercial services.

¹ two services overlap if (but only if) the potential audience of either service includes 50 per cent or more of the potential audience of the other

- 1.17 In relation to areas served by a commercial radio station with a measured adult (15+) population of fewer than 150,000, if a community radio station would overlap (or is overlapped) by 50% or more such an area, then income from on-air advertising and sponsorship (including commercial references) is prohibited. The list of commercial radio station areas affected in each region will be included in each notice inviting applications. ('Overlap' refers to population overlap.) Potential applicants can check the adult population in the coverage area of a commercial station with which they may overlap on our website (<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/radio/coverage/> see 'MCA populations and overlaps'.)
- 1.18 More detail about these provisions, and information about their practical effect, is in the document inviting licence applications for the first region for which we are advertising licences, south west England and Wales (see paragraph 1.22 below).

Application form and notes of guidance for applicants

- 1.19 A new community radio licence application form has been prepared for this round of licensing. The application form can be found on our website <http://licensing.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/radio/community/thirdround/thirdround-applicationform.rtf> Applicants should download a copy, complete it and submit it by email to the address given, and by the deadline given, in the 'invitation to apply' document for the region in which the proposed service is located. The questions asked, and the information requested, are designed to enable Ofcom to consider an applicant's proposals against the various legislative requirements.
- 1.20 Ofcom's document 'Notes of Guidance for Community Radio Licence Applicants and Licensees' has been revised and updated. All potential applicants are advised to read these guidance notes; they include a copy of the Community Radio Order and relevant sections of the Broadcasting Act 1990 (as amended and modified).

Feedback to unsuccessful applicants

- 1.21 As in our second round of licensing, verbal feedback will be provided to unsuccessful applicants upon request. Written feedback will not be provided.

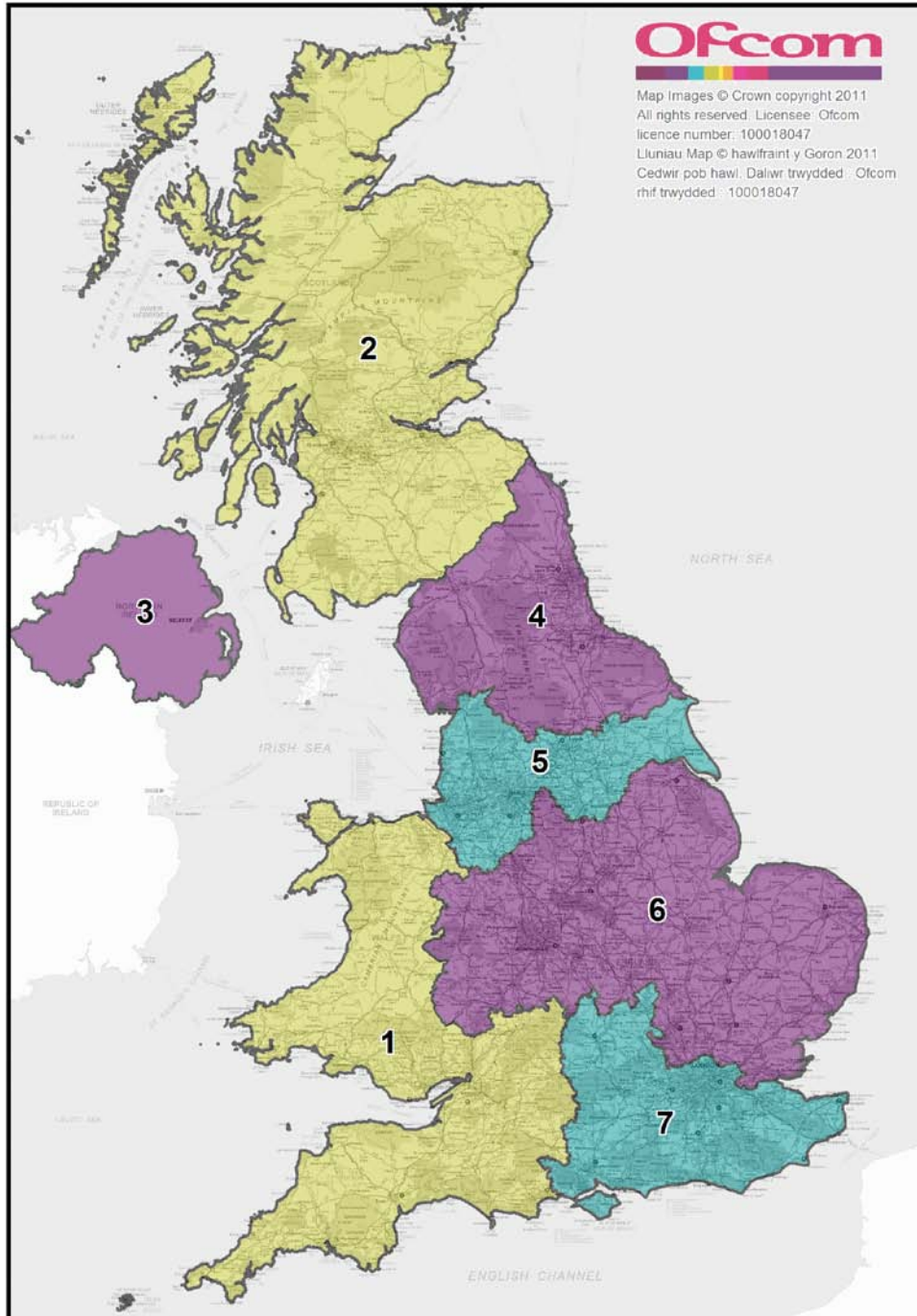
Applications for south west England and Wales

- 1.22 A notice inviting applications from the first region listed in the table above is being published alongside this statement, along with the application form for this round of licensing, and revised 'Notes of Guidance for Community Radio Applicants and Licensees'.
<http://licensing.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/radio/community/thirdround/notesofguidance.pdf>

Annex 1

Regional map

The third round of community radio licensing will be carried out on a region-by-region basis, as shown below. (A preliminary timetable is on page 2 of this document.) The areas for which we do not expect to invite any applications for services on FM are listed in annex 2.



Annex 2

Areas: descriptions and information on FM frequency availability

Nation/region	Description of region (including counties and unitary authority areas)*	No suitable FM frequencies are available in these areas (This list is not exhaustive. For each region it will be finalised when we invite applications for the region in question. Please refer to the relevant notice inviting applications.)
South west England and Wales	Cornwall, Isles of Scilly, Devon, Plymouth, Torbay, Somerset, Dorset, Poole, Bournemouth, Wiltshire, Swindon, Gloucestershire, City of Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Wales	Bournemouth Poole City of Bristol Bath and North East Somerset Swansea Neath Port Talbot Bridgend The Vale of Glamorgan Rhondda, Cynon, Taff Cardiff Caerphilly Newport Flintshire Wrexham Coast of Conwy and Denbighshire
Scotland	Scotland	
Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland	Derry
Northeast England and Cumbria	Northumberland, County Durham, Tyne and Wear, Cumbria, Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees.	Tyne and Wear Stockton on Tees Middlesbrough Hartlepool Durham
Yorkshire and the Humber and the north west of England	North Yorkshire, York, East Riding of Yorkshire, City of Kingston upon Hull, North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Warrington, Halton, Cheshire West and Cheshire, Cheshire East.	South Yorkshire Greater Manchester Merseyside Wirral Cheshire West Yorkshire (except Huddersfield or Halifax or Dewsbury)

<p>West Midlands, East Midlands (including Lincolnshire) and the east of England</p>	<p>Shropshire, Staffordshire, Telford and Wrekin, Stoke on Trent, West Midlands, Warwickshire, County of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Derbyshire, Derby, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Leicester, Northamptonshire, Rutland, Peterborough, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Essex, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock, Hertfordshire, Luton, Central Bedfordshire, Bedford.</p>	<p>West Midlands (Metropolitan County) Leicestershire Leicester Nottinghamshire Nottingham Derby Lincoln Cambridge Bury St Edmunds and surrounding area of Suffolk Southern and western Essex Southend on Sea Thurrock Hertfordshire Bedford Central Bedfordshire Luton</p>
<p>South east England,</p>	<p>Greater London, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham, Windsor and Maidenhead, Bracknell Forest, Slough, Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth, Isle of Wight, Surrey, West Sussex, East Sussex, Brighton and Hove, Kent, Medway.</p>	<p>Surrey Kent Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Bracknell Forest Wokingham Reading The coastal strip of Hampshire, West Sussex and East Sussex (excluding Brighton and Hove) Localities within 10km of the M25 motorway. Greater London and other localities within the M25 motorway (there are no suitable FM or AM frequencies available within this area).</p>

* A map showing the Counties and Unitary Authorities of the United Kingdom is available on the website of the Office for National Statistics.

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/downloads/uk_cty_ua.pdf