

**BBC TRUST SERVICE LICENCE REVIEW**  
**BBC LOCAL RADIO AND NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS IN ENGLAND**

**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 **BBC Local Radio plays an important role in the UK's media market.** A thriving and sustainable local media sector is a vitally important part of the UK's social, cultural and democratic landscape, and the BBC plays a key role in this through its Local Radio stations.
- 1.2 **Local Radio is the biggest area of radio expenditure for the BBC and its content should reflect this investment.** This means avoiding networked content as much as possible, playing a distinct range of music and increasing its focus on local news. Some budget reductions have been achieved in recent years, but BBC Local Radio remains adequately funded overall and there may be further scope for efficiencies in management and facilities.
- 1.3 **The key determiner of distinctiveness for BBC Local stations remains their localness.** BBC Local Radio has no distinct purpose if it does not offer a local service. England does not need another national BBC music service, nor does it need an additional national speech service. BBC Local Radio is at its best when it is a locally-focussed news and speech service, providing distinctive and high-quality speech which informs, educates and entertains.
- 1.4 **Local Radio's news and current affairs provision should be maintained and extended where possible** in order to complement local commercial radio. 'All speech' programmes on BBC Local Radio should not include music, or focus on light entertainment non-news content. If it reduces or loses its speech commitments this will diminish the distinctive value it has and its unique role in the local media landscape.
- 1.5 **The recent proposal to make BBC Local Radio content more 'personality driven' risks diluting the distinctiveness of the service.** The personalities on BBC Local Radio have always been an important part of its offering and will remain so, but this should not be at the expense of a commitment to news, debate and local knowledge. If it drifts too far from these core requirements it will risk becoming more like other BBC services or local commercial radio stations. BBC Local Radio should be seeking to complement not duplicate these services.
- 1.6 **BBC Local Radio stations should continue to focus on offering distinctive and high-quality speech content for older audiences.** No other radio stations have a mandate to explicitly serve older people in the same way, yet BBC Local Radio is not doing this as effectively as it could. BBC Local Radio should take the opportunity provided by this service licence review to refocus its efforts on serving older audiences.
- 1.7 **The Trust should require BBC management to do more to encourage older programme makers into BBC Local Radio.** The stations rightly do not want to sound 'old-fashioned', but it is crucial that they fully acknowledge the diverse tastes and interests of the older audience they are required to serve. This should be supported by a range of producers, journalists and presenters who reflect the audience: both now and in the future as the population ages.
- 1.8 **The BBC's role in supporting digital radio is critical** especially at a local level. It should commit to completing the current build out of digital radio coverage so that all BBC Local Radio stations are available on DAB, and this network should commit to be local multiplexes for the duration of their licences (until 2030).

## 2. Background

- 2.1 The BBC Local Radio network of 39 stations across England is currently listened to by 6.7m adults each week. It has a specific focus on targeting 'listeners aged 50 and over, who are not well-served elsewhere,'<sup>1</sup> and should do this through a distinctive mix of speech and music with a spine of local news, information and debate.
- 2.2 However, despite this fairly unique output, an ageing population and an audience with increased loyalty to radio listening, BBC Local Radio has struggled to maintain listenership in the past decade. At the time of the previous service licence review in 2011, listenership had declined by 6% and the amount of time listeners were spending with the station had declined by 22%<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.3 To add pressure to the service, the 2011 review also took place against a background of budget cuts. The BBC was reducing its costs by 20% as part of its Delivering Quality First initiative, and proposed that there would be cuts of up to £15m from the BBC Local Radio budget, which meant more networking across the service: ending the local afternoon and evening shows on weekdays, whilst introducing introduce an 'All England Programme' at 7-10pm.
- 2.4 The 2011 Radiocentre response highlighted that the key determiner of distinctiveness for BBC Local Radio stations was, and will always be, their localness. The Trust appeared to agree with this, and the scale of savings was reduced to £8m: with the All England Programme the only networked show introduced.
- 2.5 BBC Local Radio has continued to struggle to attract listeners since 2011. Audiences have fallen further across the board, with 8.3% fewer listeners since the changes were introduced, and the amount of time spent with BBC Local Radio falling 17.3%. As far as the All England Programme is concerned there are 28.4% fewer listeners listening for 32.9% less time since it was introduced<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.6 These shifts in audience have occurred despite the fact that there are now 19m people in the UK aged over 55, and the 65+ market the fastest growing population segment. The lack of appeal with these audiences deserves careful attention from the Trust, because most of the UK's competitive radio environment is focussed on 25-44 audiences meaning that the 50+ audience is generally less well served.
- 2.7 In response to these most recent audience changes Controller David Holdsworth has announced another new direction for BBC Local Radio stations, with a focus on less speech in breakfast and less formal speech output across the schedule. Radiocentre has already written independently to the Trust about this proposal. The way this proposal was announced appeared to pre-empt the outcome of the service review. This leads some of our members to question how effective the Trust's consultation can be and whether the current service licences are sufficiently robust and detailed, since a new strategy has already been outlined.

## 3. Overview

- 3.1 Local Radio has the potential to be one of the most unique parts of the BBC's offering. No other service targets an older age group and local community in such an explicit way, or is depended on by such a unique audience. 2.3m listen to no other BBC Radio, and 1.1m listen to

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<sup>1</sup> BBC Trust, [Local Radio Service Licence](#), July 2015.

<sup>2</sup> *Rajar* Q2 2005-Q2 2011.

<sup>3</sup> *Rajar* Q2 2012-Q2 2015.

no other radio at all in a week. Yet critics would argue that despite being the most significant investment in BBC radio (£153.8m pa) it is also somewhat neglected.

- 3.2 Local Radio only ever appears to be the news when there is a controversy of some sort (such as when presenter David Lowe lost his job after unintentionally playing the wrong version of The Sun Has Got His Hat On<sup>4</sup>), or when it is under threat due to budget cuts as the BBC enters more straitened financial times.
- 3.3 This year, faced with new financial pressures as part of Charter Renewal negotiations, Lord Hall is said to have stated that all of the BBC's Local Radio stations could potentially be taken off the air<sup>5</sup>. Yet in the BBC's response to the Government's Green Paper on the BBC, he proposed a multi-million pound partnership with local news groups to provide a network of 100 public service reporters to generate and provide content. Neither of these measures appears in the interests of Local Radio or its listeners, but instead risks politicising a key public service.
- 3.4 The Director General's announcements detract attention from a valuable service which should be analysed in its own terms, not as part of political manoeuvring. Just as the proposed cuts ultimately dominated the 2011 service licence review, Radiocentre is concerned that new proposals – both from Lord Hall and the content changes proposed – will dictate the theme of the Trust evaluation of the 39 Local Radio service licences.
- 3.5 This has particular relevance for service licence reviews because it is becoming clear from Charter Review discussions that the Trust's regulatory and governance functions are likely to be passed to another body after 2016, and therefore it will not be in a position to implement many of the suggestions we make in this paper. Consequently, it is likely that the public purposes (that BBC Local Radio services are being evaluated against) will have changed by 2017.
- 3.6 In response to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Green Paper on BBC Charter Review, Radiocentre has indicated that it agrees that the BBC's current public purposes could and should be improved, both in terms of providing greater clarity on *what* the BBC must deliver and prioritise (its output) and *how* this is delivered and executed in practice (its impact).
- 3.7 In considering ways of improving the public purposes our starting point has been to build upon some of the thinking outlined by the BBC Trust in its preliminary response to the Green Paper and the report of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee on the Future of the BBC. In particular the Trust outlined an illustrative set of public purposes that emphasise key areas of output that it believes the BBC should be prioritising.
- 3.8 These include a greater focus on news and information, education, diversity, high-quality distinctive content and partnership. We have built on these suggestions (below), and will be using them in this consultation as a way to ensure our recommendations remain relevant to the new governance structure.
  - Providing news and information to help people understand the world around them
  - Supporting education and learning
  - Showcasing distinctive and highest-quality content
  - Reflecting and representing the diversity of the UK's population
  - Growing the UK creative industries and extending the benefits of technology

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-27360884>

<sup>5</sup> Raymond Snoddy, '[Revealed: the botched affair between government and the BBC](#)', *Mediate1*, 18 Aug 2015.

#### 4. Providing news and information to help people understand the world around them

- 4.1 The BBC has an obligation to deliver a distinctive public service on Local Radio by maintaining its provision of local news and information to listeners; and this should not diminish. Producing the best journalism in the world is consistently the number one editorial priority for BBC services. It cannot do this without a range of journalists stretching from the widest significant international levels through to those reporting at the nearest locality.
- 4.2 **BBC Local Radio is part of BBC News division and should remain firmly as part of that structure.** The stations were founded with a commitment first and foremost to news, and continue to provide a vital news source for specific licence-fee paying groups. This means higher commitment to news; which translates to investment in journalists (rather than ‘talent’) and less music.
- 4.3 At the time of the previous service review the Trust stated that ‘BBC Local Radio’s news programming is highly regarded by the audience and felt to be a vital part of the BBC’s local provision’<sup>6</sup>. Within the UK’s local media markets the BBC and commercial radio currently play largely complementary roles in serving local audiences, but BBC Local Radio must strive to offer licence fee payers something which they cannot get elsewhere.
- 4.4 On the whole BBC Local Radio does appear to provide a well-resourced, responsible and comprehensive local news service. Bulletin durations allow for detailed analysis and the frequency and timing of bulletins across the day ensure that those listeners who may not be core consumers but who seek out their local station on occasions understand where to find the information they seek.
- 4.5 **It is of paramount importance that BBC Local Radio continues to focus on its public purpose commitments to news and speech.** It is understandable that the BBC will wish to make headway in audiences, but this does not have to be incompatible with retaining a conscientious commitment to local news in sufficient depth.
- 4.6 There is no evidence that the BBC lacks the resources to deliver this commitment given that it has access to around 800 journalists in BBC Local Radio stations alone<sup>7</sup>. Therefore recent proposals to introduce a Local Accountability Reporting Service of 100 public service reporters across the country have understandably been greeted with some caution by other local media providers.
- 4.7 While it is encouraging to see the BBC seeking to develop a partnership approach to local media (assuming that these opportunities would also be available to local commercial radio) it is probably too early to say whether it will offer a genuinely useful service. If this led to a further expansion by the BBC into local reporting with the funding of an additional 100 of its own journalists there would be significant concern. It could also have serious implications for plurality if it expanded the BBC’s role in local newsgathering at the expense of local press and radio.
- 4.8 However, the recent comments by the Secretary of State on this issue were encouraging, when he stated that *‘I would therefore hope that the BBC would not seek to recruit or employ these journalists directly. Instead they should look to commission content from qualifying local media organisations and news agencies perhaps on the basis of tender’*<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> BBC Trust, *Service Review: BBC Local Radio*, May 2012, p.6.

<sup>7</sup> Estimate based on 2011 Radiocentre report and subsequent 20% cuts.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/culture-secretary-keynote-to-rts-cambridge-convention>

- 4.9 This would seem a better approach if the BBC truly wants to ‘revive local journalism’ as Lord Hall claims, along with heightening the commitment on BBC Local Radio, and not letting the content become mixture of chat and entertainment (as proposed by the Local Radio Controller), which is already well catered for on commercial radio.
- 4.10 The strains being placed on BBC Local stations in terms of audience are well understood. Commercial radio audiences have been under considerable threat over the past 10 years, most specifically due to the expansion of BBC popular music services Radio 1 and Radio 2. Commercial stations have recovered listeners by refocusing on what audiences want and strengthening their brand propositions. There is no reason why BBC Local Radio cannot do the same.
- 4.11 The concern among some commercial radio operators (and listeners) will be that the new type of content being proposed by BBC management strays from the quality journalism that audiences have come to expect from BBC Local Radio. While it is likely that the some of the current decline in audience on Local Radio has been a result of a Radio 2’s continuing expansion, the way to bring that audience back is for BBC Local Radio is not necessarily to try and replicate Radio 2’s approach to content (and in essence become Radio 2 *lite*) – or even extend its music offering to become more like commercial stations aimed at older audiences such as Gold, Smooth or Magic.
- 4.12 **The ‘all speech’ programmes at breakfast time should remain and be news focussed.** In order that BBC’s Local Radio output continues to complement the provision from local commercial radio, we believe that the distinctiveness provided by the level of speech on BBC stations is vitally important. Large numbers of local commercial radio stations already specialise in content which focus on personalities, production and conversation (as well as a range of music).
- 4.13 Clearer speech commitments should be put into the Local Radio service licences. BBC Local stations are currently performing well within the boundaries of speech requirements – over 70% of daytime content is already speech – so it seems appropriate to acknowledge this achievement formally and further identify with the content which listeners have previously informed the Trust that ‘they depend on to keep them in touch with news from their area...and rate very highly.’<sup>9</sup>

***Recommendations:***

- Service licences should provide a clearer commitment to local news, speech and information – with more detailed conditions
- The ‘all speech’ programmes at breakfast time should remain 100% speech and primarily news focussed
- The Trust should seek to increase the speech commitment of BBC Local Radio to 70% during daytimes
- The proposal to develop a Local Accountability Reporting Service of 100 public service reporters should be developed further, but as an external resource for the BBC provided by other local media (probably on the basis of a local tender process).

## 5. Supporting education and learning

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<sup>9</sup> [Ibid.](#), p. 15.

- 5.1 The BBC has a responsibility, and the opportunity, to ensure that its portfolio of radio services broadcast content that informs, educates and entertains listeners of all ages. The BBC Local Radio service licence states that stations should contribute to educational and learning purposes amongst its audience by contributing to pan-BBC learning and social action campaigns. We support this continuing work.
- 5.2 **BBC Local Radio not only has a duty to act as an educator to the listener but also a broader responsibility to provide education and training to its workforce.** This remains an important role for the BBC as a local employer, particularly given the significant public funding it receives and overarching duty to support learning and education. If it fails to provide sufficient training and support then the responsibility of providing practical media skills and journalistic training at a local level will fall disproportionately on local commercial radio and newspapers.
- 5.3 Other forms of local media are unlikely to be able to match the BBC's resources for training, or offer to the sort of salaries that journalists, producers or presenters are able to receive from BBC Local Radio once they are fully trained. This can contribute to the related problem of a drain on talent leaving commercial media to join the BBC after receiving extensive training and experience in the commercial sector. In order to start to address some of these issues the Trust should require BBC Local Radio to provide opportunities to access training to its workforce and examine ways of working with local academic institutions and other local media providers on providing a broader range of training and media skills opportunities.
- 5.4 As well as investing more consistently in training at a local level **the Trust should require BBC management to do more to encourage older programme makers into BBC Local Radio.** The stations rightly do not want to sound 'old-fashioned', but it is crucial that they fully acknowledge the diverse tastes and interests of the older audience they are required to serve. This should be supported by a range of producers, journalists and presenters who reflect the audience: both now and in the future as the population ages. BBC Local Radio stations are aimed at over 50s but too many of the current staff members are at the early stages of their careers, so are less than half the age of the audience and share no cultural references with their listeners as a result.

*Recommendation:*

- BBC Local Radio should work with local academic institutions and other local media to provide access to a range of training and media skills
- There should be a greater focus on increasing representation of a broader range of older and more experienced staff.

## 6. Showcasing distinctive and highest-quality content

- 6.1 **BBC Local Radio should provide output which sets the standards for local broadcasting in the UK.** Its content should be appealing, but distinctive from that provided elsewhere (particularly local commercial radio). This means the sort of news and current affairs discussed above, combined with a music offering which is eclectic and distinct from what is offered on other BBC stations or commercial radio.
- 6.2 Where music is played, it should be different from what is available elsewhere in the UK radio market. In some areas the music and artists played on BBC Local Radio (at least in the weekday daytime schedule) have been too similar to commercial competitors and a dilution of distinctiveness.

- 6.3 In the conclusions of the last service review, the Trust ‘asked BBC management to develop a music policy that will underpin Local Radio’s distinctiveness within the BBC radio portfolio’<sup>10</sup>. Today, music still constitutes a greater appreciable proportion of output than necessary, but we welcome the shift by BBC Local Radio to music more suited to the target demographic in line with Trust recommendations.
- 6.4 There is a need for continued vigilance both in song selection and scheduling to ensure this remains the case. Music that is featured on BBC Local Radio should focus clearly on its target demographic. Such a policy would avoid duplication with the vast majority of commercial stations and other BBC services.
- 6.5 BBC Local Radio plays an important role in the BBC’s support for new and unsigned music, through *BBC Introducing*. While this programming strand is undoubtedly valuable it remains an odd choice to include this on a BBC service that is targeting over 50s. Despite the local appeal of these programmes, they are ultimately new music shows aimed at under-25s. Therefore it would make more sense to expand *BBC Introducing* as an online service, while linking it more intimately with Radio 1, 1Xtra, 6Music and iPlayer.
- 6.6 **BBC Local Radio should play an eclectic range of older and specialist music**, in shows hosted by presenters who appreciate the music tastes of the older audiences (particularly in the evenings and at weekends). Ideally BBC Local stations would have clear limits on the volume of popular music from daytimes and allow the stations to refocus their priorities on the speech content and local news which listeners value. This means more shows like the esoteric music show ‘On the Wire’ on BBC Radio Lancashire, which is challenging and often startling, but never boring<sup>11</sup>.

***Recommendation:***

- BBC Local Radio should focus on more eclectic and specialist music choices likely to appeal to its target audience
- Clear limits should be imposed on the use of music in daytimes (alongside the 70% speech commitment suggested above)
- *BBC Introducing* should be expanded as an online service, while linking it more intimately with Radio 1, 1Xtra, 6Music and iPlayer.

## 7. Reflecting and representing the diversity of the UK’s population

- 7.1 Across the UK, the BBC Local Radio licence is implemented, rightly, in differing ways by stations. As is common with speech formats, each service appears very different to the listener. Although there are commonalities – in the scheduling and structure; the ‘imaging’ sound; and music content – each service is thoroughly distinctive for the vast majority of key listening periods.
- 7.2 Indeed, the ability of BBC Local Radio to provide localness has never really been in doubt. While its profile is often lower in the cities where many decision-makers live – London, Birmingham and Manchester – it remains an essential and highly valued part of the media offering for communities in other parts of the country (especially in rural areas where the BBC tends to under serve the population overall<sup>12</sup>).

<sup>10</sup> [Ibid.](#), p.5.

<sup>11</sup> Fiona Sturges, ‘[On the Wire, BBC Radio Lancashire, review: It is radio at its simplest and most effective](#)’, *The Independent*, 25 September 2014.

<sup>12</sup> BBC Trust, [Impartiality Review: BBC coverage of Rural Areas in the UK](#), June 2014

- 7.3 **BBC Local Radio has an important role to play in drawing communities together.** Consumers and citizens value the role local and regional content plays in their lives. Local and regional news in particular helps to inform people about what is going on in their local community; while news and other types of local content contribute towards reflecting UK cultural identity and representing diversity and alternative viewpoints.
- 7.4 Some Local Radio stations in urban areas, such as London, Liverpool or BBC WM, re-enforce this commitment with dedicated programmes for black, Asian and minority ethnic audiences. This commitment is welcome although a lack of prominence on the wider schedule means that even these stations do not always fully reflect the diversity of regional populations. This experience suggest that the BBC could use Local Radio to more effectively and efficiently reach minority audiences by providing more clearly delineated slots on BBC Local Radio.
- 7.5 Along with localness and ethnic diversity, distinctiveness for BBC Local Radio stations should be achieved by offering distinctive and high quality speech content for older audiences. ‘The target audience should be listeners aged 50 and over, who are not well-served elsewhere, although the service may appeal to all those interested in local issues’<sup>13</sup>.
- 7.6 **BBC Local Radio is missing an opportunity to serve growing older audiences.** Older radio listeners are increasingly important for radio. According to Rajar figures for all radio, 55-74 year olds now listen longer to radio on average than any other group, are not explicitly catered for anywhere else in the same way, and this target audience will increase with an ageing population. Changes need to be made so that there is scope for further focus by BBC Local Radio on its 50+ target demographic, with particular focus on the 60+ demographic to reflect this ageing population.
- 7.7 The BBC should reflect the diversity of the UK in its content. In doing so, the BBC should accurately and authentically represent and portray the lives of the people of the UK, its nations, regions and communities. On Local Radio this means shows with presenters which appeal more to over-50s than currently. Its listeners do not want a stuffy, dated, dull service; yet they do want content which relates to people like them.
- 7.8 BBC Local Radio should take the opportunity provided by this service licence review to refocus its efforts on serving older audiences. 50+ listeners do not share the presenter’s enthusiastic school day memories when they hear a song from the 1990s. They are more likely to feel that the 1980s seems actually quite recent and may not have purchased new music since the 1970s.
- 7.9 Achieving appeal to this audience demands sound leadership and careful management; and staff recruited whose abilities fit with the vision. It means playing music which was released in the 50s and 60s, and continuing to play new releases by these artists even if it is no longer considered popular. It means a continued and extended commitment to speech content about local issues. It means having the courage to bring in older staff and talent which reflect the audience.
- 7.10 **The BBC has a special duty, due to the universality of the licence-fee, to lead the way on gender equality.** 55% of listening to BBC Local Radio is undertaken by women, and a staggering 82% of this is by women over 55<sup>14</sup>. The representation of women on the airwaves does not echo the

<sup>13</sup> BBC Trust, [Local Radio Service Licence](#), July 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Rajar Q2 2015

audience. Whilst the 'Women in Local Radio' initiative introduced by Lord Hall has seen the number of breakfast shows with female presenters rise from 15% to 49%, figures show the majority of women are in co-presenter roles.

- 7.11 Indeed, only one in eight BBC radio breakfast shows are currently hosted solely by women despite the corporation's commitment to diversity, figures have shown. Of the 48 daily shows on national and local stations, just six have women at the helm. But 24 shows are hosted solely by men.<sup>15</sup> Only six local stations – Cambridgeshire, Leeds, Norfolk, Somerset, Suffolk and York – have women hosting their own shows.
- 7.12 BBC Local Radio should introduce more female presenters aged over 55 as a matter of urgency. This year a House of Lords committee inquiry into employment practices at the BBC found that women are under-represented in news and current affairs, and that older women are discriminated against. Local Radio, with a majority older female audience, is the ideal medium to help reverse this change. Against this background it is disappointing to see long serving presenters such as Judi Spiers (62) on BBC Radio Devon leaving the BBC<sup>16</sup>.

**Recommendation:**

- Conditions should be introduced in the BBC Local Radio service licence to ensure that local ethnic minorities are catered for explicitly as part of core broadcast hours
- BBC Local Radio should introduce more female presenters aged over 55 and this should be reviewed within the next 12 months.

## 8. Growing the UK creative industries and extending the benefits of technology

- 8.1 **Public investment in the BBC means that it has broader responsibilities on technology and infrastructure.** While it is correct for BBC funding to be focussed primarily on the provision of its own distinctive services it also has an important role in supporting growth and innovation as well as a diversity of media services and content.
- 8.2 The BBC's role in supporting digital radio is critical. Without the support of the BBC it would not have been possible to agree the build out of local digital radio coverage from 66% of the UK population to over 80% in the past few years (with a plan to get to around 90% by 2017). The BBC should commit to completing this build out so that all Local Radio stations are available on DAB, and the Local Radio network should remain on local multiplexes for the duration of their licences (until 2030).
- 8.3 All BBC Radio services have a role to play in growing digital radio and experimenting with appropriate platforms for the future. We note that the BBC has been using BBC Local Radio as a testing ground for new technology advancements. BBC Local Radio stations in Lancashire, Humberside, Wiltshire, Devon and Surrey & Sussex each lost at least one of their AM transmitters in December for a trial period,<sup>17</sup> whilst BBC WM has been made available as a hidden stream on the BBC's standard definition TV multiplex.<sup>18</sup>
- 8.4 **BBC Local Radio should also use a range of methods to facilitate contact and interaction with its audience.** Whilst most 50+ listeners may not be as obsessed with Twitter as twenty-

<sup>15</sup> Anita Singh, '[BBC breakfast radio: why can't women get their own shows?](#)' *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 June 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Heather Saul, '[Judi Spiers: BBC faces fresh backlash after axing one of its longest-serving female presenters](#)'. *The Independent*, 23 June 2015

<sup>17</sup> '[BBC continues to switch off local radio AM transmitters](#)', *Radio Today*, 18 November 2014.

<sup>18</sup> '[BBC local radio spotted testing on Freeview in West Midlands](#)', *a516digital*, March 1, 2014.

some things, they do like to be able to contact the station to contribute to radio shows, either in writing, on the phone or online. To support this accountability and openness, there might also be a case for making station management names and contact details available for each station, in much the same way as the commercial radio stations have their public files.

- 8.5 Local pages exist on the BBC site, which usefully bring listeners up to date with local news. There is not a dedicated site for each radio station, merely a link to current and past programme audio and a brief future schedule. Whilst this is clearly efficient, there may be a case for further information about radio programme content online so that listeners know what they might hear. There is also more scope to link out to stories on other local commercial broadcaster sites, as the BBC already does with local newspapers.

***Recommendation:***

- It should be made easier for members of the public to interact with staff and presenters via Local Radio websites
- The Trust should seek to require Local Radio stations to link out to online commercial broadcasters as they do with local newspapers.

## 9. About Radiocentre

- 9.1 Radiocentre is the industry body for commercial radio. We work on behalf of over 40 stakeholders who operate 278 licensed radio stations across the UK and represent 90% of commercial radio in terms of listening and revenue.

We perform three main functions on behalf of our members:

- Drive industry revenue by promoting the benefits of radio to advertisers and agencies through a combination of marketing activity (e.g. events, advertising, PR, and direct mail), research, and training
- Provide UK commercial radio with a collective voice on issues that affect the way that radio stations operate, working with government, politicians, policy makers and regulators to secure the best environment for growth and development of the medium
- Ensure advertising messages on commercial radio stations comply with the necessary content rules and standards laid out in the BCAP Code of Broadcast Advertising and the Ofcom Broadcasting Code.

[www.radiocentre.org](http://www.radiocentre.org)