

## Open letter for anyone with an interest in music on BBC Local Radio

If there is to be any credibility given to the BBC Local Radio Service Licence, the BBC Trust must challenge programme planning for BBC East Midlands which appears to be in direct conflict with aspects of their licence. This matter needs urgent attention before irreparable damage is done to specialist music programmes and the reputation of local radio in this area. Local BBC management show no intention of reconsidering this matter and seem intent on removal of specialist music output by the end of December 2010. Their poor notification of such plans means that the normal appeals process through the BBC will be ineffective in preventing wanton destruction of existing well-informed, high quality and engaging programmes.

A specific example, the planned removal of Folkwaves has created a great deal of discussion on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Save-Folkwaves-on-BBC-Radio-Derby/173039876049804>). Within a week over 1,250 people have united in opposition to this development. Folkwaves is aimed at an East Midlands audience including information on local artists and music events. It is a credit to the quality of the programme, that it has a much wider appeal and is able to project the region at both a national and international level. It is encouraging to see that our musical heritage is appreciated elsewhere, although not apparently by our regional BBC.

It appears that the planned changes are being dictated at a regional level. Stuart Thomas, Head of Regional and Local Programmes for BBC East Midlands, responds “Although specialist music programmes like Folkwaves have been very popular with a loyal core of listeners, we feel that we now need to provide a programme that appeals to a wider number of licence fee payers in the East Midlands”. This is not consistent with the tone of the BBC Local Radio Licence which specifies a requirement to provide specialist music and to cater for those “not well served elsewhere”.

The full BBC Local Radio Service licence agreement is available at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/regulatory\\_framework/service\\_licences/radio/2010/english\\_local\\_radio\\_may10.pdf](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/regulatory_framework/service_licences/radio/2010/english_local_radio_may10.pdf). Below are some relevant extracts. Ironically this includes the intent to ‘hold elected and unelected decision makers to account’. Physician, heal thyself.

### ***Extracts from the BBC Local Radio Service Licence May 2010***

*This Service Licence covers all BBC Local Radio stations in England.*

#### *1. Remit*

*The remit of BBC Local Radio is to provide a primarily speech-based service of news, information and debate to urban and rural communities. Speech output should be complemented by music. **The target audience should be listeners aged 50 and over, who are not well-served elsewhere.** There should be a strong emphasis on interactivity and audience involvement.*

#### *2. Scope of this Licence*

*Breakfast peak defined as 0700-0830hrs, Monday-Friday; Daytime defined as 0600-1900hrs, Monday-Friday and 0800-1400hrs, Saturday and Sunday; Peaktime is defined as 0600-1900hrs, Monday-Friday, and 0800-1400hrs, Saturday and Sunday.*

#### *3. Service budget*

***the Trust may judge that planned or actual change in annual expenditure of less than 10% should require its approval if the implications of this are significant for the character of the service or its market.***

#### *4. Overview of aims and objectives*

*BBC Local Radio programmes should exhibit some or all of the following characteristics: **high quality, original, challenging, innovative and engaging**, and it should nurture UK talent.*

*BBC Local Radio stations should champion the local area and call to account decision makers. They should also reflect the diversity of communities served.*

*Output should be all speech at the breakfast peak and the service should be speech-led in daytime. Music output should be mainstream in peaktime **and include specialist in off-peak hours. Specialist music should be appropriate to the area. Current and recent chart hits should represent a low proportion of weekly music output.***

#### *5.1 Sustaining citizenship and civil society*

*BBC Local Radio should make a very important contribution to this purpose amongst its audience. It should encourage a shared sense of civic responsibility among its listeners by providing constantly updated, accurate, impartial and independent news and information on local, national and international matters. **It should host wide-ranging discussions on matters of local concern and hold elected and unelected decision makers to account**, and frequently offer listeners opportunities to contribute to the output and take an active part in their local communities.*

#### *5.2 Reflecting the UK's nations, regions and communities*

*Where they exist, local minority audiences should be catered for.*

#### *5.3 Stimulating creativity and cultural excellence*

*BBC Local Radio should contribute to this purpose amongst its audience. It should provide opportunities for new and emerging musicians from the local area and support local arts and music events by providing event information.*

*Music output should be mainstream in peaktime **and include specialist in off-peak hours. Specialist music should be appropriate to the area. Current and recent chart hits should represent no more than 15% of weekly music output.***

#### *5.5 Bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK*

*BBC Local Radio should play its part in contributing to this purpose amongst its audience, primarily by bringing the world to the UK. Its news bulletins should cover key international events and issues.*

#### *6. Annexes to this Licence*

##### *6.1 Annex I – Performance assessment*

*The BBC Trust will expect BBC Local Radio to comply with the commitments described in sections 4 and 5 of the Service Licence. **The BBC Trust will monitor compliance with these commitments retrospectively as part of its periodic service reviews and/or on an exceptional basis if there is evidence or allegation of non-compliance.***