

OFCOM CONTENT SAMPLING REPORT

Station : Bright FM

Dates Sampled : Sunday 20 September, Monday 21 September and Tuesday 22 September 2009.

CONTENT SAMPLING FINDING

Bright FM is unapologetically anchored within West Sussex with many of the links referring to the county. Clearly a lot of the local references are references which can be used across the station owner's 'network' of stations in the region, but there are enough specific references to the target area of Bright (Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill and Lewes) to conclude the station is delivering its localness remit.

The local news is complemented by the busy news schedule as published on the website, and that tends to be both localised and regionalised news, with sometimes as many as a dozen different local stories published daily. The events calendar is also updated regularly, and covers the area.

The music is broad with a bias towards the last few years, and the station is operating within its Format.

Bright FM Character of Service

A FULL SERVICE, COMMUNITY-ORIENTED, BROAD MUSIC AND INFORMATION STATION FOR THE HAYWARDS HEATH AND BURGESS HILL AREA

Format Obligations: Pre-Sampling observations :

Bright FM has been broadcasting for eight years. The Haywards Heath/Burgess Hill area lies to the edge of the Mercury FM (Crawley) MCA and Heart (Brighton, formerly Southern FM) MCA. The Lewes area was recently added to the Bright MCA.

Unusually it is not required to broadcast local news on a Sunday, but such news is an aspiration for the licensee, which also operates Splash FM in Worthing – and it is at Worthing that Bright FM is located. As well as a co-location arrangement in place, there is also agreement that Bright may share six of its ten daytime hours with other Sussex-based stations (Splash in Worthing, Sovereign in Eastbourne, and Arrow in Hastings).

It is, therefore, at breakfast, where the heaviest local output on Bright FM would be expected, and so this report concentrates on weekday breakfast.

The Format is for a full service and for broad music, and the station is relatively small with an MCA of 108,000 adults.

General Format Findings (excluding news) and music :

The weekday breakfast show ran a number of X Factor versus Strictly Come Dancing type links, and pulled in local comments as part of the debate ... and much of the Monday output centred on local weekend activity and outside broadcasts run by Bright in Burgess Hill over the previous couple of days, referring to local listeners and competition winners involved, follow-up requests and the like.

There were also competitions centring on local businesses and topics raised by local listener texts.

West Sussex is a commuter-heavy area, making the road news important, and it was noticeable that road issues were broadcast as they occurred, as well as part of the planned travel reports.

Music plays an important part in the output ... there were competitions such as a Mika album giveaway ... and music strides the last four decades, with a concentration on the last two decades.

Core artists include Beyonce, Robbie Williams, The Saturdays, Pixie Lott and Lily Allen, with older spice including artists like Blondie and Simply Red.

Sport is catered for .. with a round-up in the evening bulletins and included interviews with local football managers.

Local events are mentioned regularly by presenters and, as with the news, the website carries a full list of events from across the region, and this is clearly updated regularly.

News :

Bright FM runs hourly local news (alongside national and international news) from 6.30am to 6.30pm, inclusive, every weekday, with half-hour local headlines at peak (during breakfast and drivetime). On Saturdays local bulletins run from 8am to 12 noon.

Monday's breakfast news included a preview of a trial involving the death of a student in a Sussex fracas ... the position with swine flu in West Sussex ... car sharing and eco-travel in the county ... a local hospice awareness campaign ... and a charity run by locals. Most carried studio or phone quality interviews, and there were re-writes through the morning. After breakfast the local bulletins carried new stories and re-writes through to drivetime.

Most of the stories carried were of interest to listeners across West Sussex – and, therefore, were not out of place on any of the stations involved in the regional ‘network’ ... but a few, such as the hospice story, were of specific interest to Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath.

Tuesday’s bulletins were also a mixture of local and regional news, with the major stories involving new local schools and London rail links to the county. The news section of the station’s website is particularly targeted at Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath, Lewes and surrounding villages like Hassocks, and some days up to a dozen different local stories are posted there, so local news is catered for in a fulsome way with a combination of on-air and web-based copy.

Notes on Content Sampling

Ofcom’s Content Sampling Procedure :

In Ofcom’s move of emphasis from input regulation towards output regulation, content sampling has become an important regulatory process. Ofcom has already published the methods to be applied when formally listening to local commercial stations to create a content sampling report. These methods and processes are published at <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/radio/ifi/contentssampling/>.

Background Information :

Content sampling is a major Ofcom tool in judging the level of station compliance with regard to

- a) Public File*
- b) Localness*
- c) Music*

Content sampling may be carried out as part of an organised process, or may be as the result of a complaint.

Public File :

Public File obligations are enshrined within each station’s Licence. The Public File and/or station website will, in many cases, not only support the findings of content sampling, but signpost monitors to output that enhances specific aspects of localness and music, whether or not it involves the specific days being monitored.

Localness and Music :

Localness guidelines are available on Ofcom’s website at www.ofcom.org.uk/radio/ifi/rbl/car/localness/ and station localness and music obligations will vary considerably from Format to Format.

MC Oct 09