



CR103 - Cheshire FM Limited

**Key Licence Commitments,
Annual Report to Ofcom**

Year Ending 30th April 2008



Community Radio Annual Report Form

Community Radio Annual Report Form: Year Ending 30 April 2008

Licence Number

[CR103](#)

Station Name

[Cheshire FM](#)

Launch Date

[1st April 2007](#)

Web address where you will publish this report

www.cheshirefm.com

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1.2 Key commitments: programming

Cheshire FM's Key Commitments

- Day time output will typically comprise of 65% music and 35% speech
- Cheshire FM intends to broadcast a wide variety of music to embrace the diversity of the community. Daytime programming from 07.00 to 19.00 will be comprised of three main categories of music: Adult Contemporary, Hit tracks of the past 40 years, and Soft Adult Contemporary. The following genres may also be included: Jazz, Dance, R&B, Rap, Folk, Rock, Country and Nostalgia and may constitute around 12% of airtime.
- Speech output will include topics such as news, local information and sport as well as citizens' advice information, education, farming and health. Speech programming will principally include phone-ins and interviews in general programming as well as specialist magazine-style programmes. Other programming such as documentaries, community news programme inserts and radio drama will also feature.
- The service will typically broadcast 24 hours a day, 7 days-a-week. Usually around half of the output will be live. (Live programming may include pre-recorded inserts, if applicable.) The majority of the output will be locally produced.

Response

- Although it is likely to vary from week to week, depending on the features aired and the presenters on-air, we believe the ratio of 65% music to 35% speech to be a fair representation of our output
- As stated, Cheshire FM's daytime music output has embraced the mainstream genres of AC, Hit Tracks of the last 40 years and Soft AC. Of the sub-genres listed, we have playlisted tracks show below. As befitting the mainstream flavour of our daytime output, these have often been 'cross-over' tracks from big selling artists. These sub-genres will certainly have exceeded 12% of airtime in the 0700-1900 time band.

Dance :

David Guetta – Love has Gone
Freemasons – Uninvited
Fredde Le Grande – Let Me Think About It

Jazz :

Duffy – Stepping Stone

R&B :

Timbaland – Scream
One Republic – Apologize
Kelly Rowland - Daylight

Rap :

Eminem – Without Me

Country :

Shania Twain – Don't Be Stupid
Gavin DeGraw – In Love with the Girl

Folk :

The Middlewich Paddy's - The Middlewich Song

Rock:

Nickelback – Rockstar
ELO – Evil Woman
Queen – Killer Queen
Kid Rock – All Summer Long

Nostalgia:

Tony Bennet – If I Ruled The World
Elvis Presley – Suspicious Minds
Chubby Checker – Lets Twist Again

Cheshire FM has met its key commitments in all of the speech categories listed. Examples are provided below:

- **News Bulletins**

Local news round-ups are currently broadcast at 1630, 1730 and 1830. News broadcasting occurs when suitable volunteers are available to prepare the content.

- **Local Information**

Broadcast continually through out the day including traffic and travel specifically targeted at the otherwise un-served Mid Cheshire area and a constant stream of what's on and community noticeboard-type information.

- **Citizen Advice**

The following are examples of programming features broadcast concerning citizen advice:

- Big Drink Debate – Local NHS Initiative
- Weaver Vale Housing Trust – Tenant Information
- Furniture Finders Campaign – Start Up Housing
- Borough Council Elections – Coverage of campaigning and live broadcast of results

- **Education**

The following are examples of programming features broadcast in the area of education:

- GCSE & A Level Results – Connections
- Mid Cheshire College – Student Careers Advice Night, Live Broadcast
- Mid Cheshire College - Adult Learning Campaign
- MCC Drama Students – Recording of Coursework
- Hartford Primary School – PA Provision and Live Broadcast
- National Poetry Day – Students Broadcast Poetry

- **Farming**

The following are examples of programming features broadcast involving our significantly rural coverage area:

- Cheshire Forest Farmers Trust – Coverage of Point-to-Point Horse Racing Event
- Cheshire Agricultural Show – Live Broadcast and Attendance for entire event
- RHS Flower Show, Tatton – Live Broadcast

- **Health**

- NHS Initiative – Big Drink Debate
- Cheshire County Council - Smoking Ban Initiative
- Word On Health – Broadcast of Syndicated Programme
- Leap Year Babies – Live broadcast from Leighton Hospital Maternity Ward

- **Phone In's & Interviews**

- Mid Cheshire Talks – Live 60 Minute weekly phone in on local issues
- Sport Phone In – Live 90 Minute weekly sports phone ins
- On average – 3 phone in inserts weekly on a wide variety of issues

- **Documentary Features**

- St Lukes Mid Night Walk – Live Coverage, Recorded Inserts, MC'd event
- McMillan Coffee Morning – Pre-recorded inserts and live broadcast
- Destination 49 – Local Economy Initiative
- 'The Saving of Northwich Victoria' – Acclaimed Football Documentary (subsequently re-broadcast on Setanta Sports)

- **Radio Drama**

- 'Thomas & Higgins – A Tour of Winsford' – Winsford based drama
- Various readings of Poetry by local authors on 'The Hive' programme

- **Broadcasting Hours and Local Content**

Cheshire FM broadcasts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Weekdays, live shows have varied between 15 hours (i.e. all programming 0700 – 2200) and 12 hours presented live (i.e. not voice tracked). We note this compares extremely favourably with most small to medium sized commercial stations. All programming is produced on-site at Cheshire FM.

1.3 Key commitments: Social gain objectives (a) The provision of sound broadcasting services to individuals who are otherwise underserved

Cheshire FM's Key Commitments

- Cheshire FM's programming will be a voice for the young in our community, giving them an opportunity to represent their own views and lifestyles
- Cheshire FM will also reach out to older listeners through interest groups which represent their lifestyle – reflecting their interests in Jazz, Classical, Swing, Easy Listening as well as the issues which affect them such as rural transport, pensions, health provision, etc.
- Cheshire FM will elevate non-mainstream sports in our community - such as girls' cricket, netball, girls' football, etc. Young sports people will be encouraged to participate fully in the station – from interviewing & reporting on events through to presenting the sports bulletins and programmes.
- Cheshire FM will provide access and airtime to special interest groups that do not have significant coverage in other local media. In particular youth music programmes – aspiring artists, bands, musicians, lyricists, etc - and other local performers.
- Cheshire FM will also represent the various faiths in the community through all-inclusive multi-denominational programming including reflective and spiritual music programmes.

Response :

Younger Listeners

- The daily Hit 7 and 7 sequence is always presented by a member of our team under the age of 21. This is a lively contemporary music sequence aimed at the 'teens and twenties' age range.
- The weekly 'Hive' programme includes numerous contributors in their teens contributing music, drama and arts performances.
- Cheshire FM was instrumental in establishing 'Frenzy', a under-16's party night in Winsford. This event is a multi-agency effort with involvement with the local police and Connections youth services in providing local Youths with a supervised night out.
- Over a dozen young people have been provided with extended work experience at Cheshire FM, being involved in all aspects of the stations operations including programme making.
- Through innovative Dance Music programming presented by Mark Richards, Cheshire FM has provided a platform to talented young local DJ's.
- Cheshire FM's news team are local university students using the station to refine their skills.

Older Listeners

- A regular magazine and interview programme presented on a Sunday evening by Diana Tackley has covered serious local issues of particular interest to older listeners. This includes numerous local business people, champions of local tourism, politicians and leaders of local campaigns.
- Music targeted at older listeners is played concurrently with this feature, in a 'Golden Years' programme with music from the 50's and 60's. 60's music is also playlisted in our daytime sequence.

Non-Mainstream Sports

- Our weekly Saturday sports show, as well as covering the three local football teams, 2 local rugby teams, have covered individuals success in motor sports, athletics, and cricket. With the exception of Northwich Victoria, all local sport covered on Cheshire FM is amateur and grass-roots based.

Special Interest Groups

- Cheshire FM's weekly 'Hive' programme provides a platform for local artists, musicians and drama groups. This programme is presented by the owner of the principal live music venue in the area and consequently this programme is well embedded in the local arts scene.
- Riversdale Bridge – As part of the Sustrans-Connect 2 project, Cheshire FM created awareness of the local impact and promoted voting on the website to target lottery funding locally.
- Cheshire Anti-Incinerators Network – Cheshire FM has given balanced coverage to for and against groups in connection with the proposal to build a waste incinerate in a relative deprived area in Lostock.

Religious and Spiritual Programming

- Cheshire FM undertook an 8 week sequence of programmes with a local spiritual medium dealing sensitively with issues of personal, emotional and spiritual awareness.

1.4 Key commitments: Social gain objectives (b) The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion

Cheshire FM's Key Commitments

- Discuss topical issues in specialist programmes; such as a weekly 30-minute speech-based programme as a focus for current affairs issues of local interest and importance.
- Work with other local media where possible to debate issues on-air that surface in the press

Response

- Cheshire FM has undertaken a series of 60 minute broadcasts entitled 'Mid Cheshire Talks' where listeners are invited to phone-in with a topic of local interest. Subjects covered included plans for a controversial local incinerator plant, Northwich Vision (regeneration) project, local road infrastructure and parking issues, Anti-Social Behaviour, Policing etc.
- A broadcast involving maternity issues was broadcast in conjunction with Leighton Hospital Radio
- The story of the collapse and resurrection of the major local football club, Northwich Victoria, was undertaken with the Northwich Guardian newspaper. A phone in was held jointly to allow fans to air their feelings and concerns.
- A series of 2 hour broadcasts on a Sunday evening have allowed local people an hour long slot to air their views or discuss a topic of local relevance in detail. Many of the key figures in local life have featured on this programme including local business people, representative of local charities, local politicians and officers of local authorities.

1.5 Key commitments: Social gain objectives (c) The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service

Cheshire FM's Key Commitments

- Cheshire FM is committed to the provision of quality training for everyone involved in the operation of the station and will provide formalised and accredited training programmes with local colleges. We aim to provide training to 30 people in the first year of operation.
- Cheshire FM will develop its links with local schools and institutions to promote pathways to wider education and skills training.
- It also intends to establish working partnerships with existing stakeholders to provide internships and facilitate work experience opportunities particularly for young people, 'return to work' mothers and the long-term unemployed. Target numbers will set as part of that process as an agreed/measurable outcome.

Response :

- Cheshire FM has provided training to approaching 40 on-air volunteers who broadcast regularly on the station. Training has been held at weekly sessions and has covered technical subjects as well as programming and presentation skills topics.
- Cheshire FM facilitated (organised and provided transport) for the attendance by a number of volunteers at a series of training sessions organised by BBC Manchester for the community sector.
- A formal training course has been developed with the intention of securing NOCN (National Open College Network) accreditation for delivery. The course covers the industry awareness and practical skills required to contribute to all areas of radio programme making. This 10 session, 30 hour course has required a considerable time investment in develop. A pilot intake is currently in the final weeks of the course and it has been well received. However, in developing this course, it has become apparent that the requirements of formal accreditation are somewhat onerous in financial and non-value adding time overheads. Further assessment of the business case (i.e. cost and value) of securing accreditation will therefore be undertaken before committing to this route. If this is not favourable, Cheshire FM will not proceed with this element of the commitment.
- Cheshire FM has developed strong links with the education sector in Mid Cheshire to the extent that we have been appointed as turnkey suppliers for a fully equipped mobile radio studio to be shared amongst local schools. Once delivered, Cheshire FM will provide support to students who want to develop their skills with us.
- More than 12 young people have been provided with an opportunity to spend extended amounts of time with Cheshire FM. During this period, extensive opportunities for work shadowing have been provided with staff involved in programme making, outside broadcasts,

engineering, administration and sales.

- Cheshire FM has provided opportunities to two members of staff who are returning to work after pro-longed (in excess of 3 years in each case) periods on incapacity benefit.
- Cheshire FM's part-time Station Administrator is a mother returning to work. This individual works flexible hours around her child care arrangements and has been provided with training in areas specific to her role.

1.6 Key commitments: Social gain objectives (d) The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of the links within it

Cheshire FM's Key Commitments

- Cheshire FM will conduct a review of programming feedback at weekly meetings to understand the needs of the community and solicit continual feedback on its programmes and activities through a range of media.
- The station will conduct bi-annual focus group research with representatives from a broad range of community groups and conduct bi-annual telephone surveys to focus on individuals in the community and their listening preferences.
- The station will hold regular events, seminars and meetings so that the community can meet and discuss issues with the station's management.
- Cheshire FM will use a range of technology to engage with the community both on and off air.

Response

- Cheshire FM holds a weekly programme meeting where issues and upcoming broadcasts are planned and discussed. The meeting is carried both on a telephone conference line and Skype. Presenters are encouraged to attend and to air their views and programming ideas and to voice any feedback they have received on their programmes and the station in general.
- Station Management hold weekly one-to-one review sessions with individual presenters where their presentation and programme content is discussed in a constructive manner.
- Member of Cheshire FM's Board, several of which have a high profile in the area, make the feedback they receive known at Board Meetings.
- Cheshire FM's website hosts a listener forum and encourages feedback throughout. Listeners may contact the station by telephone, email, text message and via various forms on the station's website.
- The station regularly hosts visits from representatives of community groups looking to discuss with the station's management ideas for broadcasts and initiatives. Examples include the Neuro-Muscular Centre, St. Luke's Hospice, Alzheimer's Society, The Joshua Tree Charity, Connections Youth Service, MacMillans Trust, Lion Salt Works, Vale Royal Disability Service etc, The Jacob Marsland Fund.
- Cheshire FM has a high profile at community events held in Mid Cheshire where we welcome approaches from members of the public and representatives of local groups to give us feedback on the station and approaches with requests for airtime. Events include the Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival, Winsford Carnival, Northwich Carnival, Weaverham Carnival, Hartford Rose Fete, Winsford Cross Singing Competition and numerous commercial events for which attendance is paid for. In addition, Cheshire FM set up a temporary studio for a week at

Northwich's Weaver Square shopping centre at which feedback on the initial months of broadcasting was solicited.

- In the light of operational experience, Cheshire FM is confident that our continuous exposure to feedback from individuals and local groups and organisations makes the requirement to solicit formal feedback in the form of focus groups and telephone surveys unnecessary.

1.7 Key commitments: Additional Social Gain objectives (if any are specified in your licence).

Cheshire FM's Key Commitments

Cheshire FM intends to deliver social gain in the following areas:

- improve community awareness of local services
- promote economic development and social enterprise;
- promote employment and provide work experience
- promote social inclusion;
- promote cultural and linguistic diversity;
- promote civic participation and volunteering.

Response :

A steady stream of 'community noticeboard' announcements (typically 3-5 a week) are broadcast on Cheshire FM promoting the awareness of local groups, the services they provide as well as specific events. These centre of promoting community awareness of local services, civic participation and volunteering opportunities.

Cheshire FM has worked with Mohammed Afzal and the team at Ramadhan Radio (RSL) in Bolton since 2006 to help develop their organisation and provide cultural insight to Cheshire FM's members.

Cheshire FM has broadcast a 'Job Finder' services giving details of local vacancies.

1.8 Key commitments: Access and participation

Cheshire FM's Key Commitments

- Cheshire FM will actively seek volunteers through activity such as press releases, on air invitations, public meetings and presentations to community organisations and at community events.
- Cheshire FM will have a core of volunteers who will be required to assist with the running of the station. Volunteers will be asked to sign the Volunteer Charter, an agreement setting out expectations and obligations of both parties. Volunteers will then acquire voting rights and other entitlements as members of the registered company (if they wish to become members). Members of the registered company are entitled to stand for election. The members elect the Board of Directors of the company. We aim to recruit up to 120 volunteers in our first year of operation.
- Everyone involved in the station will have input into the station's decisions and will become a member of the registered company. All members will be encouraged to participate in meetings and committees.

Response

- Cheshire FM's profile in the local community has been sufficiently good as to generate the steady flow of volunteers who contact the station to become involved. The large number of community events we attend serve us particularly well in this regard.
- Cheshire FM's membership list currently stands at 42 with around 66 people in total having worked in a volunteer capacity at Cheshire FM during the reporting period. With hindsight, 120 volunteers would be a quantity which we would struggle to manage and direct into useful programming activities.
- Volunteers who show a sustained commitment to Cheshire FM become members of the organisation and are expected to abide by our various policies and procedures which are displayed on a notice board at the station.
- Certain financial commitments such as personal guarantees required to be provided by all members of the Board in order to secure bank finance required to establish the station have precluded open elections to the Board to date. It is our intention to remedy this situation this year.

1.9 Key commitments: Accountability to the target community

Cheshire FM's Key Commitments

- Cheshire FM will hold regular - usually monthly station meetings, where members can discuss and debate monthly members meetings. Members suggestions implemented by the management team;
- Cheshire FM will report annually on our achievements performance targets. This will be available on the Cheshire FM website.
- Cheshire FM's Community Partnerships Director has a remit to work with representative organisations to assess the effectiveness of our provision for special interest groups and those underserved by other local services. This will augment the feedback we receive from street surveys and focus groups, which will be conducted on a quarterly basis.

Response

- Cheshire FM holds weekly operational and programming meetings. Station performance, targets, suggestions and feedback are debated openly at these sessions. All of Cheshire FM's activities are a product of the belief of our volunteers in the best way the station can be operated.
- Cheshire FM will be pleased to publish this Annual Report on our website.
- Cheshire FM's Chief Executive (acting in the role of Community Partnerships Director) and Board Members all meet regularly, either formally or informally, and in a number of roles, with individuals and groups active in Mid Cheshire. These session allow feedback to be gathered for subsequent discussion by the Board.

1.10 Volunteer inputs (see guidance notes on page 2)

Cheshire FM employs a part-time Station Manager (Chief Executive), Station Producer/Programme Manager, Part-time Administrator and a full-time Sales Manager.

In general, all programming is presented by volunteers. We have, on occasion, reimbursed modest petrol expenses to volunteers undertaking a major commitment of time to the station. We have also occasionally paid presenters undertaking short-term cover for the breakfast programme.

All other programming, engineering, promotions and administration duties are undertaken by volunteers. There's rarely such thing as a typical week at Cheshire FM, however we attempt to provide a breakdown of weekly volunteer input below :

Area	Average No. Volunteers	Typical Weekly Commitment
Programming	28	4.5 Hours
Promotions	2	5 Hours
Administration	1	4 Hours
Training	2	3 Hours
Fundraising	1	2 Hours
Engineering	2	15 Hours
Marketing	1	3 Hours

1.11 Significant achievements

1. Delivery of Social Gain Objectives

Cheshire FM believes that the vast majority of social gain objectives have been achieved in our first year on-air. Our challenge is to now sustain and improve on this level of delivery for the remainder of the licence period.

2. Standard of Programming Delivered

Our listeners tell us that they enjoy our programmes, and we take an unapologetically mainstream approach to much of our programming. Whilst many CR stations serve niche listener needs in areas otherwise well served by local radio stations, we are pleased that in Mid Cheshire we seem to be providing a primary local radio service to many of our listeners, and that this service incorporates our key commitments. This accessibility is a factor of increasing importance with the demise of the BBC's plans for a Cheshire radio service.

We believe popularity amplifies the social gain Cheshire FM is able to provide. We have therefore expended considerable effort in the training and mentoring of volunteers and the provision of facilities that will enable our programming to be, if not as slickly professional as our commercial and BBC counterparts, then at least of a sufficient standard that listeners are not dissuaded from listening due to perceived amateurishness.

Cheshire FM is of the opinion that delivering local programming that is attractive to the intended audience requires specialist skills won through good training, experience and at least a modicum of talent. We intend to continue to provide our volunteer broadcasters with at least the first two of these!

3. Financial Sustainability

Whilst a not-for-profit social enterprise it may be, strong business principles and know-how are used in the management of Cheshire FM. This has allowed us to secure a strong base of supporters, both from the local business sector and public sector that spends money with Cheshire FM for advertising, sponsorship, promotions and a variety of related services. This large base of supporters has provided Cheshire FM with relative financial stability in its initial year. It also provides Cheshire FM with exposure to a wider range of organisations than a station supported by a small number of public sector or grant funding organisations would perhaps have contact with. These factors provide Cheshire FM with a strong and self-serving platform for the delivery of the social gain objectives.

4. Build of Second Studio

Start up funds only allowed the build of a single initial studio by our launch. However, by Feb 08, monies to build a second studio had been secured. This was built with the benefit of our initial experience and provides Cheshire FM with a facility of enviable quality providing both talk programme and training (via integrated Audio Visual equipment) spaces for 8 people. We believe this combination of studio and training facility to be unique in the Northwest.

Significant difficulties

Do you wish this section to be kept confidential? **No**

1. News Provision

The single key area of programming difficulty causing most concern for Cheshire FM has been providing a quality regular local news service.

Based on our initial business plan, it had seemed possible to fund 1 x FTE role to provide a daily news service and provide training and guidance to other volunteers in the area of speech programming. Unfortunately, levels of achievable and sustainable funding have precluded filling this role.

Additionally, it has proven difficult to attract volunteers or student journalists interested in news presenting. The rural nature of Cheshire FM's area and the 'bright lights' of the adjacent metropolitan areas of Manchester, Liverpool and Stoke-on-Trent have meant that we have struggled to attract suitable individuals.

We have delivered a news service for several periods using volunteers, particular student journalists. However, unlike other programmes, a daily commitment is required to deliver a news service and this is not sustainable for prolonged periods.

This is particularly disappointing as local government restructuring of Cheshire County Council has resulted in a multitude of issues that would have benefited from in-depth coverage. A recent CRF funding application to specifically facilitate this was also turned down.

2. Daytime Programming

We have been fortunate to attract individuals of appropriate skills able to commit to presenting daytime programmes for prolonged periods. However, and we suspect in common with many CR stations, our most active periods for volunteers is weekends and evenings. This does cause some occasional dips in the number of live daytime hours presented and associated content. Consistency, as well as content, is therefore a continuing challenge.

3. Membership Elections

The intention at the time of the company's formation was for the Board (Executive Committee) members to be partially elected from the members of the organisation. To date this has not happened. The reason being that in order to access start-up funding provided by the DTI Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme, the fund's administrators (Natwest Bank) required personal guarantees, credit checks, and sight of Board Members CV's in order to confirm that Cheshire FM met the criteria for the scheme. This requirement would extend to any newly appointed Board Members. However, excellent progress has been made in repaying these loans and it hoped membership elections to the Board can be held this year.

In the real world, participation in management comes with the requirement for an acceptance of a level of personal financial risk and the necessary financial means to carry that risk. Despite the somewhat utopian statement in the Community Radio Order that "*members of the community it is intended to serve are given opportunities to participate in the operation and management of the service*", not every member who may wish to serve as a board member will want or be able to accept this risk. Nevertheless, Cheshire FM is keen to provide the opportunity to those willing.

Section 4

Declaration

I hereby declare that the information given in this annual report is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, true and correct.

Signature

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Position

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Cheshire FM

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Date

22nd September 2008