



Memorandum of Understanding

Community Media Association and BBC English Regions

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16th February 2015

Memorandum of Understanding

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Community Media Association and BBC English Regions recognises the many areas of common cause between us. Whilst recognising our different traditions it aims to encourage a spirit of trust, best practice and local engagement that will benefit communities and audiences.

The aim is not to force members of the CMA and BBC Editors into a “one size fits all” level of co-operation. We recognise that in every case the level of engagement between individual CMA member projects and the BBC will be different and will be closer in some areas than others.

Both parties are encouraged to enter into dialogue and establish joint working wherever possible.

1. Why we have developed this Memorandum of Understanding

“In the fast changing landscape of local media it makes sense for the BBC and community media to form a closer working partnership that will help deliver on the public service objectives of both sectors. The value to each other as complementing resources is immeasurable. The CMA and its members are committed to facilitating access to the media by individuals and communities as a vehicle to drive positive social change. We are encouraged by what our MOU has achieved locally with the development of some strong co-working. The launching of the first national project between the CMA and the BBC in November 2014 marks a new phase of cooperation. This MOU has been designed to build on that. I am pleased that it comes with a commitment for both organisations to meet and monitor as well as drive forward its progress. The cooperation this triggers will help us all deliver media that maximises positive impact on individuals and audiences.”

Dom Chambers, Chair, Community Media Association

“The BBC is keen to work more closely with community radio stations and this agreement provides a framework to further develop local relationships. I hope the benefits will continue to flow both ways. From a BBC perspective we see great potential in working more closely with radio stations that reach out into communities, and together I believe we can help develop the next generation of radio talent. I am delighted we are renewing this memorandum of understanding”

David Holdsworth, Controller, BBC English Regions

Signed By:

Dom Chambers – CMA Chair:

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David Holdsworth – Controller, BBC English Regions:

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Date:

2. CMA Context

The Community Media Association was formed (originally as the Community Radio Association) in 1983. The CMA is the UK umbrella organisation for communities, usually constituted with charitable purposes, which make broadcast and/or electronic media. The communities are generally geographical, although some may be communities of interest, such as ethnic groups. The organisations are locally owned and locally accountable. Participants include people who are not currently represented by or feel disenfranchised from mainstream or traditional broadcasting. The CMA supports its members and the sector by raising awareness of the benefits of community media and campaigning for a legislative and policy environment which enables communities to use broadcasting as a mechanism to deliver social gain.

The CMA also works with partners to give practical, technical, governance and funding advice, networking opportunities and other support to community media organisations. All full CMA members are required to sign the Community Media Charter. The principles enshrined in the Charter strongly overlap with the aims set out in the BBC's 'Building Public Value' document originally published in 2004.

Following the success of a series of 'access pilot' stations, in 2004 legislation was passed which enabled the licensing of community radio stations, defining a special licence which commits the stations to delivering social gain to their local area and to local ownership, accountability and participation. These stations typically cover an area with a radius of 5km and serve a geographical or shared interest community. The benefits achievable through community radio have the potential to be replicated on other platforms. There are already community television stations and a large number of internet projects. The capacity to broadcast and the number of platforms available to community broadcasters is on the increase.

3. BBC English Regions Context

The BBC has been a champion of local radio at a county and conurbation level in England for over 40 years, building the multimedia local services we recognise today. Each local BBC multimedia hub now offers licence fee payers a local radio service; BBC Local internet site; television newsgathering staffing and resources.

BBC English Regions are responsible for all non-networked television, text and radio output in England as well as the BBC's local web indexes covering the English Regions.

The best known output is the daily regional news programmes such as Look North and Points West, and Local Radio stations like BBC Radio Newcastle and BBC Radio Solent.

There are 12 regions, each of which has a Head of Regional and Local Programmes who report to David Holdsworth, Controller English Regions, based in Birmingham.

4. The Strategic framework between BBC ER & the CMA

BBC ER and the CMA will arrange a twice yearly meeting that facilitates regular appraisals of the MOU. The minimum requirement will be one representative from each organisation to attend. Meeting will provide an opportunity for updates and strategic developments relevant to the MOU. Examples can be shared of good practice in working relations between CMA members and BBC local stations. This will be a central point of contact to seek any internal BBC or CMA support which may be required. A standing agenda item will be to address any grievances which may have arisen.

5. Working Together

In the spirit of this MOU, community radio and other community media outlets will be encouraged to start a dialogue with their BBC Local Radio Editor in which they explore synergy with their objectives and aspirations. Similarly, if a new managing editor (or representative) should change within the BBC station, the new person should endeavour to establish contact with their local CMA member organisations, and in the spirit of best practice departing editors should provide a handover of collaborative projects to date.

This MOU is not setting out to provide a rigid template for engagement – it is about reaching a level of mutual trust and understanding between community media projects and BBC Editors. We hope to encourage mutual support, innovation, creativity and a spirit of co-operation.

There is no obligation on either party to enter into agreement to work together, but should they wish to the following areas are within the scope of the MOU.

A working arrangement with a Community Radio Station may offer a BBC Local Radio Editor:

- Access to a wide range of voices and perspectives from a very local or defined community
- Content sharing opportunities for rebroadcast or joint initiatives
- New Talent for development across the spectrum of Local Radio roles
- Opportunities for BBC staff development
- Use of local studios and equipment
- Staff exchange programmes
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Community Radio Managers may benefit from:

- Mentoring on a group or individual basis
- Access to local training/ workshops and online training modules

- Content sharing and showcasing on air or via the BBC local website
- Recycling of technical equipment
- Work experience placements
- Financial rewards for content
- Access to a BBC news service

We recognise that not every community project will want to engage in this kind of activity and that BBC Editors will need to base the level of co-operation on the resources available. We also recognise that the ability to work together will be influenced by business and community pressures.

This said, both parties should be open to these developments and potential joint-working. If either party feels that this has not happened despite various attempts, the grievance procedure should be used.

When we do work together, it will be within the spirit of understanding and trust that this Memorandum of Understanding aims to achieve.

6. Standards for working together

Both the BBC and CMA affiliated projects work in complex regulatory, funding and operating environments. This MOU recommends working with similar guides to best practice outlined in the Standards for Community Engagement best practice guidelines. The COSLA standards can be viewed in full on the Scottish Community Development Centre website at:

www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards/10-national-standards

In principle this will mean

5. Participatory arrangements

BBC stations are publicly funded, centrally located and have paid staff. By contrast, community projects are based where there is a local need and many of the people, though not all, who work in community media are volunteers. When working together we need to recognise these differences in resources and take account of potential partners' working environments;

- Are the deadlines achievable and realistic?
- Are meetings scheduled at appropriate times and in suitable locations and recognise the limited resources of community organisations and their volunteers?
- Is office support such as photocopying available where needed?
- Where the BBC commissions special material for broadcast it should be paid for on the same basis as independent productions at the local rate, or structured, in kind training and development opportunities offered as appropriate.

Taking an inclusive approach will help to ensure that each local partnership will be one of equals, both with valuable contributions to make.

2. Planning

There should be agreed timescales, resources and identifiable results for evaluation.

3. Sharing Information

All information relevant to the agreed partnership project should be shared between all of the participants in an agreed format and timescale. This will be particularly important where partners have taken the lead to secure external public funding for a particular project. Where information is likely to be restricted, due to confidentiality for example, then this should be made clear at the outset.

4. Feedback

During an agreed partnership project there should be regular contact and feedback. This could take the form of ongoing meetings and evaluation to ensure the project is still on track and set to achieve the planned outcomes. There should be agreement in advance as to how this commitment will be resourced and evaluated.

5. Monitoring & Evaluation

The setting up, ongoing work and outcomes of partnership projects should be notified on a structured basis to the Community Media Association and BBC English Regions so that all other CMA members and BBC Editors can learn from best practice that may be identified. This should be done via the designated person from each party as previously identified. Competent engagement with the community media sector should also form part of the BBC editor's assessment and productivity.

Monitoring, evaluation and the progress of this MOU will be standing agenda points in the bi-annual meetings between BBC English Regions and the CMA.
