

# Westward Broadcasting Ltd.: Comprehensive Application for Dual Local Radio Licences for Exeter, East Devon, Torbay, Torquay, and South Devon (1992 / 1993)

## Executive Summary

Westward Broadcasting Ltd. ('Westward Radio') presents this detailed proposal for the dual local radio licences covering the Exeter, East Devon, Torbay, Torquay, and South Devon areas. We propose to replace DevonAir Radio with a modern, community-driven, and future-ready service, consisting of two stations—*Westward FM* and *Westward AM*. These stations will be supported by dedicated studios in Exeter and Torquay, ensuring region-specific content and a strong connection to the local community.

Westward Radio's ownership structure combines the benefits of local insight with the resources of national expertise:

- 52% Investment from Devon-based Individuals and Businesses: Our local investors include business leaders, media professionals, and entrepreneurs, ensuring a focus on the region's unique needs and community interests.
- 48% Investment from a Leading National Commercial Radio Provider: This strategic partnership provides access to advanced technology, best practices from successful stations across the UK, and national advertising networks, ensuring financial stability and growth.

This balanced investment model ensures that Westward Radio can operate as a fully independent local radio service, deeply connected to the community, yet equipped with the expertise and resources to succeed in a competitive market.

## Critique of DevonAir Radio: Why Westward Radio Is the Superior Choice

While DevonAir Radio has a long history in the region, its outdated strategy and inability to adapt to the evolving radio landscape make it a less suitable choice for the future. Westward Radio offers a significantly improved approach in several key areas:

- Outdated Programming Approach: DevonAir's initial proposal to maintain a single, simultaneous broadcast across both AM and FM frequencies is misaligned with market trends. Today's listeners expect distinct content tailored to each platform: FM for music and lifestyle programming, and AM for talk radio and community discussions. DevonAir's reluctance to adapt demonstrates

a reactive mind-set, as opposed to the proactive and strategic thinking required in today's radio market.

- **Financial Vulnerability:** DevonAir's financial struggles have been well-documented, with the station often relying on external support to remain viable. This raises serious concerns about their ability to sustain operations independently. In contrast, Westward Radio's investment structure ensures a solid financial foundation, combining the deep local roots and commitment of Devon investors with the strategic resources of a national partner.
- **Lack of Vision for Technological Advances:** DevonAir has shown little commitment to embracing the technological shifts that are reshaping the industry, such as Digital Broadcasting which is currently being trialled and tested. This failure to prepare for the future limits their potential to grow and adapt. Westward Radio, by contrast, has built its strategy around integrating these new technologies, ensuring that we remain competitive as the media landscape continues to evolve.

## The Westward Radio Vision: A Future-Ready, Community-Centric Service

Westward Radio's proposal offers a forward-thinking vision for local radio, combining modern technology with a deep commitment to serving the communities of Exeter, East Devon, Torbay, and South Devon. Our dual-station model allows us to cater to the unique needs of different listener segments while leveraging the strengths of both AM and FM.

### Programming Strategy: Tailored, Engaging, and Relevant

Westward Radio will deliver two distinct services—*Westward FM* and *Westward AM*—designed to maximise the potential of each frequency and provide highly relevant content to listeners.

#### Westward FM: Music, News, and Lifestyle Programming

*Westward FM* will operate as two localised services:

- **Westward FM Exeter & East Devon:** Broadcasting from our Exeter studio, this station will feature a blend of contemporary music, local news, and lifestyle content. Programmes like *Morning Drive Exeter* will combine upbeat music with traffic updates, local interviews, and news, creating a dynamic start to the day for listeners in urban and suburban areas. Midday programming will focus on local businesses, cultural events, and community stories, ensuring that Exeter and East Devon residents hear the issues that matter to them.
- **Westward FM Torbay & South Devon:** Broadcast from our Torquay studio, this service will focus on the coastal and rural

communities of Torbay and South Devon. *Good Morning Torbay* will provide localised news, features on the tourism industry, and profiles of local businesses, while *Afternoon Escape* will blend music with in-depth features on the unique history and culture of the South Devon area. Evening programming will offer a platform for local artists, helping to cultivate a vibrant regional music scene.

#### Westward AM: Devon's Hub for Discussion and Community Engagement

*Westward AM* will offer a unified service across the region, with a focus on talk-based content and community engagement:

- **Devon Today:** A flagship morning news and talk program featuring in-depth interviews with community leaders, discussions on regional issues, and the latest updates from local councils. This show will provide a comprehensive overview of the day's most important stories.
- **Talk Devon:** A daily interactive call-in show where listeners can voice their opinions on issues such as local government, rural development, and community events. This format fosters a sense of community connection, making *Westward AM* a true voice for Devon's residents.
- **Heritage Hour:** A weekly feature dedicated to exploring the history and culture of Devon, offering insights into the region's rich heritage and traditions through interviews, archival content, and listener stories.

#### Studio Infrastructure: Supporting Local Voices

Westward Radio will operate from two dedicated studio centres, each equipped to deliver high-quality programming and facilitate community engagement:

- **Exeter Studio Centre:** Located in the heart of Exeter, this studio will house the main production facilities for *Westward FM Exeter & East Devon* and contribute content to *Westward AM*. It will be equipped with advanced digital recording and editing suites, allowing for live broadcasts and high-quality content production. This centre will also serve as a training hub for aspiring local broadcasters, offering workshops and internships to support the development of new talent.
- **Torquay Studio Centre:** Serving Torbay and South Devon, the Torquay centre will produce programming for *Westward FM Torbay & South Devon* and support *Westward AM* with localised content. It will feature facilities for live music recordings and remote broadcasts, allowing the station to cover events and festivals across South Devon. This ensures that *Westward Radio* remains a true reflection of the communities it serves.

#### Investment in Technology: Building a Future-Ready Service

Westward Radio's strategic focus on technology ensures that we are prepared for the future of broadcasting:

- **Digital-Ready Studios:** Both studios will be equipped with state-of-the-art digital production technology, positioning us to seamlessly transition to Digital Broadcasting as the market evolves. This will enable us to reach new audiences with enhanced sound quality and a broader signal reach.
- **Data-Driven Programming Decisions:** Westward Radio will invest in audience analytics to better understand listener preferences and optimise our programming. This data-driven approach allows us to continually refine our content to ensure that it resonates with listeners, driving both audience growth and advertiser interest.

### Financial Strategy: Sustainability, Growth, and Community Investment

Westward Radio's financial strategy is built on stability and a commitment to reinvesting in the region:

- **Dual Revenue Streams:** By leveraging the national sales capabilities of our partner, Westward Radio can secure significant advertising contracts, while developing tailored packages for local businesses. This dual focus ensures that we remain competitive while creating strong ties with Devon's business community.
- **Community Sponsorships:** We will offer local businesses opportunities to sponsor specific programs and community initiatives, creating visibility for them while strengthening their connection to listeners. Sponsored content will include segments such as *Local Business Spotlight* and *Community Heroes*, highlighting Devon's entrepreneurial spirit and community leaders.
- **Local Reinvestment Fund:** A portion of our profits will be allocated to a *Devon Community Fund*, supporting local charities, arts programs, and youth media initiatives. This commitment ensures that Westward Radio remains not just a broadcaster but an active contributor to the community's development.

### Leadership Team: Expertise and Commitment

Westward Radio's leadership team combines local expertise with national industry knowledge:

- **Chairperson:** A respected Devon-based entrepreneur with extensive experience in media and regional development, bringing strategic oversight and a deep understanding of local needs.
- **Managing Director:** An experienced executive from our national partner, responsible for ensuring that Westward Radio remains financially sound and operationally efficient.

- Programming Directors for Exeter and Torquay: Skilled professionals with a track record in regional broadcasting, dedicated to maintaining high standards of content that reflect the local culture.
- Finance Director: A Devon-based chartered accountant, managing budgeting, financial planning, and ensuring transparency in operations.

## Conclusion: A Bright Future for Devon's Radio

Westward Radio is prepared to deliver a service that far surpasses DevonAir's outdated and reactive approach. Our plan is built on a clear vision for the future, leveraging advanced technology, embracing new ways to engage listeners, and maintaining a strong connection to the community. Our strategy ensures that *Westward FM* and *Westward AM* not only meet the needs of today's listeners but are also ready to evolve with the industry.

With our dual focus on high-quality, locally relevant programming and investment in technological innovation, Westward Radio is positioned to be the independent local radio service that Devon deserves. We look forward to bringing this vision to life, serving Exeter, East Devon, Torbay, and South Devon with a radio service that truly speaks to their needs and aspirations. We believe that The Radio Authority should choose Westward Radio to deliver a new era of broadcasting in Devon—one that is both modern and deeply rooted in the community.