

# **Rutland and Stamford Community Radio Project**

## **Independent Project Board**

### **Project Feasibility Interim Report <sup>1</sup>**

#### **Introduction**

During the first phase of the *Community Radio Project* (the Project), an initial study has been completed into the feasibility of establishing a community based radio station. As a result of the due diligence completed to date the *Independent Project Board* (the Board) has unanimously agreed that there is proven evidence of sufficient demand for a community radio station to serve the Rutland and Stamford area and that it is technically feasible to quickly establish a pilot station.

The Board is now recommending that the Project is progressed to the next phase with the timely implementation of *Rutland and Stamford Sound* (the Pilot Station) that will both validate the expected community demand and confirm the feasibility of a suitable operational platform.

The Pilot Station needs to be independent of *Rutland County Council* (RCC) to be able to seek advertising, grant funding and/or apply for a licence from Ofcom. It is therefore necessary that this second phase of the Project is delivered by an independent organisation.

This Report is to inform RCC that the next stage of the Project involves the setting up of an independent *Community Interest Company* (CIC) to manage the activities of the Pilot Station and to support the Board's request that the remaining balance of the RCC budget allocated to the Project be issued as a grant to the CIC, once formed.

The interim report sets out the key conclusions from the work undertaken by the Project to date, the reasons for selecting a CIC to operate the Pilot Station and proposals for the ongoing governance of the Project. The attached appendix provides detailed information to support the Board's recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> Last revised Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020, 15:45, Controlled Version 12

## **Background**

Following takeover which resulted in a rebranding and refocussing of Rutland's local radio station<sup>2</sup>, RCC set up the Project on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2020 to investigate the feasibility of developing a community based radio platform for Rutland and Stamford.

RCC appointed Rob Persani on a fixed term contract to manage the Project until no later than 14 September 2021. RCC allocated a budget of £50,000 to the Project, to include the costs of the Project Manager's salary.

The Board, comprising 6 members, was appointed in early November 2020 by community representatives selected for their mix of skills, qualifications and experience to provide governance, scrutiny and validation for the successful definition and delivery of the Project thus providing accountability to the local community for the Project's stated aims<sup>3</sup>. The Board has worked closely with the Project Manager throughout this first stage of feasibility analysis for the Project.

This interim report is based on the Board's thorough evaluation of the demand for, and anticipated feasibility of, a community-based radio platform for the Rutland and Stamford area. It has involved careful consideration of a number of different delivery platforms and structures.

## **Key Conclusions from work completed to date**

The Board has agreed that:

- There is proven evidence of sufficient demand for a community radio station to now justify the timely progression of the feasibility study to a validation phase (the Pilot Station).
- The Pilot Station will be called "Rutland and Stamford Sound" to legally distinguish it from the historic "Rutland Radio" name retained by Bauer Consumer Media Ltd, and to recognise the communities of Rutland and Stamford that it will support. The term "Sound" recognises the various

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<sup>2</sup> Bauer Consumer Media Ltd, operating as Greatest Hits Radio with limited community focus.

<sup>3</sup> A complete description of the Board's Duties and Responsibilities, Membership and Operational organisation is given in the Terms of Reference (TOR) which is published on the Rutland County Council (RCC) website

methods of delivery that are gaining wide popularity in the radio community<sup>4</sup>, and the name “Rutland and Stamford Sound” gained most popularity in the listener survey undertaken during early stages of the Project. Bauer have no objection to the name.

- There is a need to progress matters swiftly to retain audience interest, provide accountability to the community for the Project and to bring clarity with respect to other potential station bids.
- The platform for the Pilot Station must be online initially at least to ensure that it is technically and operationally achievable in the short term and that the requested grant from RCC, will be sufficient to adequately run the Pilot Station for the remaining duration of the feasibility study.
- During the next phase of the Project, opportunities will be actively sought to build advertising income and to attract incremental grant funding, to sustain a community radio station beyond the feasibility study using an online, FM<sup>5</sup> and/or SSDAB<sup>6</sup> platform as and when licences become available and if it has been successfully demonstrated that there is a large enough audience to cover the cost base.

### **Legal Structure to oversee the Pilot Station**

- To ensure that the Pilot Station is recognised as being independent and to facilitate broad community engagement, the Pilot Station will operate separately from RCC to undertake the remaining requirements of the feasibility study defined by the Project.
- To achieve separation within a legitimate framework an independent CIC limited by guarantee is in the process of being created with a minimum of two Directors from the existing Independent Project Board<sup>7</sup>.
- Any Board members not transferring to the CIC Board will continue to participate in a Steering Committee to check and challenge the good governance of the company and the proper use of grant funds.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Leicester Sound, Wycombe Sound, Amber Sound FM.

<sup>5</sup> A method of broadcasting using frequency modulation (FM)

<sup>6</sup> Small-scale DAB; a new way of way of transmitting digital radio to a relatively small geographic area

<sup>7</sup> Initially for the remainder of their tenure to 14 September 2021 but re-electable thereafter.

- The CIC not-for-profit model is successfully used in the community radio arena<sup>8</sup>. Two existing Board members have experience of establishing and managing successful Rutland based CIC's<sup>9</sup>. It is a reliable model for community accountability and handling grant funding.
- The new company will operate independently with full responsibility for managing all aspects of the Pilot Station, including establishing communication channels to maximise community engagement.
- The grant being sought from RCC, will include any pre-purchased assets, remaining agreed salary costs for the Project Manager and any other remaining monies up to the original £50,000 allocation to fund content, advertising, marketing, production/technical and overheads<sup>10</sup>.
- If RCC does agree to the budget being allocated to the CIC as a grant and the CIC is then responsible for delivering the Project then it is almost certain that the Project Manager will transfer to the CIC in accordance with the provisions of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006.
- While the CIC is initially being established for the purpose of operating the Pilot Station, implementation of the second phase of the Project will be completed in a manner which facilitates the CIC assuming responsibility for operating a community radio station beyond September 2021, if the Pilot Station demonstrates that there is sufficient demand.

### **Ongoing Governance and Accountability**

- The CIC will be accountable to RCC to evidence that the grant money is used for its intended purpose, in particular the payment of the Project Manager's salary.
- An interim report will be provided 3 months after go-live of the Pilot Station with a final report within 1 month of the conclusion of the Project (by 14 October 2021).
- The Board understands that the Project Manager's salary will need to be administered properly with the appropriate deductions being made.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Ridgeway Community Radio CIC in Dorset, Coast Community Radio CIC in Clywd, and Leicester Community Radio CIC

<sup>9</sup> Inspire2tri Community Interest Company and Root-and-Branch-out

<sup>10</sup> As detailed in the Pilot Project Budget

- In the event that the Project is terminated early, any remaining unallocated monies after the Project has been properly wound up would be returned to RCC.
- The Board acknowledges that the costs of administering the Project Manager's salary must be found by the CIC from incremental revenue sources.
- The Chair of the newly created CIC Board will undertake line management responsibilities for the Project Manager. In the Chair's absence, this responsibility will be delegated to the Company Secretary or other Board member with line management experience.
- The Project Manager will assume some broadcasting responsibilities within the Pilot Station. The Board is aware that, prior to transfer from RCC employment, it will be the Board's responsibility to notify RCC if they are aware of any policy breach during broadcast by the Project Manager that could lead to potential disciplinary action.

#### **Recommendation to RCC Cabinet**

The Board therefore asks RCC to agree that:

1. The remaining balance of the RCC budget allocated to the Project to include any items already purchased from the budget for the purpose of the Project, will be issued as a grant to the CIC, once formed, to continue with the Project which will include the implementation of the Pilot Station through to the end of the feasibility study by no later than 14 September 2021.
2. They will not oppose the transfer of the Project Manager post to the CIC. The majority of the grant will be for the payment of the Project Manager's salary for the full term of the Project.

Signed on behalf of all members of the Board on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020



**Mary Hardwick BSc, MBA, PhD, MBCS, CITP, FIOD  
(Chair)**



**David Lewis, BSc, ARCS  
(Secretary)**



**Mick Meadows BA, 4 x Sony Award winner as an Executive Radio Producer**



**Sarah Press BA, MA, MBACP**



**Heather Sharpe PGDip FCCA**



**Alex Wilby**