

Community Radio stations across Greater Bristol go Digital

PRESS RELEASE EMBARGOED UNTIL 09:00 ON MONDAY 5TH DECEMBER

Today (Monday 5th December), during a live broadcast from Bristol Beacon, community radio stations in the Greater Bristol area will start broadcasting on DAB Digital Radio. This is a landmark moment, making it easier for more local people to find and listen to their community radio stations.

Bristol and Severnside Digital Radio is a collaboration of three established community radio stations - Ujima Radio, BCfm and Bradley Stoke Radio. Also going digital will be Somer Valley Radio (Midsomer Norton), KTCR (Keynsham), Base Radio (Filwood) and Hub Radio, the student radio station of the University of the West of England (UWE).

Two local radio stations based in Stokes Croft will also start to broadcast digitally; NOODS Radio, with independent radio streaming from around the world, and Decadance, playing the freshest Dance and Urban music with a strong support for local Bristol artists., both reflecting the vibrant and energetic music scene in the area.

As well as community and local radio stations, there will be more new radio stations for people to listen to, including Angel Vintage, Fun Kids Naps, Radio Maria England, Tomorrowland, and Gaydio will join in January 2023.

Bristol and Severnside Digital Radio were founded as community interest companies to apply for and run digital radio services for community radio stations in Bristol and South Gloucestershire. They have been awarded licences by Ofcom and have worked with local organisations to create a digital radio network which covers over 530,000 people. The surplus from operating the network provides a new source of funding for community-based media.

All of the stations will now have much wider and more consistent coverage than they currently have on FM, and will be listed on digital radios alongside other national and regional radio stations. In Bristol, where over 70% of listeners listen to DAB Digital Radio alongside a continuing decline in FM radio listening, making the move to digital is important so that people can continue to find their local and community stations.

Quotes:

Patrick Hart, CEO BCfm Radio, said "This is a really important milestone for independent media as we take control of our own digital future."

Kevin Philemon, Chair of Ujima Radio, said "This is a perfect example of excellent collective work between community radio stations in Bristol. It's a landmark that will be treasured by the city and generations to come."

James Witcombe, Station Manager of Bradley Stoke Radio, said "We're so happy that this has launched. It gives us some freedom over our future and ensures the communities of Bristol and the wider area are served with local content when that sector is being cut."

Nick Piggott, Project Manager - "I'm incredibly proud of the way our community radio stations have worked together to get onto digital radio, and in a way that will benefit the stations with better accessibility for listeners and by providing community media an ongoing financial benefit. It's a great outcome."

The launch of the two multiplexes provides opportunities for both local radio stations and for new stations across the country who want to reach listeners in and around Bristol.

Bristol and Severnside Digital Radio are the first in a series of areas in the West Country that will follow a similar path in migrating community radio to digital. In the next 18 months, stations in Bath and North East Somerset, Taunton, Swindon and Marlborough, West Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire will also go digital, as part of Ofcom's "Small Scale DAB" licensing programme.

ENDS

Note to Editors:

Bristol and Severnside Digital Radio have websites at <https://bristoldigitalradio.org> and <https://severnsidedigitalradio.org>

Logos and coverage maps are available at bristoldigitalradio.org/media and severnsidedigitalradio.org/media

Bristol and Severnside Digital Radio have been licensed as part of Ofcom's Small Scale DAB programme, which provides a pathway for community and small local radio stations into digital radio.

FM and AM radio now accounts for only 34% of radio listening, and is in decline. Digital listening accounts for 66% of listening, of which DAB Radio listening is 39%. (Source - RAJAR, Q3 2022).

Almost all new cars in the UK come with DAB Digital Radio installed.

Bristol has a long history of innovation in Digital Radio. The UK's first commercial digital radio stations were based on the harbourside, and many digital radio innovations were led by teams based in the city.