

Paul Keenan

President of Audio, Bauer Media

paul.keenan@bauermedia.co.uk

Dyddiad | Date: 15 June 2020

Pwnc | Subject: **Swansea Sound**

Dear Paul,

It has come to the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee's attention that from September, Swansea Sound will be rebranded as Greatest Hits Radio and as a result much of the local content will be replaced by networked shows.

The Committee conducted an inquiry into radio in Wales during 2018 and published its [report](#) in December of that year. In that report we expressed concern, given the limited competition within the commercial radio industry in Wales, that companies might reduce and centralise local content as a cost-saving opportunity: at the loss of local, distinctive content. In order to prevent this, we recommended that the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport should consider introducing a regulatory requirement for commercial radio stations in Wales to report on distinctly Welsh news, as well as local and UK news, as part of its reform of commercial radio.

We are concerned the impact of Bauer Media's decision to rebrand Swansea Sound may result in the loss of local provision we predicted in our report. This would not only effect the people of Swansea but also the future of local radio stations in Wales. Swansea Sound is one of the oldest local radio stations in the UK and plays an important role in the cultural and social life of Swansea. It is vital that the provision of local, as well as distinctly Welsh, news and information is maintained. There is a growing deficit in the provision of local news in Wales and centralising content and providing network shows will only make this problem worse.

The Committee has been contacted by listeners who are keen to see the diversity of programming, as well its focus on local issues, maintained. Please can you give us more details of the proposed rebranding exercise, including:

- will the station produce at least 10 hours of Welsh output per week? If so, can this can be considered a minimum number of hours which can increase, rather than a ceiling? Can you



Senedd Cymru

Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN

✉ SeneddDGCh@senedd.cymru

☎ 0300 200 6565

Welsh Parliament

Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN

✉ SeneddCWLC@senedd.wales

☎ 0300 200 6565

give an indication of when this output will be broadcast? Listeners are concerned that Welsh output be might marginalised by being broadcast late at night; and

- We understand that Bauer propose to have a regional weekday afternoon non networked show. Can you confirm whether Swansea will be part of a region which covers Wales and the South West of England? If so, will listeners in Swansea hear a drive time show that is produced in England?

Swansea Sound has many loyal listeners who value the station's role in promoting community cohesion and championing local causes. The importance of local broadcasting in providing information and support has been demonstrated during the current pandemic.

We therefore ask you to reconsider the decision to rebrand Swansea Sound. It is our understanding that some of your local radio stations will not be rebranded, so we would urge you not to treat Swansea Sound any differently.

In order to keep those people who have contacted us informed, I would be grateful if you could reply to my letter at your earliest convenience

Yours sincerely,



Helen Mary Jones MS

Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg | We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Helen Mary Jones MS,
Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee,
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

16th June 2020

Dear Helen Mary Jones MS,

Thank you for your letter regarding the future of Swansea Sound.

I completely understand your concerns, the importance of retaining programming made in Wales and the loyalty of the station's listeners, so I hope that the news we have announced yesterday will reassure you of our intentions.

While it is true that we plan to rebrand Swansea Sound as Greatest Hits Radio in September, we will continue to produce weekday daytime programming in Swansea and all of the station's existing daytime much-loved presenters will continue to broadcast their shows. They will be joined by well-known local presenter Badger (real name Andy Miles) who will present a new evening show, replacing a show previously produced in England. This will increase the total daytime output of local programming from Swansea to eighteen hours a day on weekdays by September, as well as local output at weekends.

The station will also honour all of its Welsh language programming commitments and will continue to provide the local news, traffic and travel information service that listeners in the area rely upon and to champion local causes.

One of the reasons for the rebrand is that from 1st September the station will expand its existing DAB coverage of Swansea to South East Wales (including Cardiff and Newport), bringing this area an additional source of news from and about Wales as well as Welsh language programming not currently available from commercial radio in the area. The Swansea Sound name would no longer be appropriate given this wider coverage. The station will of course continue to be available on AM in the Swansea area and online across Wales and the rest of the UK, available through Bauer's app which gives access to all of our stations.

We look forward to providing this enhanced service to listeners across South Wales.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Keenan, President,
Bauer Media Audio