

Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
Ymchwiliad i'r achosion o COVID-19 ac effaith y feirws ar ddiwylliant, y diwydiannau creadigol, treftadaeth, cyfathrebu a chwaraeon / Inquiry into the COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on culture, creative industries, heritage, communications and sport

CWLC COV78

Ymateb gan Môn FM / Response from Môn FM

Covid19 Response Summary - MônFM Community Radio, North-West Wales

1. Introduction:

This report outlines the involvement of MônFM Community Radio in the Covid19 pandemic. Below is one of the many banners which was used on social media to introduce a daily coronavirus safety and information radio bulletin. This report does not cover the content of extensive daily National (i.e. UK) CV19 news information which was also broadcast, but has focused on the key information for the local population from **local** Public Services and **Welsh Government**.

Figure 1: Example of the MônFM Daily Coronavirus flyer used on social media.



2. Background:

The last Public events which MônFM was able to take part in before the pandemic was a careers day with students in the local College, 'Fairtrade Fortnight' when a coffee grower from Uganda visited the studio, and a charity truck run which involved a convoy of over 1 mile long of lorries going around the Isle of Anglesey with the station's OB van leading the way (with content being broadcast live whilst in motion) – see photos below:-

Figure 2: Gwyn Owen and Anwen Weightman explain all about Community Radio to Coleg Menai students who are interested in careers in media.

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Figure 3: Tony Jones welcomes a coffee grower from Uganda and the Anglesey Fairtrade association to MônFM's studio in Llangefni.



Figure 4: Tom Cook and Mike Wilson lead a 1 mile long charity truck convoy around the Isle of Anglesey to raise money for good causes in memory of three local lorry drivers.

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Figure 5: An example of how one of MônFM's many fundraising events to keep the station on-air had to be cancelled due to CV19 safety concerns – another blow to incoming station finances.



3. Financial Implications:

In total, approximately 40 external outside broadcasts and public events had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Those cancellations resulted in the station losing valuable income from e.g. local sponsorship of events, advertising and promotions – **that income was mission critical to help keep the station going throughout the year.**

To compound things and to make things worse, large-scale advertising agencies pulled (cancelled) 100% of advertising campaigns, rendering the station in a no-win financial situation, with ZERO income to keep paying bills, and no option to generate any income from its usual multiple streams.

It's hard enough in 'normal' times to keep a flow of income to pay the bills, but in the situation created by the pandemic – there is no alternative means to continue to pay normal running costs (Licensing, Music & incoming News Fees, vehicle insurance, technical, software and utility & premises costs etc).

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4. National and Local Context:

The need for local news and information as well as an overview of National news grew significantly during the pandemic, and community radio became the main channel for up to date local and accurate information from Public Services and Welsh Government.

It was useful to have a daily on-line 'podium' briefing from Welsh Government, together with the three weekly legislative review of lockdown rules - MônFM was able to re-broadcast the 'podium news announcements' on

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the station's social media channels, however the content was very 'journalistic' and questions were naturally interviewer led.

More specific information was required for North-West Wales, and although MônFM felt it had provided a conduit for connecting Welsh Government to the people, there was a need for additional local details for North-West Wales grass-route communities i.e. people need to know what is the advice locally as well as Nationally – this is where MônFM was well able to compliment the National picture to provide a fuller and richer picture of advice and information for its respective transmission service area.

In the period January to March, 2020, MônFM initially supported the sharing of National developments and their potential impacts locally with Gwynedd and Anglesey Councils submitting various voice recorded safety and advice messages with key telephone numbers and safety information. Such recordings were broadcasted hundreds of times at NO COST to the local population (*without any income to the station to maintain its daily operating costs*) – the station's board took this additional work on-board without thinking about financial costs (had the content been costed on the usual advertising rates, the cost would have been significant and probably beyond the scale of communications budgets) .

5. Volunteer Safety:

Being responsible organization, the priority was to keep the station's volunteers safe and well, and so detailed risk assessments and precautionary measures were put in place at the Llangefni studio i.e. a list of potential risks were assessed (a detailed risk assessment was undertaken) and procedures to minimize risk were put in place, together with pro-active use of handwashing and disinfecting / cleaning stations. There were limitations on the number of people entering the building at any one time. An overall survey of station volunteers was undertaken, to re-confirm private details about age, any health risks or vulnerabilities, and whether any of their family might be at risk (i.e. classed as vulnerable).

Figure 6: Fader controls were wiped, mic coverings were cycled and protective measures were installed and encouraged at the studio.



6. Escalation of the CV19 crisis in N.W. Wales:

The first formal interview concerning CV19 took place in both English and Welsh with the Leader of Anglesey County Council on the 17th of March, 2020 to explain how the County Council were working with Public Health Wales, the local voluntary council, social enterprises and local volunteers to pull together a response pack for volunteers to assist with support for vulnerable people in communities, and to ensure that core services continued (*contingency planning & partnership working*).

The interview also promoted the Public to use more 'on-line' and telephone communications to reduce health risks. At that time there was a low number of confirmed cases locally. The guidance to the Public was covered in the interview and was later, shared on social media, and podcasted for later listening by Tony W. Jones – Acting Chair MônFM Community Radio – 12/07/20 [REDACTED]

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anyone who missed the initial broadcast.

The interview can be listened to here in both English and Welsh:-

<https://www.mixcloud.com/MonFM/diweddariad-cv19-cyngor-sir-ynys-m%C3%B4n-ar-m%C3%B4nfm-270320-cymraeg/>

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<https://www.mixcloud.com/MonFM/cv19-update-isle-of-anglesey-county-council-on-m%C3%B4nfm-270320-english/>

There followed a number of critical interviews about the pandemic in the coming days with key public figures e.g. MP, MS etc. Here are examples which were podcasted:-

<https://www.mixcloud.com/MonFM/cv19-update-gwynedd-county-council-on-m%C3%B4nfm-010420-english/>

<https://www.mixcloud.com/MonFM/cv19-update-from-mark-drakeford-first-minister-welsh-government-on-m%C3%B4nfm-300320-english/>

<https://www.mixcloud.com/MonFM/angleseys-mp-virginia-crosbie-on-m%C3%B4nfm-corona-virus-update-010420/>

MônFM continued to receive a significant number of queries from members of the Public via social media and via email, and on the 22nd of March, the station took the initiative following consultation with some of its listeners and conversations with its volunteers, to write to local Public Services and voluntary bodies to invite them to participate in a daily CV19 Radio Bulletin.

The intended outcome at that time was to improve the flow of information to the Public – particularly for older people (*who we understood to be feeling very isolated*), to improve the capacity of community volunteers, and to promote appeals for kit and essential supplies, but also to advertise or promote access to hardship funds for businesses or third sector groups.

The offer was made for a **daily radio bulletin to be broadcast at 8pm** (*so as not to clash with the UK Government or Welsh Government 'podium' announcements*) for a duration of initially 15 minutes. The initial bulletins soon developed into hour long programmes packed with local information. A copy of the letter initially sent to Public Services can be seen in [APPENDIX 1](#).

MônFM went on to create better links with local key organizations responding to the CV19 pandemic and made provisions to hand-out its precious 'ZOOM' handheld recorders to the County Council, local voluntary council and a large social enterprise which was helping to prepare meal packages.

Commitments were also sought and obtained from the local MP (Virginia Corsbie) and the MS (Rhun Ap Iorwerth) to provide regular updates at least once a week, but also to maintain an active feed of information on its local social media and web-site but also through the station's mobile phone app which carries news. Initially the CV19 bulletin was digitized and podcasted but local demands soon outweighed capacity and so back-up recordings were kept for future use.

7. Closing the Studio and Broadcasting from Home:

On the 24th of March, 2020, the Llangefni studios were closed due to increased CV19 risks to volunteers. The lock on the door was changed and to this day, the studio has not been able to re-open (*this at a very critical time when the main studio had been dismantled and was undergoing a major re-build for an upgrade*).

With the station's local bank being closed due to safety concerns, and the station facing financial hardship, the challenge was on regarding how to arrange for up to 40 volunteers to somehow broadcast from home. The Management Board and the Technical Team gave countless voluntary hours to plan and prepare how this might be achieved effectively.

Following consultation with Station's Board, and at additional cost, it was agreed to order and install additional kit for volunteers to be able to broadcast from home (e.g. *remote access software, server*

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configuration, USB mics, use of cables, laptops, headphones, mic shields etc) – this at a time when stocks of key equipment like e.g. USB mics were quickly being depleted in the UK and globally due to a national shortage (everyone wanted the same type of kit at the same time).

With no access to bank funds, one or two members of the management board kindly stepped forward and used their own savings for emergency broadcast equipment, and to date were awaiting compensation due to the local Barclays bank being closed.

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Observing that the station might become a key source of Public information going forward, (*especially to older people who were not able to access social media and were getting increasingly concerned about which information was correct and accurate*) further services and organizations were invited to take part in the daily CV19 radio bulletins.

A provision had to be made for interviews to take place from home, and for recording capacity, which would then allow editing and re-upload for FM and on-line broadcast – another challenge and cost given that the station normally uses a high-quality Telephone interconnect unit in the studio. Facilities were only available to some station producers and time was spent experimenting to get the best results (audio quality).

A special letter of dispensation had to be requested from the local Police Inspector in Llangefni to allow emergency radio kit to be taken out to volunteer presenters. Two members of the technical team arranged items delivery and to unpack, pre-configure and test equipment (some re-purposed and some new), and then to disinfect the kit before arranging special delivery at a time when lockdown was in full-force (*one of the team was actually stopped by local Police and had to produce the permission letter*).

The Technical Team followed this up and volunteered for lengthy periods to **train 40 volunteer presenters over the phone and on-line**, with dozens of hours having to be spent familiarizing how to use the remote broadcast software and to configure new or alternative kit (*and careful placement of them for best sound quality!*) ☺.

The challenge was met, and against all odds MônFM's team of volunteers were equipped to broadcast from home and able to maintain a full service even before local BBC presenters received the same facilities NOTE: *This involved training people of all ages, and with varying degrees of experience and e.g. learning or physical disability / mental health conditions.*

An added difficulty was that a few of the station's volunteers had to self-isolate e.g. after returning from abroad, or because they had pre-existing health conditions.

The daily corona virus radio bulletins were compiled approximately within a 4hr slot between 4pm and going to air at 8pm. Likewise, news bulletins which ran throughout the day were organized within the working (volunteering) day.

CV19 Radio Bulletins and additional news items involved a significant team effort to request, download, correct, edit and prepare and then re-upload content for broadcast (all from home), with producer and technical input, plus an excellent effort from contributors, volunteer editors and interviewers / researchers.

Shortly after the pandemic was declared, the station's head of news was taken ill, and a younger volunteer was mentored to undertake the work. The volunteer enjoyed the experience and did a superb job and is now doing daily local news bulletins every other day. He has recently been given the green light to go to air without prior content approval – a sign that talent can come through community radio and hopefully on to the Welsh media industry.

One of the major bonus points of introducing a new volunteer for news bulletins was that we were able to expand our local news provision in the Welsh language. The news team also contributed to the 8pm bulletins, providing coverage of WG briefings and relevant interviews, syndicated to MônFM via Sky News / IRN. Traffic bulletins were also extended to weekday breakfast shows and introduced hourly local weather updates following news on the hour.

As the pandemic developed, National news and information content was enriched e.g. Radio News Hub, 60 second updates (useful hints and tips on Covid19) but also other locally prepared content and

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material from the area e.g. through local interviews.

8. Achieving new things and Breaking Old Records:

The station's volunteers were encouraged to 'go the extra mile' and to use the remote broadcast kit to the utmost. They did this with vigor and extreme dedication, and even some previous volunteers came back to help with the work.

Although some presenters hadn't been able to get on-air due to equipment shortages, others stepped

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forward to fill in any gaps and kindly gave additional broadcasting hours over the duration.

The aim was to provide additional local information and news so plug the gaps from traditional mainstream and some regional newspapers which had to suspended output due to the lockdown. MônFM's volunteers provided additional and quality entertainment which many listeners have commented on as having been of great help to their mental wellbeing during lockdown.

This aspect of 'filling the gap' with local news and information cannot be underestimated – **MônFM BECAME and has BECOME one of the only regular and local trusted news sources compiling hyper local information in the area - daily updates were received safely with no health risk to listeners who were tuning in from the safety of their homes, their vehicles or via their mobile phones/smart speakers.**

Most MônFM radio news bulletins contained coronavirus information and updates – they ran straight after the National Sky IRN news on the hour (*they also of course provided a National perspective*).

Additional requests were received from Public Services and the Welsh Government Press Office to organize interviews with Ministers, but also for local appeals for additional volunteers, more access to PPE, emergency funding etc).

In the face of adversity, MônFM achieved three new major milestones, and a press release was arranged to share the good news (See [APPENDIX 2](#)). They included :-

- Increasing broadcasting hours to a full broadcast schedule – the first time in the station's history – at least 16hrs a day from 7am to 10pm and even to Midnight some days);
- The first time the station had been fully remote controlled and all radio programmes, including news and daily CV19 radio bulletins prepared from volunteer's own homes;
- The listeners on-line listening figures record was broken with a massive peak in local people tuning in to a CV19 broadcast with Leaders of Anglesey and Gwynedd Councils, and the First Minister.

9. Keeping in touch with Listeners:

MônFM also needed to develop a means for the Public to continue to call the main station telephone number, and to have calls diverted through switchboard server directly to presenter's homes and an 'out of hours' facility for any emergency – no such facility was previously required, and so additional IT hardware had to be developed and put in place by the Technical Officer (resulting in extra hardware cost to service the need).

The station's social media content and web pages were also maintained remotely, together with App content, and this also helped to keep the station in touch with its listeners.

It was very important for MônFM to continue to provide good quality entertainment (*for everyone's continued mental health and wellbeing*) as well as regular local information and news throughout the pandemic.

One of the popular initiatives developed was 'THE BIG SHOUTOUT for KEYWORKERS' (*see Appendix 2*), which enabled members of the Public to telephone the station, press 9 and then record a greeting message for keyworkers. The initiative proved to be very popular, and recorded messages were able to be incorporated into radio shows for inclusion 'on-air' during programmes – some of the messages (*especially from close family of keyworkers*) were emotional and very well-meaning - an inspiration to keyworkers working hard on the front-line. Others like e.g. delivery drivers who were tuned in said they

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were very grateful for the support.

MônFM developed several versions of new 'STAY AT HOME WITH US' jingles and even ran a competition between its presenters to develop each other's on-air show promotions during lockdown (*the presenter PROMO challenge*).

MônFM received good support from mainstream media, and were featured on S4C's 'Prynhawn Da' TV programme (*click on this link for a video clip*):-

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<https://youtu.be/IQ-TNDeGPcs>

The station was also given coverage by BBC Radio Cymru:-

<https://clyp.it/vugchkyt?token=91d726036cbf739aacad7af36a2d0638>

Additionally, the station has been awarded a 'Hidden Hero' award for the amazing effort of all its volunteers.

Several letters of appreciation and emails / social media messages were received from listeners ([see attached letter from the Wales Domestic Abuse helpline](#)).

10. The '2 Sisters Factory' Outbreak:

The demand for daily coronavirus information reduced in early July, and the daily radio bulletins were scaled down to two longer mainstream bulletins a week (held on Wednesday and Friday evenings). However the new outbreak of CV19 at the '2 Sisters' meat processing factory in Llangefni necessitated additional bulletins and interviews from the County Council and the First Minister and caused a major second spike in media attention.

Concern was so high at one point, that the station decided to poll its listeners about their main concerns (*that had a superb response*) to enable listener questions to be posed direct to Mark Drakeford. The radio programme containing the interview with Mark Drakeford was exceptionally popular, and the follow-up radio podcast was the most listened to in the station's history, with circa.1300 listens in just 48hrs.

MônFM's volunteering work is understood and appreciated by the communities of Anglesey and Gwynedd, and the station has recently been approached by a TV company to ask if it would be interested in featuring in a UK wide documentary to cover how it worked tirelessly to help tackle the Coronavirus pandemic.

11. Volunteer Hours invested in the Pandemic:

The station usually invests approx 1200 hours a month in terms of on-site and off-site show preparation, delivery and support. This was for an average of 8-10 hours per day broadcast schedule. Taking this baseline figure into consideration, it is estimated that volunteer hours will have at least doubled and probably exceeded 2,500 hours per month at the peak of the pandemic. This is a truly remarkable achievement for any voluntary community group, which has maintained an essential local radio service which may have exceeded the operating hours of some local commercial radio stations, and was only marginally below the BBC's broadcasting hours in Wales (approx. 1hr less per day on some days).

12. Local CV19 Radio Bulletin Content:

The following topics were extracted from actual CV19 Radio Bulletins hosted by MônFM, and **DOES NOT contain any reference to other additional UK-wide CV19 updates** which were also included in daily coronavirus radio bulletins.

The log list of content which took many hours to summarise and listen to from the archive have been grouped into specific categories and are listed below in order of priority – a full explanation can be seen in **APPENDIX 3** :-

- a. Local Authority Queries (47 in total)
- b. Safety Information and advice (29 in total)
- c. Health and Welfare (28 in total)

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- d. Financial Support and Assistance (21 in total)
- e. Voluntary input and Support (19 in total)
- f. Political input from MS and MP (17 in total)
- g. Environmental, Waste and Recycling (17 in total)
- h. Schools and Education (16 in total)
- i. Foodbanks (15 in total)
- j. Welsh Government Guidance and Advice (14 in total)
- k. Economy (13 in total)
- l. Coronavirus Emergency Response (12 in total)

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- m. Emergency Response (12 in total)
- n. Social Services and Safeguarding (12 in total)
- o. Housing (10 in total)
- p. Tourism (6 in total)
- q. Exercise and Keeping Fit (5 in total)
- r. Police and Crime (5 in total)
- s. Community Cohesion (4 in total)
- t. Farming (1 item)
- u. Employment (1 item)

13. CV19 Summary Statistics:

- Number of CV19 Radio Bulletin clips broadcast (Max 1 Hour duration) = 463
- In-depth CV19 related interviews undertaken = 23
- Organisations and individuals who have contributed to CV19 Radio Bulletins (to mid July):-
 - Welsh Government Ministers (e.g. Mark Drakeford, V. Gething, Kirsty Williams)
 - Anglesey County Council Chief Executive
 - Gwynedd Council Leader
 - Anglesey Council Leader
 - Chief Executive of Menter Môn
 - Chief Officer of Mantell Gwynedd
 - Chief Officer of Medrwn Môn
 - Chief Officer of Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline
 - Senior Officer of Gorwel (DA service)
 - North Wales Police Chief Constable
 - Members of the Senedd
 - Members of Parliament
 - Manager of local Foodbanks
 - Manager of local Advice Centre
 - Owner of a local Animal Rescue facility
 - County Councillors (various)
 - Manager of local Hosbis
 - Chair of local chamber of trade
 - Portfolio lead for economy and tourism
 - Van Drivers Association representative
 - Senior Housing Officer – Isle of Anglesey County Council (Housing Support)
 - Chief Executive Citizens Advice Bureau
 - Police and Crime Commissioner;
 - Manager of the Test, Track and Trace service;
 - Manager of the Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline;
 - Manager of the GORWEL homeless and domestic abuse service;
 - George North message of inspiration;
 - Manager at Shelter Cymru;
 - Manager of local jobs agency;

Note: Several attempts were made to engage with the press office of the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), via phone and email. Examples of the CV19 radio bulletin were shared, however despite sustained requests, BCUHB felt that they were unable to prepare any additional audio content or make themselves available for interviews or contributions to CV19 radio bulletins,

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(this despite the station being approached by Health Board staff wishing to place appeals e.g. for PPE via the station. Note: *some press releases were received via email, however more detailed queries were directed to the Health Board's web-site.* MônFM firmly believes that this was a huge missed communications opportunity with the local population at a time when Public support for the NHS was at its highest, but that this should not in any way undermine the truly remarkable work undertaken by NHS staff on the front line.

- Approx. number of national news bulletins containing CV19 information broadcast = 2,410

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- Number of local news bulletins prepared containing some form of CV19 updates = 310
- Approx. number of social media & web posts relating to CV9 = 47
- Popular content covered in CV19 Bulletins:-
 - Coping with loss (bereavement);
 - Supporting others from a distance;
 - Managing fears for the future
 - Combating Stress;
 - How to get conversations started on-line;
 - Van and Lorry drivers as keyworkers;
 - Re-opening schools;
 - Rediscovering Anglesey Safely;
 - Fire Safety and BBQ's;
 - Understanding your feelings;
 - Practicing mindfulness;
 - Making a plan for lockdown (routines);
 - Fears about the future;
 - Using music to tackle stress & worries;
 - Building a daily and weekly routine;
 - Dealing with change under lockdown;
 - Making a plan for life under lockdown;
 - Staying connected to family and friends – safely;
 - Handling conflict;
 - Breathing exercises;
 - Mental Health wellbeing on-line;
 - Helping your kids understand coronavirus;
 - How to reach out for support;
 - Sleep during stressful times;
 - Mindfulness on your daily exercise;
 - Worrying about someone you love;
 - Working from Homes;
 - Dental Care & BUPA;
 - Films & classics to watch and listen to;
 - Pets in Lockdown;
 - IET Mental Health;
 - Dementia in lockdown;
 - Blood cancer;
- Approximate hours of CV19 related material broadcast to 12/7/20 = 374hrs (10 working weeks @37hrs of continuous air-time)

14. The Recovery Path going forward:

At a time when emergency funding has been given out or pledged, it would be easy to take for granted the excellent work undertaken by Community Radio stations in Wales, and to hope for the best.

However as the pandemic is receding, there is a chance that it might return later in 2020 or early in 2021, forcing a second lockdown over Winter.

Given that the weather is going to be much harsher, and poverty levels will not have recovered in the Autumn, it is essential that Public Services and the Welsh Government installs an effective means of

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continued communication with the population.

Coupled with the fact that commercial radio is not being expanded on a semi-local basis, but nationalized resulting in their reduced overhead costs, and less and less local content for news and information (the Bauer or Global models), commercial local radio is vastly shrinking. The BBC only has to National radio services for Wales, therefore Community Radio stations are now taking over local radio by default in most areas in terms of hyper-local content.

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Wales' economy needs to be rebuilt, and needs time to recover. Businesses need to re-advertise and use the good services of community radio to promote their services. Community Radio can play a very important part in economic recover if it is given fair play to do so.

Given that the income of Community Radio has also been severely affected by the pandemic, now is the right time to bring back the Welsh Government Community Radio Fund in Wales – there has never been such a high need to support Community Radio in Wales.

15. Financial and Policy Aspects:

Often when discussing finance, the argument is heard whereby 'Community Radio is Funded Nationally by Ofcom from their fund' and 'the Community Media Association' supports all their needs and so in Wales, there is no need for the Welsh Government to be involved or to support further!

This is a very frustrating aspect for all Welsh Community Radio stations, where most subscribe to the WALES COMMUNITY RADIO NETWORK (WCRN), and not the CMA, which is primarily an organizations focused on English Community Radio Stations and has little or no connection with community radio in this locality.

Likewise, whilst the National Ofcom community radio fund is open to applications from all UK Community Radio Stations, the size of that grant amount is humble in terms of the true operating costs for over 300 UK community radio stations. Realistically, the chances of under 20 stations in Wales accessing this fund are very low given the total number of UK applications – stations have become hesitant to apply, possibly due to the grant ordinarily favoring developmental aspects rather than baseline revenue running costs.

During the pandemic, Ofcom did allocated all of this year's grant to support community radio stations who were in dire need or at risk of going into administration, and whilst it is understood that two community radio stations in Wales were successful in their application, the vast majority were not, or did not apply (possibly due to having some emergency reserve funding in place due to good prior financial planning).

It also often said that community radio is a 'soft' journalistic cousin, and doesn't always promote investigative journalism and not holding officials to account. This is both true and untrue. Its not always necessary to use hard-faced journalism to get information in an aggressive manner – often community radio presenters wish to build up a trusting relationship with local politicians and public servants in order to obtain an honest overview of various topics, which in the long-term can pay increased dividends in receiving more regular and long-term access to news and information.

It has been incredibly difficult to find time to prepare any funding applications in the middle of a global pandemic, whilst also keeping a 24/7 volunteer radio station going, however MônFM did make time to apply for two grants – one to the local 'Y Gymdeithas' (previous Anglesey Charitable Trust) CV19 emergency fund, which was unsuccessful (*it is understood that funding had been awarded to food packages etc*), but it was successful and very appreciative in obtaining a £1,000 contribution towards the cost of USB mics from the local voluntary council, which will assist with CV19 emergency broadcasting costs.

Considering the station lost 100% of its advertising income, and its ability to be sustainable over the coronavirus pandemic, MônFM feels that the community radio sector in Wales has been left out of the various financial support packages. This is difficult to accept especially considering the extremely important role the station and community radio has played across Wales and the UK in the pandemic.

It has been mentioned that there is a National Ofcom fund for stations who are in dire financial difficulties, and that Welsh stations should apply for funding from that pot, however that is not an acceptable solution given the above facts.

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The Welsh Government should now recognize the evidence in-hand, and the crucial role community radio has made to the coronavirus pandemic, in keeping the public informed with a steady stream of LOCAL information and entertainment (including creative competitions and quizzes) to maintain the population's mental wellbeing and safety and a sense of community cohesion.

What's required is the re-instatement of an annual fixed-sum of revenue (proportional to actual running costs) to each community radio station across Wales to help make such stations more sustainable going

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forward. This could be in the form of a fixed-term payment or annual grant, or payment for a minimum number of Government advertising slots per station per year.

The investment for such a grant would be minimal and humble compared to other sums allocated for e.g. supporting independent journalism in Wales (which arguably reaches a lot less of the population overall).

There is also a need for the Welsh Government to recognize the mission critical role that Community Radio stations will play in the Welsh recovery plan, in terms of promoting local businesses, highlighting the plight of local communities and assisting with the overall economic and social recovery going forward.

Should a second wave of the coronavirus hit Wales in the Autumn/Winter, then urgent consideration should be given to supporting Welsh community radio stations right away, and not to wait for a second wave of coronavirus to appear or to struggle on by themselves.

Photos of some MônFM Volunteers Broadcasting from their homes:-



Tony W. Jones - Acting Chair Môn FM Community Radio 12/07/20

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