



PROGRAMMING AND CONTENTS POLICY

Provide access to training, production and distribution facilities;
encourage local creative talent and foster local traditions, and provide programmes for the benefit, entertainment, education and development of their audience;
Community Radio Charter for Europe, point 2

In keeping with the stated objectives of our Community Media Co-op, content will incorporate a positive emphasis on:

- * Facilitating and supporting community development
- * Contributing to the media diversity in our area.
- * Encouraging education and life-long learning.
- * Providing information on employment and other issues which will assist people in meeting their information needs
- * Providing access for a wide range of groups within the community, in particular minorities and those under-represented in public service and commercial media
- * Providing a platform for local arts, musical, literary, sports, and other cultural activities
- * Providing a platform for Irish culture, including the Irish language and Irish music
- * Promoting civic pride

All of our proposed content will be measured against the Co-op's objectives and the policy statement, and against any guidelines laid down from time to time by the Programming and Contents Committee.

Furthermore, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) has stated that Near FM has editorial and operational independence in terms of scheduling, programme content, and staff / volunteer utilisation. In doing so it must comply with necessary legislation and adhere to its own guidelines.

THE PROGRAMMING AND CONTENTS COMMITTEE

We promote the right to communicate, assist the free flow of information and opinions, encourage creative expression and contribute to the democratic process and a pluralist society.

Community Radio Charter for Europe, Point 1.

The Programming and Contents Committee is appointed by the Committee of Management. The current Committee are; Alan Braddish and Dorothee Meyer-Holtkamp, Debbie Hutchinson, Sarah Jane Fortune, Dave Rigney. The Committee's job is to plan the schedule, allocate time to new contents, revise the Schedule and individual programmes on a continuous basis, and deal with problems including legal, regulatory and near ethos to broadcasting as they arise.

In keeping with the policy, contents will change from time to time. No one will OWN a particular time slot or programme, so if you are asked to move the time of the programme, or if the programme/area you are working on is dropped, please accept it in the spirit of the Co-op. Naturally, the Committee will consult with you before taking any such decision. At times Near organises special programmes from outside the studios, so called Outside Broadcasts, OB's. We generally give 8 days notice prior to cancelling a programme.

When dealing with TV issues the Programming and Contents committee will include the TV coordinator, and when dealing with online issues the Social Media appointee will be included.

PROGRAMME REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE

This is currently made up of Dara Duffy, Connie O'Reilly and Andrew Flannery and is supported by staff member Alan Braddish.

Terms of Reference

What is it?

A review panel is a group of experienced broadcasters/Committee of Management members who will review programming on a regular basis.

Why do it?

- It is an important part of our ethos and strategic plan to give regular feedback to programme producers to try to encourage stronger community programming.
- Many programme makers regularly ask for feedback.
- It gives Committee members a regular understanding of the issues with programming.

How does it work?

- The group is made up of Committee members, key staff and experienced volunteers. A programme is selected by the Programme/contents committee* or a volunteer requests feedback.
- A technician will mail the below form and a link to three random podcasts to the panel.
- Each panel members listens to the programmes and give the feedback.
- A panel member working with a key member of staff, collates the feedback and sends to the programme producers. (copies to panellists and programme/contents committee)
- Programmes are reviewed under the headings below.
- Training can be recommended to the programme-maker

*Programme/contents committee primarily looks after new programme proposals, scheduling issues and problems with programmes, not turning up etc.

Panel Review form

The comments are intended to be constructive and help improve your programme are not to be taken as a personal criticism.

Content: We are looking to see if the content matches the programme guidelines or programme proposal.

Community relevance: This can be understood in quite broad terms, especially with a music programme, where the community may mean the listeners with an interest in this type of music e.g. is there information about upcoming gigs.

Production: We are trying to see if the programme is well researched and planned, and is there any promotion.

Technical presentation: Was there dead-air, or poor sounds or phone levels. Did it sound like the person was wearing headphones etc?

Right of reply: All reviewed programmes have a right of reply, where they can write to the secretary, if they feel unjustly treated.

Sample feedback letter

Dear XXXX,

We are writing to you to give you feedback on your programme, "XXXXX, to which we have been listening over the past while. Our comments are made up of those of on the programming review sub-committee and experienced broadcasters.

The comments below are intended to be constructive and help improve your programme are not to be taken as a personal criticism. If however you feel unjustly treated you may reply in writing to the programming committee through the station manager.

Content:

Community relevance/participation:

Production:

Technical presentation:

Overall it is an excellent/v. good/good programme.
We recommend that you take some refresher training on ...

If there any areas in which you would like to comment please contact us.

Thank you for your reliability and commitment.

Yours sincerely,

The programming review sub-committee

TYPES OF CONTENT

Content will include:

1. Those made by volunteers within the project itself, such as local current affairs, arts, sport, specialist music and
2. Those made by groups within the Community.

Many volunteers will be involved for the most part in type 1, but there is a very important role to be played in providing help and support to groups taking part.

Content

There is ALWAYS a local angle!

All content, whether music or speech-based, should focus on local issues and local talent. In planning your programme please try to bear this in mind, as it is easy to lose sight of our objectives when you are caught up in the mechanics of actually producing content. This does not mean that national or even international issues cannot be dealt with; it just means that in dealing with them you should try to take a local or community angle.

Style

We do NOT want to sound like a pale imitation of commercial media.

Near Media Co-op does not aim to have a particular "style" of broadcasting but we aim to AVOID particular styles. Commercial media has a particular "sound" and "look" which is instantly recognisable. If you tune into a radio station you will know if it is a commercial one almost instantly, whether you hear a "DJ", an advertisement, or even, sometimes, a piece of music. In fact, you could travel around Ireland listening to commercial radio and in many cases you would think you had never left Dublin. Near FM should sound as though it comes from North-East Dublin. In other words, people involved in the Co-op, and on the station should sound like themselves, speaking in their own accents, in their own language.

The question of style goes deeper than accents: it also covers such issues as our attitude to our audience. Serious issues are often treated sensationally and personal stories can be used in a way that exploits the person telling them. It is useful when making content to ask yourself if you are treating your audience, and indeed your guests (if any) with the respect and dignity due to all human beings.

Sponsorship

You may feel that your area could benefit from a link with a sponsor. ANY such links need to be discussed IN ADVANCE with the Project Co-ordinator. This is very important as our approach to Sponsorship is very specific and is part of our radio licence conditions.

Complaints

From time-to-time complaints about particular items can arise. If you receive a complaint about your content, please let the Programming and Contents Committee know. If the Committee receives a complaint about your content they will talk to you about it before taking any action. They may write to you directly setting out the basis of the complaint and may take a decision to cease your broadcasting of similar or all material. You will be advised of your right of appeal to the Committee of Management, should this happen.

BALANCE IN CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING

This is our Mission Statement

- ✓ To foster social justice, media literacy and promote civil society ownership of media.
 - ✓ To be a democratic, independent, not-for-profit community building resource.
 - ✓ To provide an alternative to mainstream media by offering an outlet for those underrepresented or excluded through training and access to distribution facilities.
 - ✓ Through distinctive programming to contribute to the education, entertainment and development of our community.
 - ✓ To defend the environment and human rights, particularly the right to communicate.
1. Presenters and producers should be very familiar with the **mission statement**, as set out above. These demonstrate our commitment to empowerment, minority voices and our duty to support these voices. This does not mean that there cannot be another side to the story. Having a counter argument can make the telling of an issue more interesting and engaging for the listener. It is part of our role to offer some level of opposing viewpoint and where necessary to play devil's advocate.

2. Counter-argument

This is something we should strive for. We have to use our experience and expertise as community media people to decide where, when and to what extent. e.g. We may not be looking for counter-arguments during an anti-racism week. But this is not to say that xenophobia couldn't better challenged by allowing people to have a voice a put forward their point of view.

3. Time frame

We cannot always bring balance to a discussion within the one interview. There are simple constraints such as resources and availability. Therefore the timeframe in which we bring about the counter argument can be over a given period, two months being the maximum time.

Additional guidelines:

Here are some of the key issues when dealing with current affairs interviews.

- The presenter needs to put questions to the interviewee that represent the other side of the argument. The presenter **cannot** be seen to be endorsing or supporting an interviewee's side of the argument.

- A person representing the other side of the argument can be interviewed on a future programme, therefore balance can be achieved over a number of programmes. **But** the timing between the interviews is important and they cannot be too far apart. (There is no strict duration, but depending on the issue, a month is about the limit)
- It is not enough that there is **balance** over a broad theme (e.g. the Israel /Palestine conflict) More so, we have to try to achieve balance with a topic under that theme (e.g., the flag protests in Belfast is a topic and the troubles in the North of Ireland is a broad theme)
- A connection must be stated between the interviews. We need to be explicit in stating what we are doing. So “this interview gives another side of the story to the one we played about the ‘given topic’ two weeks back.

If you have any questions please come back to Ciaran, Sally or Alan.

CURRENT AFFAIRS SUB-COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

What is it?

A group of experienced broadcasters/Committee of Management members/staff who will oversee current affairs review programming on a regular basis. The committee mainly concerns itself with politics, referendums and looks to keep programmes in line with Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) codes and guidelines while maintaining the ethos of the coop. Other legal matters such as libel are also covered.

Why do it?

- To ensure that a wide variety of good quality current affairs output
- To ensure that we are keeping to our ethos in current affairs programming
- To ensure that as part of our licence broadcasting codes are followed correctly.
- To give presenter the tools and confidence to handle tricky issues

How does it work?

- The committee deals with programming that cover current affairs items, i.e. magazine programmes, social justice programmes etc.
- Workshops and training are provided on various elements of current affairs.
- Member of the sub-committee will meet and support presenters on a one-to-one basis from time to time to talk through tricky issues.

- The committee listens to programmes and give feedback and direction to the presenters and producers.
- Further training can be recommended to the programme-maker
- If presenters do not follow the instructions of the sub-committee, the matter will be passed on to the Coordinating Committee, and this may lead to the programme or the presenter being suspended. See operational manual.

Right of reply: All programmes and presenters have a right of reply, where they can write to the secretary, if they feel unjustly treated.

Competitions

As an alternative service to both commercial and national public service media, we are experimenting with alternative ways of doing things. One you should be aware of is our 'non-competitive' policy. This means that no competitions are allowed. Instead, if you have a gift to give away, you should ask your audience to submit their names for a draw for the item. No competitive questions are to be asked. Similarly, we will attempt to find non-competitive ways to promote the Co-op, to encourage more involvement of the local citizens.

Celebrity Free Zone

As a Co-op, we try to offer an alternative to that presented by other media. For instance, we don't promote the 'cult of the celebrity'. This is a decision taken by us, and not one imposed by any state body. It's not a condition of our radio licence, for example. But, we do want to acknowledge and celebrate creative talent across our community. However, we don't see ourselves as a publicity machine for celebrities, personalities or 'Very Important People'. In our community project the celebrities are the local citizens.

Near Media Co-op tries to create positive community celebrities, positive in the sense that we want to honour people who demonstrate with particular clarity, virtues that need to be, in our view, more prominent, admired, supported and emulated in our society. The only star on our logo and in our community, is the community activist, whether paid or voluntary.

GUIDELINES AND POLICY FOR PROMOTING YOUR PROGRAMME

Display Material

Posters also add to the attraction of your work. If you have a special feature or are inviting a guest in to talk on a topical subject, draw up details of a poster announcing this. The office will help you to produce and distribute these. Most shop owners, libraries, community halls etc. will display your poster – but ask before you display.

Recorded Promotional Material on radio

We encourage and ask all volunteers to record a promo prior to starting your programme. The policy is to keep all promos to about 25-30 seconds. Please contact Alan Braddish, alan@near.ie for assistance.

Getting into the Community/Outside Broadcasts

Another way to promote each platform is to go and visit public places. Becoming involved in the active life of our community can help us to promote our work. We have an Outside Broadcast Unit that can travel anywhere in your community. Our outreach platform can provide help with this. Contact dorothee@near.ie for more details.

For Radio, Taking A Break

Programme schedules are generally set on a quarterly basis. If you decide to take a break from your programme, give the Contents Committee at least six (6) weeks notice. This will ensure that a replacement programme/presenter can be arranged. Our programme schedule is updated regularly on our website <https://nearfm.ie/schedule/>

Studio Booking and Equipment Sign-Out

We ask that all volunteers book studio time in advance. Contact reception for further information, and available studio time. If you are taking out portable recording equipment, we ask that you sign it out. This is for insurance purposes. We ask for your Co-Operation in this.

Some things to note, keep in mind:

- Check if there is somebody assigned to do **studio duty** on the day you are recording/presenting your programme/segment if you need assistance.
- After you have agreed to do a programme you need to sign the **programme agreement**. Usually slots are given for 13 weeks initially. You can apply for a 30min or 60min or 90min programme.
- Prepare a **promo** in order to let other people know about your new programme. Alan can assist with the promo: alan@near.ie.
- Promote your new programme in the newsletter which is sent out bi-monthly.
- If you'd like some assistance with designing a flyer or poster for your programme, get in touch with Dorothee, dorothee@near.ie
- Keep a **running order** of each programme and send it to the reception, the receptionist will archive it: reception@near.ie.
- You can **book portable recorders for compiling recordings** through Alan or Gay Alan@near.ie, gay@near.ie 01.8671190.

