



Community Radio Awards – Station of the year

Introduction:

Bro Radio is the local community radio station for the Vale of Glamorgan, the southern most county in Wales. At the heart of its area is one of the largest Towns in Wales, Barry, best known for its coastal resort – the home of Gavin and Stacey, with a bustling high street featured in a list of the top in the country.

The south of the county features some of the best beaches in Europe to the west of Barry, with a Victorian Seaside town to the east. The seaside towns and villages are surrounded by large areas of fields, farming land and industrial units, surrounding a former military base which is now home to Aston Martin – all of which makes for a diverse population that the station serves.

Bro Radio's service is delivered by a team of 60 local volunteers, all of whom live, work and love the County we serve. The station delivers local radio service, focusing on all of the community – being largely music led, with local interviews, content and news featuring throughout.

Its daytime music policies help it target a core demographic of 25 – 54 years olds, with specialist programming during evenings and weekends catering to Welsh language speakers, sports fans and those who love music from Rock, Reggae, RnB, Classical, Musicals, Country and everything in between.

Bro Radio has served our community since 2009 and despite the pandemic, the last twelve months have been our biggest yet. The station has increased coverage, increased its local news content and through lockdown delivered some of its most exciting, engaging and informative content yet.

Bro Radio is the station that loves the Vale, with four key objectives which form the work which we undertake.

Inform:

Bro Radio exists to deliver content that informs the community about local news organisations, groups, initiatives and information that could benefit them. It shares local news, travel and sport, throughout the week and gives local people, organisations and groups platforms to be on air and speak directly to their community.

Local News has been a key focus of Bro Radio's development over the last twelve months, seeing the station grow to producing and airing 76 unique, locally produced news bulletins every week and creating online news content which has been read by over 300,000 people from August 2019 – July 2020.

Its bulletins are created by a team made up of local people, who live in the area and have an interest in local news and the community – alongside journalism students, living in the area from the University of South Wales, who are provided with regular volunteering opportunities to build experience, confidence and their portfolio.

Working in 5 hour shifts, the team deliver local news bulletins, weather, tide times and travel each afternoon – with the station's Operations Director delivering local news bulletins during weekday mornings as part of his role on Vale Breakfast.

Geoff and Guests: Presented by **Geoff Selby, the 2019 Gold winner of Sage Person of the Year**, Geoff brings a unique outlook to life, events and information in the community. His programme provides a platform for community groups, individuals and fundraisers to speak to local people in an informal way, which helps them reach an audience which many say **"they wouldn't be able to reach without Bro Radio"**

The Vale this week: The Vale this week is the station's flagship news programme, which outside of its on air local news bulletins and written online pieces, takes a longer look into some of the biggest stories taking place in the county over the last week.

The programme launched in January 2019, **winning Bronze in the Community Show of the year category in the**

same year. The programme was created to give local people more opportunities to share their views and discuss issues in their community, with a particular focus on giving them an opportunity to question the people who make the key decisions which effect their lives.



Mark Hutchings
@markhutchings1

Excellent fact-finding interview here with [@fmwales](#). Confirms household bubble anno due "very early" next week. 2 metre rule stays but talks with hospitality sector ongoing about mitigation for reducing it outdoors and he's missing seeing his 90 year old mam and swimming in Pems.

Bro Radio @BRORADIO · 1h

Head over to our Facebook page at 5:30 to hear @Dan_Moffat1998 and @MsportMatt's chat with @fmwales @MarkDrakeford. Hear his response to the fights in #OgmoreBySea, when we can expect 'social bubbles' and answers to some of your quest...



During the lockdown period, the programme has become a focal point of the station – helping listeners clarify what restrictions and announcements made by the UK and Welsh Governments actually mean to them.

The Vale this week has given listeners the opportunity to put their questions to the Vale Council Leader, Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, Wales Education Minister and First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford. Clips and key pieces of the stations interview with the First Minister were **shared on social media by local journalists including Mark Hutchings, a BBC 5 Live reporter.**

With so much public opinion regarding lockdown restrictions and easing, the programme also gives listeners a chance to share their views on topics that matter and affect them, with its "ask the audience" feature receiving hundreds of responses each month, on matters ranging from Schools reopening, LGBT rights, Black lives Matter, Tourism and car parking changes.

Saturday sport: Hosted by three local sporting fans, two of whom are young aspiring sports reporters, Saturday Sport provides a local outlook on sport in the Vale – whilst giving a platform to lesser known sports, teams and individuals in the County.

The station's **youngest reporter James Young** provides live updates from Jenner Park for each of Barry Town United's home game – which has been praised by fans from around the world and those who are unable to attend the game, giving them access that no other radio station is able to provide.

Due to the studios close proximity to the ground, James is able to grab an interview with the club's manager Gavin Chesterfield after the game and get back to the studio, for a more in depth discussion on the game.



Jenner Park, the home of Barry Town United under the floodlights during winter 2019.

With Barry Town United fighting for and securing a place in the Europa League, the coverage provided and the questioning and knowledge of James Young has been praised by the club's manager, staff and fans alike.

Pride Cymru Radio Show: The show is broadcast live on Bro Radio and Radio Cardiff each Wednesday night and was brought to Bro Radio in August 2019, as the station looked to **continue conversations around LGBTQ+ rights, issues and challenges, following the first Barry Pride event.**

Since launching on the station, the programme has focused on Drag Queens, Anti-bullying charities, Pride Events and so much more – becoming the most listened to programme via the Bro Radio website.

Monthly Programming: Outside of regular interviews on Vale Breakfast, Geoff and Guests and the Vale this week, Bro Radio airs a series of monthly programmes that support the third sector, young people and education in the County.

Its monthly **third sector show** is presented by the **Glamorgan Voluntary Services** and provides an insight into the 500 third sector organisations in the county, providing advice, support and opportunities to organisations and potential volunteers.

The Youth Show, has provided a platform for the **Vale Youth Forum** to speak to 16 to 25 year olds in the County – drawing attention to key local issues, seeking the views of young people and questioning those who make decisions on their behalf.

Finally, **the Primary School takeover** gives Primary schools across the County a chance to experience a live radio environment, presenting monthly programmes which increase confidence, skill and interest in radio and media – whilst also giving them an opportunity to promote the work of their school and play some of their favourite songs on their local radio station.



On Air Now: Albert Primary School takeover BRO Radio. Listen via broradio.fm



Pupils learning about Myriad playout software with Gareth Knight.

Educate:

Through its work on informing communities, Bro Radio also educates them on key local issues, challenges and news, as well as on services and events which could be of benefit to them, their immediate family and friends.

Off air, the station continues to provide training – with a focus on improving the lives of local people and giving them a voice within their community.

The station holds an open door policy, however its work primarily focuses on those who are not in education, employment or training – as it knows the positive impacts community radio can have on an individual's life and wellbeing.

Kane McMahon, who won Silver in Young Person of the Year in 2019 said "I've enjoyed every moment at Bro Radio, it's such a fun place to volunteer at and I believe that my confidence has grown throughout the past year thanks to Bro Radio. I've been given opportunities that I never thought I'd have."

"I'd recommend Bro to anybody who's looking to volunteer here, it's such a great place and the volunteers are so friendly. It feels like you're with one big family."

The station's training programme is delivered by Gareth Knight, who has over 15 years' experience in Community and Local radio in the South Wales area. His knowledge and patience, along with one-to-one training lets participants learn skills at their own pace, without pressure.

Broadcast Buzz: In 2019, the station secured funding from the **Millennium Stadium Trust** to further explore how radio and volunteering could have a positive impact on those with lived mental health experiences in the County.

The 12 week programme, which ran across two locations, was put on hold at the start of March due to concerns around the Coronavirus pandemic.

During the first 6 weeks of the project, it provided a weekly get together for 12 participants across two locations – where they could meet new people, interact and in short sessions, learn about radio, with the aim of delivering a regular podcast, where they could share their stories, tips and achievements. The participants could then take it forward as a monthly programme produced by the group, with opportunities to continue volunteering across the wider station, based on the skills gained through the programme.

University of South Wales: Bro Radio has always had strong links with the University of South Wales, broadcasting a programme live from its studios at the Atrium in Cardiff each Monday night at 7pm, called the Cardiff City Phone in. The programme is presented by Sports Fans and journalists, but produced by students on its Sports Journalism courses.

In addition, the station provides volunteering and work experience placements to Journalism students – who are provided with opportunities to record, produce and report on stories in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Work created by students as part of their degree are broadcast on the station via its local news output and the Vale This Week, with recent content including a piece on local group the Llanmaes Scrubbers and a short piece about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.



Dan Moffat co-presenting a general election hustings in 2019.

Dan Moffat spent two of his three years studying at the University of South Wales volunteering with Bro Radio. During that time he's presented local news, covered Vale Breakfast, joined the Vale this week team, interviewed the First Minister and co-hosted the station's first General Election Hustings.

On speaking about his experiences at Bro Radio, Dan said **“Over the past year and a half, I have grown as a person and journalist massively thanks to opportunities given to me at Bro Radio.”**

“All of the opportunities have helped me build my portfolio and also my CV, and recently have helped me find a job at a commercial radio station. Even still I continue to volunteer at Bro Radio, because I genuinely enjoy and love what I do, and

want to keep learning and practicing my skills.”

Entertain:

As well as creating engaging and informative content, we believe that above all, the service delivered must be engaging and listenable, giving the maximum benefit to local businesses and organisations who advertise with the station and come on air.

The station works to fixed daytime schedule covered by seven presenters between 7am & 7pm, Monday to Friday.

Gareth and Nathan wake up the county weekday mornings from 7am, Geoff & Guests follows from 10am, before an hour of feel-good songs with High School Hits from 12pm. At 1pm, Ben Dain-Smith (Monday – Wednesday) and Mike Briscoombe (Thursday & Friday), share the afternoon slot, before Patrick Downes hosts the drive home from 4pm – 7pm each weekday.

Our daytime programmes follow a playlist, curated over years of engagement with our listeners – it's one of the key talking points at events and the station runs annual surveys to try to get a better understanding of the likes and dislikes of our listeners. Unlike commercial radio, we want Bro Radio to be listenable all day, with a playlist of 1,200 songs meaning you are very unlikely to hear the same classic song – with new music played a maximum of twice per day.

Despite a structured playlist, presenters are given the flexibility to change songs to suit the mood, weather or requests from listeners.

A team of producers, work to support our daytime team with relevant local content via an online prep sheet – **helping them share content relevant, local and entertaining**, whilst listeners continue their everyday lives.

Specialist Music programming: From 7pm, Bro Radio volunteers provide a range of specialist music programmes that appeal to a wide range of ages and demographics. Programmes genres range from Country, Reggae, Rock, Local Music, Welsh Language, Alternative, RnB, House, Party Classics, Musicals and Classical – with many of the programmes featuring on the station for almost a decade.

Each programme focus on specific genres of music, covering the local venues, groups, bands and societies within the stations TSA **which shines a light on the diverse culture within the county.**

Engage:

For any community radio station to succeed, it has to be part of the community which it serves. In 2019, the station brought in a policy, which meant that **all new presenters had to live, work or have links to the Vale of Glamorgan** –

with all syndicated programming shelved, excluding the Cardiff City Phone In and Pride Cymru Radio show, both broadcast live from Cardiff, with relevant local content and shared with community stations across the region.

Doing this meant all of our presenters knew the community we serve, were able to interact with our listeners and local businesses and attend the events which they were talking about on air.

We believe, that our involvement in events in the community has helped create a recognisable local brand – with the station attending 50 local events in an average year, covering everything from duck races, school fetes, bonfire night displays and Christmas light switch ons – which get the station and our volunteers in the community, engaging with our listeners and learning about what they want for us, so we can create a community radio station which reflects the community which we serve.

Engaging with the public has always been a challenge, but the station has worked on key ways to attract young people, parents and families – including its selfie-board, where it takes hundreds of photos at each event it attends, which are shared on the station’s social media channels and turned into our listeners’ profile pictures – further spreading the name and awareness of the station.



In 2020, **working in partnership with local traders** the station launched its “Spin to Win” wheel, as a new way to engage with local people at events.

Starting on the August Bank Holiday at Cinema By The Sea on Barry Island, which attracts 5,000 visitors daily - the station gave attendees the chance to win everything from sweets, ice cream, coffee, days-out vouchers, Barry Town football tickets, reusable water bottles and sweets, all donated by traders at the resort.

Through four events between August & December 2019, the station built up a mailing list of over 1,000 local people, who are kept informed on local events and information – whilst also gathering feedback on the station, events and activities.

As well as supporting the station, traders saw increased footfall during the event due to their involvement, with those who won spending money on top of their prizes within local businesses.

Of the events which the station attended, there were two key events in the last twelve months.

The Vale of Glamorgan Agricultural Show: The largest single day event in the county, attended by 20,000 people each year – the station provided live coverage from 7am – 7pm.

With many of Bro Radio’s presenters living in towns like Barry and Penarth, it allowed us to give a unique take on the event – with the team learning through the day, the importance of the event and the challenges facing agriculture, food and producers in the County.



Barry Town Centre Christmas Lights: Since it launched in 2009, the station has hosted Christmas light events across the County, with 2019 seeing its biggest yet.

Following the filming of the Gavin and Stacey Christmas special, the Vale of Glamorgan Council convinced Ruth Jones to switch on the town’s Christmas lights, in character as Nessa. With the buzz around the series around the world, despite the station always being involved in the event – the Council was approached by Commercial Broadcasters offering to present the event, the first time they’d ever shown interest.

The Council’s tourism team declined – stating that **Bro Radio had supported every event they did, no matter the size or special guest.**

Attended by an estimated crowd of 10,000 people, Bro Radio had exclusive coverage of the event with its photos, videos and name shared around the world, including BBC, ITV, Sky News Wales Online, the Sun, Newsquest and many more.

Continuing to grow:

2020 has been both the most challenging and rewarding of years for Bro Radio. Within days, the station's volunteers were forced from the comfort of their studio to their dining rooms, spare rooms and conservatories – as they continued to deliver a local radio service for the County.

Despite initial worries, the station grew from a small team in week one – to having 60% of its presenters and programmes on air within weeks, as it continued to deliver an entertaining, engaging and informative service for the County.

Despite its challenges, the pandemic opened up new opportunities for Bro Radio which saw it expand its FM coverage with emergency funding from the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Vale Heroes Fund and the National Lottery. The station knew that launching a new frequency during a pandemic would be challenging and that it would struggle to generate revenue in the new area, but it did so to be there and support rural communities – who had been let down by the local free newspaper, which usually landed on its doorstep. With the support of local businesses, banners and Facebook advertising helping to build awareness and its launch programme helped it to create a name for itself in Llantwit Major and the surrounding areas.



The Vale's Biggest Radio show, an idea acquired from fellow Community Radio station Switch Radio, saw Bro Radio hand over the station to its community – with 65 local people sending in messages, stories, information and items to be broadcast from 7am – 7pm.

They included poetry, messages of support, a song written by a husband for his key worker wife, information from local services and even a message from Gavin and Stacey star!

As a source of information during the pandemic, the station has continued to shed a light on local news, information and activities – shouting about services, support and just being a friendly voice to those most isolated in our communities.

The station even worked with The Radio Hub and Gateway 98.7 to distribute 15 FM radios to vulnerable and isolated individuals in rural communities – to make sure someone was there, to help them, advise them and keep them company during the challenging times ahead.

Looking back on the twelve months, the station's Operations Director Nathan Spackman said "We started 2020 with huge plans and despite the coronavirus pandemic we have been able to achieve them all."

"We have seen record listening figures online, with a 43% increase in online and smart home listening and over 250,000 people reading local news stories via our website during lockdown alone"

"I couldn't be prouder of our team, who despite the challenges they face themselves have continued to deliver a Community Radio service which they and the community can be proud of".

