

The logo consists of the letters 'W', 'K', and 'K' in a stylized, bold, sans-serif font. The 'W' is formed by two overlapping 'U' shapes. The 'K's are formed by a vertical bar on the left and a diagonal bar on the right. The letters are dark grey with a lighter grey shadow or outline effect.

WKK

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UK MUSIC

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**Response to:**

**BBC Strategy Review**

**May 2010**



**UK Music is the umbrella organisation representing the collective interests of the UK's commercial music industry - from artists, musicians, songwriters and composers, to major and independent record labels, managers, music publishers and collecting societies.**

UK Music consists of: PRS for Music representing 60,000 songwriters and composers and music publishers; PPL representing 42,000 performer members and 5,000 record company members; Musicians Union representing 30,000 musicians; Association of Independent Music representing 850 small and medium sized independent music companies, the Music Publishers Association Limited representing 230 major and independent music publishers, BASCA with over 2,000 songwriter members, the BPI representing over 350 record company members, The Music Producer's Guild and the Music Managers Forum representing managers throughout the music industry.

## Summary

### **UK Music strongly opposes the BBC Executive's proposal to close 6 Music.**

1. The BBC is unique in the world and commands public support because it provides a range and quality of broadcast that is not matched by any commercial broadcaster and only sustainable through public subsidy. 6 Music embodies the best of the BBC. It provides a unique and distinctive service that is unrivalled. Closing 6 Music would leave its **1m+ listeners** disenfranchised.
2. The BBC has a charter duty to stimulate creativity and cultural excellence. 6 Music is the single most important vehicle for achieving this for a sizeable part of the UK's musical talent. It plays an increasingly influential role in the fragile but vital music ecology that sustains creativity at the furthest reaches of the sector. This is where new talent is first discovered and promoted, where the experimental and cutting edge first appear, and where the eclectic from the past continues to receive oxygen to inspire new generations. If the BBC proceeds with closing 6 Music, it will substantially and detrimentally reduce its activity in this critical sphere.
3. The rationale provided by the BBC Executive for closing 6 Music is contradictory. On the one hand the BBC Executive review states that 6 Music has too small an audience. On the other hand, the Executive is anxious that the 6 Music audience does not grow for fear it would challenge the commercial radio market. The Executive also justifies its proposal to close 6 Music on grounds of cost and value for money. Closing 6 Music would have

negligible impact on the BBC's overall budget and cannot be justified as a cost-cutting measure.

#### Chief Executive's statement

On one level, it's extraordinary and reassuring to witness the outburst of passion and discontent following the BBC's strategic decision to close 6 Music. The station was never intended to cater for a mass audience. But, as Rajar figures now indicate, the outcry has certainly encouraged a wider listenership to tune in. One can only imagine what a proper and sustained marketing and promotion strategy could have achieved for 6 Music since its inception. Had one existed, would 6 Music now be under threat? I doubt it.

Clearly, 6 Music has enormous resonance. Over the past eight years, it has built a loyal following. In this day and age, that's a potent currency and not easily replaced.

Quite simply, 6 Music connects music lovers with presenters who are also, fundamentally, music lovers. They give new talent a break, they take risks and – ultimately – epitomise the Reithian values of public service broadcasting.

From a personal perspective, 6 Music is the default station for the UK Music office. We love it. Where else can you hear Lauren Laverne with Broken Bells in session? Or Steve Lamacq segueing from Donovan's Goo Goo Barabajagal to a new track from Gorillaz? Or Stuart Maconie delving into the worlds of Captain Beefheart, Brazilian Psychedelia and Martin Carthy?

It is vital that as an industry our voice is heard clearly, prominently and with determination. If nothing else the BBC will need to understand that its current proposals for 6 are misinformed, inappropriate and, as an industry, not an option we are prepared to explore. And that's before we move on to plans for Radio 2.

#### UK Music's full response

**The BBC is unique in the world and commands public support because it provides a range and quality of broadcast that is not matched by any commercial broadcaster and only sustainable through public subsidy. 6 Music embodies the best of the BBC. It provides a unique and distinctive service that is unrivalled. Closing 6 Music would leave its 1m+ listeners disenfranchised.**

- The BBC Trust is required to consider the commercial impact of the BBC as part of its regulatory responsibilities. However, we believe the Trust and Executive are being oversensitive. The BBC Executive admits that “in the past, [the BBC] has not differentiated sufficiently between excessive and unreasonable attacks and legitimate concerns about its activities by commercial media players.” We strongly suggest that the BBC Executive, with its proposals to close 6 Music, is still failing to make that differentiation.
- The BBC Trust found that 6 Music's distinctiveness is driven by its breadth and depth of music content. Data on music overlap between stations “shows that very few tracks are played on both 6 Music and Radio 1, Radio 2 or comparable commercial radio stations in a typical week.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BBC Trust Service Review: BBC Radio 2 and BBC 6 Music, February 2010, p. 2

- *UK Music* research shows that in the last 30 days (to May 18 2010), 6 Music played more than 3000 unique tracks. Radio 2 played just over 2500 unique songs. NME Radio (224,000 listenership according to recent Rajars), considered by some to be a competitor to 6 Music, played 2000 unique songs. Xfm, also thought to be a commercial rival to 6 Music, registered little more than 750 unique songs.<sup>2</sup> It is clear, therefore, that the breadth and depth of 6 Music's output is unrivalled and more significantly, not being matched by any other station – commercial, or non-commercial.
- Once again, for the purposes of making a comparison with what is seen to be its commercial rival, XFM's core audience is 15-34 year olds, while the average age of a 6 Music listener is 36.
- XFM's station format as agreed with Ofcom specifies that it provides a "*specialist music format of 'alternative rock' best defined as modern rock with attitude, featuring artists generally outside the mainstream.*" However, a list of the top ten artists<sup>3</sup> played by XFM shows that they are predominantly mainstream indie guitar-based bands which have already achieved significant followings and are capable of selling out venues such as the 5,000 capacity O2 Brixton Academy. A list of the top ten artists<sup>4</sup> played by 6 Music shows that at least 70% fall outside the mainstream.
- There is not and probably would never be a commercial equivalent to 6 Music. History has repeatedly shown that the pressures on commercial radio demand that it build a mass audience by pushing to the middle ground in order to attract a viable share of advertising revenue. This has been true of Xfm, Choice FM, Kiss FM, Jazz FM to name of few, all of which started as niche stations that either moved to the centre, or closed. In other words, commercial radio must play popular, mainstream music to survive.
- Criticisms from commercial broadcasters about the impact of BBC in the market are well rehearsed. The impact that Radio1 has on the commercial radio market is far greater than that of 6 Music in terms of its appeal to the same younger demographic. The impact of BBC 3 in the television market is greater still in that its output is less distinctive and more directly comparable to commercial output. We note that the BBC Executive has no plans to close either Radio 1 or BBC 3. Singling out 6 Music for its potential impact on the commercial radio sector is therefore unconvincing.
- Former GCap Operations Director Steve Orchard summarised this predicament rather neatly: "It's difficult to see, given the track record of commercial radio to-date how 6 Music's breadth and diversity could be replicated in the commercial environment."
- The BBC Executive's strategy report appears to propose withdrawing entirely from music programming that serves 30 to 50-years-old audiences. The BBC proposes that Radio 1 will refocus on a target audience of 15 to 29-years-old,

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<sup>2</sup> Source: *UK Music* and Compare My Radio

<sup>3</sup> The top ten artists played by XFM in the 30 days ending 15<sup>th</sup> March 2010: Muse, Kasabian, Mumford & Sons, Vampire Weekend, Kings of Leon, Florence + The Machine, Arctic Monkeys, Biffy Clyro, Hot Chip, The Courteeners

<sup>4</sup> The top ten artists played by BBC Radio 6 Music in the 30 days ending 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020: Gorillaz/Bobby Womack/Mos Def, Tunng, Groove Armada, Yeasayer, Jimi Hendrix, Mumford & Sons, Jonsi, Delphic, The Strange Boys, Goldheart Assembly

while Radio 2 will focus on the 50+ audience, leaving national BBC Radio nothing to offer 30 to 50-years-olds.

- Withdrawing from provision for the 30-50 year old audience is justified by the BBC on the basis that commercial radio plays “the lead role in serving popular music” to this audience. It is unacceptable that the BBC disenfranchises this group when clearly the market cannot and will not provide what 6 Music provides. It is also unthinkable that a BBC Radio national spectrum would disengage with a huge percentage of the UK population.
- BBC and commercial radio each cater for a range of age groups that overlap. Some of the most popular commercial stations have a target audience that is the same as Radio 1 ( XFM is targeted at 15-34 year olds. Kiss 100-105 is targeted at the under 30s) or Radio 2 (Magic is targeted at ‘mature’ audiences of ‘at least over 35’). What is important is that BBC offer services that are distinctive. It would be wrong for the BBC to withdraw its public broadcasting responsibilities from the 30-50 year old demographic simply because it is the demographic of most interest to commercial radio.

**The BBC has a charter duty to stimulate creativity and cultural excellence. 6 Music is the single most important vehicle for achieving this for a sizeable part of the UK’s musical talent. It plays an increasingly influential role in the fragile but vital music ecology that sustains creativity at the furthest reaches of the sector. This is where new talent is first discovered and promoted, where the experimental and cutting edge first appear, and where the eclectic from the past receives oxygen to inspire new generations. If the BBC proceeds with closing 6 Music, it will substantially and detrimentally reduce its activity in this critical sphere.**

- There can be no doubt that the £6 billion a year industry that is the UK music industry would simply not exist in its current form, not only as a market leader but a world leader, were it not for the BBC and the access and support provided under their public service obligations to nurture and support UK talent.
- Figures provided generated by UK Music bear this out: 6 Music pays out royalties to more than 4500 songwriters, of which 750 only receive royalty cheques from 6 Music airplay – they are not receiving airplay from any other national station.
- In giving oxygen to new talent, BBC Radio helps create an audience base and often, those same composers and performers go on to become better known over time and eventually get picked up by more commercial stations. The relationship between public service broadcast and the commercial sector is thus dynamic and beneficial to both.
- Through its eclectic and intelligent programming, 6 Music has been playing an increasingly influential role in this vital but fragile music ecology, which encompasses not only songwriters and performers but also specialist labels and publishers, producers, managers and promoters, small live music venues, grassroots rehearsal space and recording studios, sound engineers and tour support staff. It is further proof that the station meets its mandate to culturally enrich the radio sector.

- Should the BBC proceed with its plans to close 6 Music, it will substantially and detrimentally reduce its activity in this critical sphere. There have been suggestions that some elements of 6 Music might be packaged for broadcast in special programmes on Radio 2. We wish to make absolutely clear that the overall effect of closing 6 Music, even with some elements retained and broadcast elsewhere, will result in a significant net decline in support for talent and creativity. 6 Music is the most important and significant way in which the BBC meets its charter obligation to support and nurture musical talent, creativity and cultural excellence.

### **MOSHI MOSHI Records – Case Study**

6 Music plays a key role in the ecosystem of music creators. Artists record new music, which when it is played on 6 Music leads to income being generated via the collection societies, record sales and touring. This income can be reinvested in developing the artists work, and in the work of more new artists.

Ultimately, this process contributes to a thriving new popular music economy – including the live music and festival industries, record industry, publishing industry and of course the related export sales.

An example of this can be found in the innovative small record label Moshi Moshi. There are two different tiers of artists that Moshi Moshi has worked with who have their initial exposure on 6 Music.

The first are those who later progress to Radio 1 daytime play, and mainstream awareness. Hot Chip, Kate Nash, Florence and the Machine were all recorded early on in their careers by Moshi Moshi, received support on 6 Music, and then got onto the radar of Radio 1 and achieved mainstream success.

The second are those for whom the main outlet is 6 Music and who never receive any daytime Radio 1 play. For example, the artist Snow Club. They released their first single in 2006, leading to an album in July 2009. They have been supported on daytime 6 Music over a two year period. They have since sold 10,000 copies in the UK, sold out the 700 seater Union Chapel and will be playing the 1300 seater KOKO in June 2010, have had music used on tv shows and adverts, and are currently on a tour of America.

It's a big step from Radio 1 specialist play to Radio 1 daytime, and few artists make that transition. However 6 Music provides a good daytime outlet for this music, and can take risks that Radio 1 and 2, and the commercial sector can't – playing a far wider selection of music, and mixing archive and older music with new music.

An artist who has made that leap is Florence and the Machine, also due to 6 Music's consistent support. Steve Lamacq on 6 Music played her very first demos, in early 2008. Her first single on Moshi Moshi was released in June 2008, and A-listed by 6 Music. There were also some spot plays on Radio 1. The 6 Music A-listing sent a message to other radio stations and the rest of the industry, a year before her album came out on a major label. Radio 2 playlisting as also influenced by what 6 Music plays, as the two stations share a head of playlist committees in Jeff Smith. 6 Music have A-listed every Florence and the Machine single since then, and supported the artist consistently for two years.

Florence Welch says:

"6 Music gave me so much support at the start, and throughout my career and I think the BBC would be failing to support young and upcoming talent if they were to take it off the air, no other radio station is as committed to playing new and alternative music, it would be a huge loss to the airwaves."

### **Plugging firm Anorak London – Testimony**

6 Music has been hugely important in developing the careers of many of our band over the last few years. This is in part because of the educated and music-savvy listeners it attracts, and in part due to the passionate delivery of its presenters (and producers).

Success stories include:

Mumford & Sons was picked up from the first Chess Club release by Steve Lamacq, Marc Riley, Shaun Keaveny and Gideon Coe. With such well-respected tastemakers, it made it easy for the band to get a raised profile, which was key in helping them secure a record deal with Island Records. Once the album campaign started, the A-list support from 6 Music on all three singles to date was invaluable in cementing them as one of the most important newcomers last year.

We have in the past really benefited from 6 Music's reflection of acts like Fanfarlo (playlisted twice and hence signed to Atlantic); The Invisible (Mercury-shortlist 2009) and even smaller bands such as It's A Musical and The Seal Cub Clubbing Club, who really benefit from spot plays and session opportunities in a platform like this for a very receptive audience.

### **Full Time Hobby Records – Testimony**

I co-own and run a UK independent label called Full Time Hobby. From the start 6 Music has been instrumental in giving our acts a leg up and supporting what may not be construed as obvious mainstream material. The core of our business is supporting and developing leftfield independent music over the long term, particularly new, creative British Music. So far our roster, including the likes of Tunng, Malcolm Middleton, Erland & The Carnival, Fujiya & Miyagi and The Leisure Society have all benefited from strong and much needed 6 Music support.

We do work with a minority of American artists and these have also benefited – the likes of White Denim, School Of Seven Bells and Micah P Hinson have all seen their profile rise particularly from the profile that 6 Music has helped develop for them.

It is a fallacy to say that our acts and the demographic they serve would be well covered by commercial radio, should 6 Music cease to exist, as espoused by the BBC's Caroline Thomson. I see none of the similar level of support we get from 6 Music from the likes of Absolute or even the 'alternative' commercial station Xfm outside of their specialist shows. (playlisted twice and hence signed to Atlantic); The Invisible (Mercury-shortlist 2009) and even smaller bands such as It's A Musical and The Seal Cub Clubbing Club, who really benefit from spot plays and session opportunities in a platform like this for a very receptive audience.

**negligible impact on the BBC's overall budget and cannot be justified as a cost-cutting measure.**

The BBC Executive report states that 6 Music ***“has low reach and awareness and delivers relative few unique listeners to BBC Radio.”*** It also stipulates that 6 Music therefore does not provide ***“appropriate value for money”*** and it ***“does not currently deliver significant enough public value to justify its intervention in the commercial radio market.”***

We would like to deal with each of these arguments in turn:

***6 Music “has low reach and awareness and delivers relative few unique listeners to BBC Radio.”***

- Latest Rajar figures makes this entire argument redundant. The May 2010 figures, showing a 50% year-on-year increase in 6 Music's listenership has shed new light on the BBC's original argument that the station has “a low reach and awareness.” Had a proper and sustained marketing and promotions strategy been in place for 6 Music since its inception, current listening figures might have been achieved much earlier.
- The BBC Trust, prior to the publication of the Rajar figures, carried out a survey to find out why more people do not listen to 6 Music. The most common reason was 'lack of awareness.' The Trust noted that promotional efforts by the BBC have been limited. However, news of the closure, and the concurrent campaign to save it (generated for the best part by its dedicated listeners), has sent 6 Music's weekly reach soaring – it is an unparalleled achievement, particularly when compared to other BBC digital-only stations.
- As the BBC Trust points out, the digital radio marketplace as a whole suffers from a lack of awareness (although Rajar statistics indicate that digital listening has grown to 24% of total listenership in the last quarter) and the slow take-up of DAB radio sets, particularly in cars. The BBC Trust's Audience Councils emphasised that lack of coverage is also a key barrier to listening in many parts of the UK. Therefore, 6 Music's performance can only be compared to other digital only radio stations, as opposed to commercial stations which benefit from FM transmission.
- 6 Music attracts a relatively high number of on-demand listeners. In March 2010, more than 1.6m live listening hours were registered through the 6 Music website, while the site attracted upwards of 133,000 unique users per week. These figures are not accounted for in Rajar reports. They are further proof however that the station is growing rapidly.



***“BBC 6 Music does not provide “appropriate value for money”***

- BBC 6 Music has an annual budget of roughly £9 million which represents less than 2.5% of the BBC’s total expenditure on radio. Closing 6 Music as a cost-cutting exercise does not make sense. Its share of the overall BBC budget is so slight that it does not make a material difference to the bottom line, and represents better ‘value for money’ when measured against other, more costly BBC services.
- 6 Music carries a cost per user of 3.4p (according to figures issued before the Rajar increase). Using cost per user as a proxy for ‘value for money’, 6 Music offers better value than both Radio 3 and Radio 1Xtra.
- Costs per listener would reduce alongside an increase in listener base, which is clearly growing substantially following news of the earmarked closure.

***“BBC 6 Music does not currently deliver significant enough public value to justify its intervention in the commercial radio market.”***

- The BBC Trust found that 6 Music has the highest average hours of listening of the BBC’s five digital-only radio stations, which indicates that those who do listen tend to be committed to the station.
- More than 80% of 6 Music listeners think the station offers something which could not easily be replaced by another station.
- On quality, the BBC Trust found that 62% of listeners gave 6 Music a score of 8 or more out of 10.

## **Conclusion**

The BBC Executive states that some radio stations win on value for money. Other more expensive stations make a unique and significant contribution to the purposes of the BBC which provides a very strong case for their levels of investment. We maintain that BBC 6 Music is the very embodiment of the Reithian values. It informs, educates and entertains. It scores high on every one of its public purposes. It provides a service that has no commercial equivalent. In short, 6 Music is exactly what the BBC should be doing.

If the same tests and criteria were applied to all of BBC programming as the reasons given for closing 6 Music, far more likely candidates would emerge for closure. We therefore conclude that perhaps there are other reasons, apart from those given by the BBC Executive, for proposing to close 6 Music.

BBC should keep 6 Music and put more effort into expanding its reach and growing its audience base, as recommended by the Trust and more poignantly, as the fan-generated marketing campaign has demonstrated can happen.



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