

Station of the Year - Marlow FM



Radio by local people for local people

[Marlow FM](#) exists to serve all the people of Marlow, Buckinghamshire and the surrounding area, whatever their background or age. For everyone at the station, this is far more important than being the slickest, or getting the highest ratings.

We provide opportunities for local residents and organisations to get their voice heard, tell their story, and publicise their events. And we also play a diverse and eclectic selection of music - our specialist music shows include rock, dance, folk, reggae, and jazz.

Anyone living in or around Marlow can get involved, whether as a presenter, or behind the scenes, or both. If there's a section of the community we don't represent, or a style of music we don't play, we want to hear from them.

Our volunteers reflect the area's mix of backgrounds and ages - one of our most prolific presenters is not far off his ninth decade. Some 80 presenters produce around 120 hours of programmes a week - that's an average of 17 hours a day.

Helping our volunteers go from strength to strength

Some of our volunteers turn up to present a show once a month; others are tied up with Marlow FM matters every day! We provide full training, and everyone has the opportunity to move from a co-presenter to a presenter to a coordinator to a member of the management team, if they want to.



This year, 18-year-old Desborough College student Luke Jales got an unconditional offer from Bath Spa University after working with our training director, John Rumble.

Luke needed to put together a portfolio of work to support his application for the degree in Creative Music Technology. With John's support and encouragement, Luke created an episode of our Music Box series to include in his portfolio.

Many of our younger presenters have gone on to make a career in broadcasting. Just last week, we asked for new volunteers in a local Facebook group, and we got these unsolicited responses from former and current presenters:

- "Best thing I ever did, now I've got a show on Kiss FM." - *Jordan Lee*
- "Thanks to MFM I'm now a full time presenter/producer at BFBS radio. We had lots of fun there." - *Gemma-Leigh James*
- "Thanks to Marlow FM I was able to gain a lot of technical & production skills which got me into the National Film and Television School! As a result I'm now working as a sound engineer on Sky's Cricket season - couldn't have got there without MFM." - *Lucy Ashburner*
- "I thoroughly enjoyed my 5 years at Marlow FM. Great fun and made some amazing friends there." - *June Bailey*

Hearing Marlow's voices

Good Morning Marlow is our flagship community programme, where local residents, businesses, and charities know they are welcome and can get their voice heard. It goes out every weekday between 10am and noon, with a different topic each day, and loads of interesting guests from Marlow and sometimes further afield.

We believe it's important to have as many voices as possible on the programme, to reflect the fact that the Marlow community is more diverse than people who don't live here sometimes think. As well as all the guests who come through the door, we have more than 20 regular presenters on the programme, many of whom bring their professional expertise to the show.

In addition, our weekly *Consumer Show* and *Business Show* provide more outlets for local voices and issues.

Each and every day we hear from local charities and charitable events, writers, singers, actors, publicans and restaurateurs, clubs and societies, and all kinds of businesses - the list is endless.

One day you'll hear Marlow restaurant owner Atul Kochhar talk about opening a new restaurant and appearing at the Pub in the Park event. Another day you'll find out about a new documentary, *The Big Kitten Con*, which looks at people being conned into buying kittens that are too young.

And with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee taking place this year, we spoke to residents of Cliveden Manor Care Home in Marlow and asked them about their memories of 1952 and 1953.

Outside broadcasts and events return - finally!

We love doing outside broadcasts. We get to meet our listeners face to face, but, more importantly, people have a chance to experience all the events they can't go to in person by tuning in - some of the local ticketed events are relatively expensive.

The pandemic obviously put paid to all the usual events in Marlow. But since the autumn of 2021, these events have come back, and we took our outside broadcast trailer to 15 of them:

- Red Kite Ride (a cycling event) - September
- Marlow Carnival - September
- Pub in the Park 2021 - September
- Remembrance Sunday - November
- Christmas lights switch-on event - November
- Late night shopping event - December
- Santa's Fun Run - December
- Christmas turkey collection event - December
- South West Chilterns Community Board event - April
- Marlow May Fayre - May
- Pub in the Park 2022 - May
- Marlow Town Council Jubilee event - June
- Marlow Town Regatta and Festival - June
- Welcome to Marlow! (Marlow Ukraine Collective event) - June
- Rock Bottom (a music festival) - June



Around a quarter of our volunteers get involved in the outside broadcasts and events, and the ones listed above accounted for more than 110 hours of output. Together with the setting-up and packing-up, that's a lot of work! Doing an outside broadcast is, first and foremost, fun, but it also gives volunteers an opportunity to improve their compering and interviewing skills, or understand the technical side of things better.

Greg Whyte, sports scientist, former Olympian, and Marlow resident, speaking to us live on air after the opening of the Marlow Town Regatta and Festival



Environmental issues in the spotlight

Marlow's on the river, in the heart of the Thames Valley. It's no surprise that environmental issues top the agenda for many local residents, with organisations like [Wild Marlow](#) thriving.

Our environment programme, *The Eco Show*, presented by Dora Hargitai and Toby Brown (pictured), has for many years been doing its bit to ensure a greener future for the local area, and this year it received an unexpected boost - being nominated for Radio Programme of the Year in the [Broadcasting Press Guild Awards](#), up against BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour, Times Radio's breakfast programme, and others.

During the year, Dora and Toby interviewed Jeremy Corbyn and other protestors at the 'Kill The Bill' demonstration in London, Louis McKechnie, the 23-year-old activist who went to prison after taking part in the controversial Insulate Britain environmental campaign group actions, and Todd Smith, a former pilot turned climate activist. The programme also revealed that Marlow had become England's first 'bee town'.

This recognition from the professionals, which came out of the blue after a listener nominated us, shows that a community radio station can go head-to-head with the BBC and commercial radio.



Marlow Film Studios - looking at both sides of the story

The proposed [Marlow Film Studios](#) development is the hot topic of the moment in the community - with staunch supporters on one side, and others worrying about the environmental impact and questioning the economic benefits on the other.

We've had both sides on air several times in the past few months, to help listeners understand the proposal in more detail and form their own opinions. Each time we get a flood of emails and texts.



Supporting newly-arrived Ukrainians in our town

More than 160 new Ukrainian residents are now living in and around Marlow, and Marlow FM has been supporting the [Marlow Ukraine Collective](#), a group of local volunteers who have come together to help Ukrainian families and their hosts.

The organisation has come on air to get their message out, and we ran an outside broadcast for their special welcome event, a family day of music, food, and activities. The highlight of the day was 10-year-old Maksym (pictured) singing the Ukrainian national anthem - there wasn't a dry eye in the crowd!



One of our own volunteers, Piers Burnell, drove to Poland to deliver supplies we collected during a one-day campaign on air



“Thinking Out Loud” - a special programme on men’s mental health

In February, one of our volunteers, Tom Fothergill, presented a special programme dealing with men’s mental health issues. 125 people take their own life each week in the UK, and three-quarters of them are men. The World Health Organisation has called it a ‘silent epidemic’. And suicide is the biggest killer of men under the age of 50 in this country.

In the two-hour show, Tom and his friend Lee, who has suffered from his own mental health problems, shone a light on the issues, and brought us stories both heartbreaking and uplifting.

Making a difference

As a small station in a small town of around 15,000 people, we certainly punch above our weight. We wouldn’t be surprised if it turned out that we produce more hours of live programming, and especially outside broadcasts, than other stations that serve much bigger populations.

There are few people in Marlow who haven’t heard of us. The town knows our priority is serving the community, not making corporate profits, so people come to us first when they want their voices to be heard.

We’re proud of all our volunteers, who give up so much of their time. And we’re especially proud that we’ve been able to help so many of them go on to make a career in broadcasting.

We really believe that Marlow FM makes a difference.