

Hermitage FM

Hermitage FM is a community radio station situated in Coalville, North West Leicestershire, run by 122 regular volunteers providing a local radio service to over 100,000 listeners.

The radio station began 35 years ago in 1976, when it started broadcasting as fledgling hospital radio station known as Loughborough Hospital Broadcasting. In 1999 it applied to broadcast on medium wave and following a name change to Carillon Radio was granted the licence in 2000, becoming the smallest hospital radio station in the country to afford this status.

The station is now the first hospital broadcaster in the country to become a community radio station, through their new service Hermitage FM, broadcasting to the people of North-West Leicestershire, whilst their sister radio station, Carillon Road, continues to broadcast to the community hospitals at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Melton

Mowbray, Coalville and Oakham.

Through its premises in Coalville, which include a coffee shop and lounge, the stations provide a voice for the community, entertaining, informing and supporting local groups both on and off area.

Susie Hudson, who manages the coffee shop, said:

“The coffee shop serves two purposes. It generates an income towards the overheads of the station and we are the open door between the radio station and the public. People come in for a coffee. We chat and tell them about the radio station; some join us as volunteers, others book our community room for fundraising events, whilst other start listening to the station, sending in requests and making suggestions for their favourite programmes.”

In addition to providing an outside broadcasting and PA service to community



The derelict pub today, photographed by Steve Marriott

Hermitage FM

groups, the station works regularly with Connexions to provide volunteering opportunities for unemployed people; Stephenson's College to give students on engineering, media and catering courses experience of work; and Leicestershire County Council's youth service creating a weekly youth club.

It is this growth that prompted the group to consider a bold move. Their latest plans for Hermitage FM is to turn an old derelict pub in a prime location in Coalville town centre into a centre of excellence and activity. This community vision includes ideas for a coffee shop, youth zone, art gallery, rehearsal studios, radio station, museum, conference centre, shop and meeting place, offering training, catering and employment.

Jon Sketchley, one of the founder members and a trustee explained:

"Coalville is crying out for some initiative to put the heart back into the town. It has a proud industrial heritage and will never feature on a box of chocolates, but that's no excuse for people to give up. At a time of universal gloom, we are creating opportunities for young people and we are reaching all parts of the community, including the housebound, through the radio programmes."

"Hermitage FM is my friend and family. There is always something going on here and I feel useful and wanted" Richard, referred to Hermitage FM by RNIB

"It's cool – I get to DJ and produce my own show. I don't know anywhere else where I could get that experience at my age."
Alex – aged 16

An ambitious plan to raise the necessary finance has been launched, with fundraising is currently underway for the project, including grant applications, sponsorship from local businesses and a "buy a brick" scheme for the public.

For further information on Hermitage Radio visit www.hermitagefm.com.