

Crystal FM radio wins another award

Crystal FM radio, now in its 11th year, has won another award. The Penicuik-based station is the Best Community Radio Broadcaster for the second year running in the SME News, Scottish Enterprise Awards.

That's a significant achievement for the station which is run by volunteers and broadcasts over South Midlothian, into Edinburgh and the Lothians and also the world via the internet.

Indeed, Crystal FM (107.4 FM) has listeners in Australia, North America, all over Europe and in India and Australia, and the audience is growing rapidly as word spreads about the mix of music and news.

Colin McCall, the station co-ordinator, revealed that the station has received well over 110,000 hits on the website and that Crystal FM now has over 50 presenters and information providers involved in the 24-hour-a-day, seven days a week, output.

The former primary schoolteacher, now in his 80th year, founded the station, which was shortlisted for a Community Award in last year's Midlothian and East Lothian Chamber of Commerce Awards, with a handful of other enthusiasts who donated £100 each.

Colin explained: "Crystal FM came to fruition because Black

Diamond was not receivable over here in Penicuik. I forwarded an application of Ofcom to extend the area to Penicuik and they refused.

“They did, however, say they would look favourably on a Penicuik application. Six or seven of us put £100 on the table and 18 months later Crystal FM came about. This is the start of our 11th year and we have a great team of volunteers who have made that possible.”

Colin, who presents a drive time programme called Crystal Fusion each weekday from 7am to 9am, and on two mornings each week to 10am, said It is not easy to run the station and raise funds to make ends meet and costs including paying the rent, paying licence fees and insurance, and keeping the equipment up to scratch.

Currently, Crystal FM have a core of 20 presenters who come regularly to the studio and, over and above that, there are another 40 people who contribute.

Overall, the station reach is supposed to be six miles from the studio in the Eastfield Business Centre in Eastfield Farm Road in Penicuik but Colin said: “How do you stop a radio signal? It is variable because you can go a very short distance and the signal is lost, or you could go a long distance and pick up the signal.

“For example, I’ve picked up the signal from the golf course car park in Kirkcaldy, and it is excellent quality in the car, but our signal also reaches Ratho near Edinburgh as it must go through a gap in The Pentland Hills.

“We now stream out online and it is interesting to note that since we moved to our new studio on the Eastfield Farm Road more than two years ago we have now had over 100,000 hits on our website.

“Looking further afield, on the internet our broadcasts are

world-wide and our regular top four on line are the UK, USA, Europe and India. We also have listeners in Australia.

“I don’t really know why we have listeners in India, but it may possibly be a link to people to live here and it allows their relatives to listen, but India has always figured in the top three of four.”

Eric Platten, one of the senior presenters, who has regular listeners in America and Spain, to name just two, told why he hosts the weekend breakfast shows on Saturday and Sunday and a blues programme.

Sunderland-born Eric, who is a local lollipop man, said: “I enjoy it and I first got in touch as I had a compilation CD which I donated to the station.

“Colin and I got talking and I stated doing the blues show and then I graduated to the weekend shots on Saturday and Sunday. It is not as simple as walking in here and pushing a button.

“I start planning my weekend programmes on a Monday and after my weekend sessions and I then find the tunes and the information.”

PICTURE: Eric Platten (in front) with Colin McCall and the awards. Picture by ***Nigel Duncan***



Picture: Colin McCall live in one of the two studios at Crystal FM. Picture by **Nigel Duncan**

