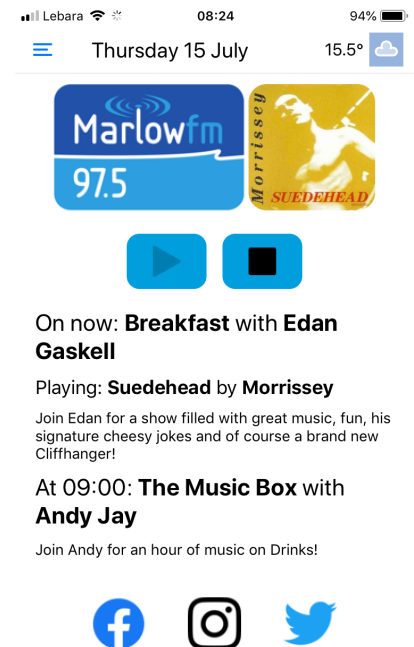


# Innovation Award entry from Marlow FM: the Marlow FM mobile app

“Our listeners were asking for an app, and I was keen to learn new coding skills. So the Marlow FM app was born!” - *Luke Morton, the volunteer at Marlow FM who built and launched our app*

- Listeners were asking for an app to make online listening easier.
- One of our volunteers took up the challenge of building one - this gave someone in the community an opportunity to develop their skills, and saved us money at the same time!
- Our brand new app hit both the *App Store* and *Google Play* in just three weeks.
- We had a great response from the community.
- We've since released several new versions, which give users lots of useful information.
- A tie-up with popular local news website *MyMarlow* now brings up-to-date stories to the app.



## What we needed

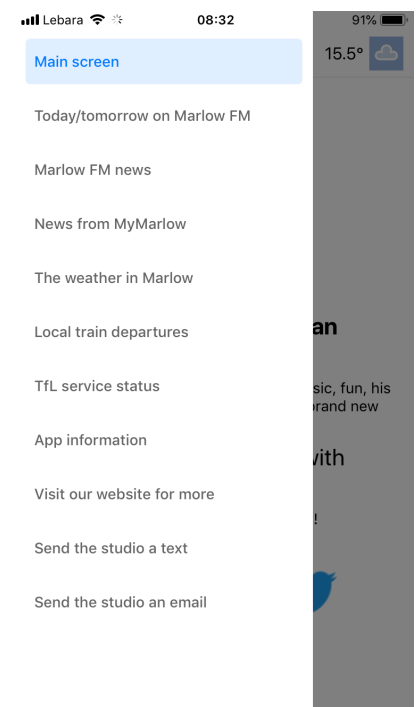
We love FM, but more and more listeners are listening to us online, especially when they're on the move. Our main streaming platforms had been Radioplayer and TuneIn, but nowadays people expect their favourite radio stations to have their own app. After all, a dedicated app makes it quicker to get listening, and gives users relevant and useful information. So we set our sights on launching a Marlow FM app for both iOS and Android in time for our 10th anniversary.

## How we went about it

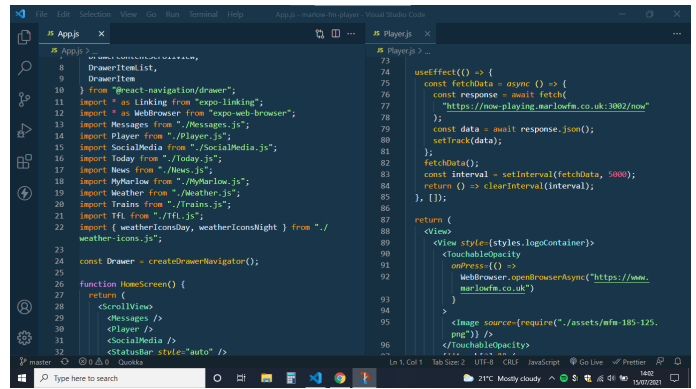
In common with so many community stations since the start of the pandemic, money was tight. So this ruled out expensive pay-per-month off-the-shelf options.

One of our volunteers, Luke Morton, who co-presents *Breakfast* on Tuesdays, does coding as a hobby. In 2020, he'd created a brand new website for the station, to replace the previous one that had been expensive to keep running, slow to load, and difficult to keep up to date.

Luke had never built a mobile app before, but he was up for the challenge. He'd been thinking about looking at how to build an app for some time, and was keen to use the opportunity volunteering at Marlow FM gave him.



He worked fast, and after just three weeks he submitted version 1.0 to Apple and Google for approval (preparing the submission takes almost as long as writing the code!).

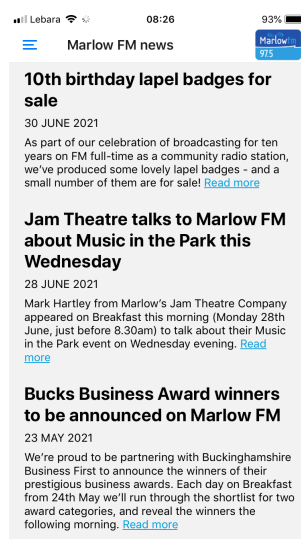
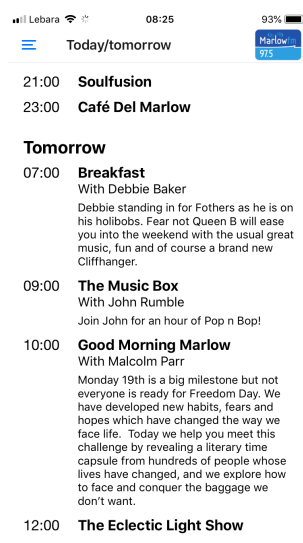


## Adding new features to the app

The first version was unashamedly basic in appearance and simple to use - just a play button and a stop button on one single screen. Luke built a new back-end system for getting 'now on' and 'now playing' information to the app, as well as to our website (see below).

We've since released several new versions, which give users lots of useful information without making it any more difficult to use. On the app you can get:

- today's and tomorrow's schedule of programmes
- Marlow FM news stories
- links to our social media pages
- links for texting and emailing the studio
- the current weather in Marlow and the forecast
- train times and delays at local stations
- the Transport for London service status

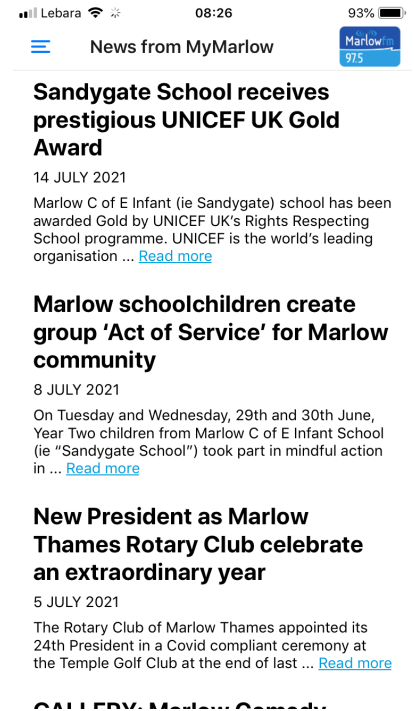


# Partnering with local news website *MyMarlow*

*MyMarlow* is an independent news website for Marlow that's really popular with Marlovians and has been around even longer than Marlow FM. In April, we joined forces, and we added a new screen to our app with links to their latest local stories.

When we showed Paul Merchant, who runs the site, the new version, he said:

“I'm not sure I'd ever get round to creating an app, so yours seems the perfect home for my news feed. And the way it links out to my site for the detail - perfect.”



## Reactions to the app

We're getting really great feedback, and our presenters love promoting the app on air. Here are some of the comments we've had:

<i>CarolineH_2345, 25/02/2021</i> "Great for listening on the go It's so handy to have the app on your phone to listen on the go"	colin parr, 20/04/2021 "marlow fm fantastic"	Andrew James, 28 February 2021 "Great little app for a great little radio station."
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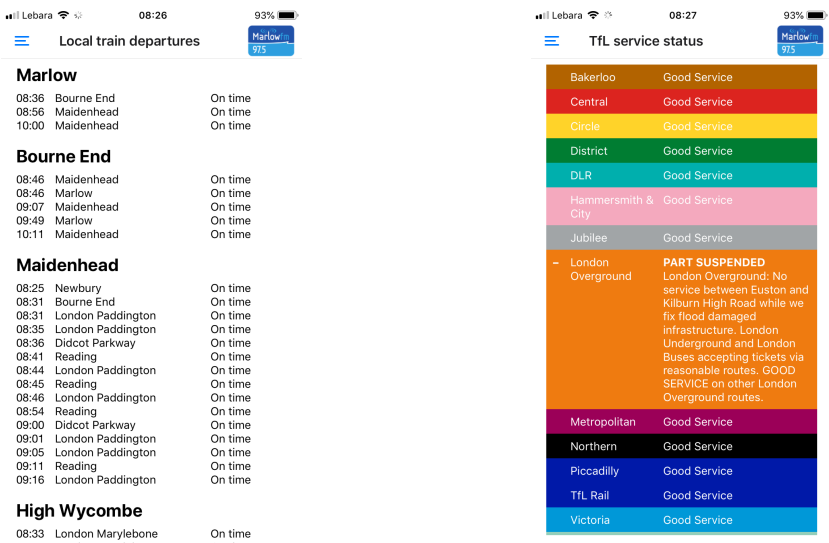
## Links to the app

In the *App Store*: <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/marlow-fm/id1554678179>

On *Google Play*: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.lpgm.marlowfm>

# The two travel screens inside the app

These give you train times and delays at local stations, and the Transport for London service status.



# The new episode information system

Presenters go to a special website and enter information for their show. The new back-end system sends this information to the app and the website.

