

I would make the following comments with regard to the consultation document with regard to Para 1.39 which states 'High definition television, by contrast, was not identified in our research as a major source of broader value to society. A bigger choice of channels was rated more highly, for both citizen and consumer interests, and HD was seen mainly as a premium consumer product, similar to mobile television.' And is qualified in para 1.40 which states 'It is possible, of course, that attitudes to an innovation like HD may change. In time, consumers and citizens may come to expect some HD content to be available to everyone free of charge, just as colour is now. But the evidence that this will happen is not strong right now.'

It is my experience that the demand for HD content has risen sharply since this evidence was collected and a similar analysis conducted now would find that consumer attitudes are changing rapidly as new HD products have become more widely available. Most productions are being produced now in HD format as it is widely regarded as a cheaper format than film shoots. For these reasons any decision taken now should reflect this.

With regard to the proposals I would strongly agree with the following:

'broadcasting and other uses: we propose to package the cleared spectrum so that it is suitable for use by national DTT, for a variety of services including high definition;'

It is a unique attribute of broadcasting in the UK that the freeview platform has been a great success and has enabled public broadcasting to maintain higher quality broadcasting than almost anywhere else in the world. This quality will only be maintained by a guarantee of free HD on the freeview platform. Although the quantity of BBC HD content is limited at the moment it offers a tantalising glimpse on what a full HD freeview service could offer and this should be supported by its permanent inclusion.