

I believe that Ofcom needs to rethink the current proposals before embarking on an irreversible break-up of the so called Digital Dividend radio spectrum, and that Government has a role to play in preventing some viewers becoming second class citizens in the provision of HD TV.

This is a matter of such concern because:

- **Universal access to DTT is a key part of the Government's plans for achieving full digital switchover by 2012;**
- **Every household in the UK is paying for the digital switchover by investing in digital TV and it is this consumer investment that will allow the spectrum to be freed;**
- **A DTT platform without HD will be less competitive against cable and satellite and risks undermining the platform - the most popular free-to-air option;**
- **There is clear citizen value in universal free-to-air DTT. The 2006 Digital Terrestrial Trial of HD television, undertaken jointly by the PSBs, indicated an overwhelming demand for HD on DTT with 85% of respondents indicating that they believed the availability of HD on DTT was "very important";**
- **HD is one of the biggest changes since the introduction of colour in the 1960s and is of major importance to the future of the DTT platform. 'HD Ready' televisions have been available for two years;**
- **In July 2005 sales of 'HD Ready' sets overtook non-HD sets and nearly three million have been sold to date. These figures prove consumer demand has been strong and expectations are growing. Universal availability of HD programming must therefore be allowed to evolve in line with those expectations;**
- **Since the launch of Freeview in 2002, DTT has proven itself as the platform of choice for millions of consumers throughout the UK. To date it is estimated that more than 9.3 million homes have invested in the platform;**
- **The spectrum which Ofcom proposes to auction is the only available spectrum that can be used for HD. There are, however, additional spectrums available which could be used for other uses, such as mobile television and wireless broadband services.**

I support the HDforAll campaign which calls for responsible intervention now to make specific provision for HD services on DTT to preserve the social value of British television and prevent the creation of a second class television service for licence fee payers.