
Ed Richards,
Chief Executive,
Ofcom, Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road,
LONDON
SE1 9HA

January 29th 2008

Dear Ed Richards,

RE: RESPONSE TO THE OFCOM CONSULTATION 'THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL TERRESTRIAL TELEVISION - ENABLING NEW SERVICES FOR VIEWERS'

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above consultation. You will find a comprehensive response of our concerns about your proposals documented in the United for Local Television submission, which has been forwarded to you separately.

We have been encouraged by the research findings regarding local television by Opinion Leader Research and Ipsos MORI commissioned by OFCOM (2007) to inform development of its policy on the DDR spectrum.

We were pleased to participate with programming content for the focus groups and pleased that Belfast was chosen as a sample point. We welcome Ofcom's intention to increase the flexibility with regard to the distribution platform for the Belfast RSL and indeed for other RSLs in the UK as well.

You will be aware that there has been all political party support for local television in Northern Ireland since the passing of the Communications Act when Northern Irish MPs called on the Government *'to include specific measures for the further growth and development of community media which would include distinct licensing arrangements based on clear public service obligations and reservation of broadcast spectrum'* (EDM 1316/03) and that this was reflected again in February 2007, when they called on the Government *'to introduce secondary legislation to ensure that community and local television has access to the digital spectrum and also that sufficient space on digital spectrum is reserved for community media when considering Ofcom's Digital Dividend Review'* (EDM 922).

I would also point you to the support of our local authority, Belfast City Council, which responded to the first Ofcom draft Annual Plan consultation document in 2004 commenting that *'it is recommended that Ofcom considers acceptance of local community television as public service broadcasters'* and to the grassroots support, which accompanied various Northern Visions responses to Ofcom consultations on public service broadcasting, media literacy and local television since Ofcom was founded.

The Belfast RSL has been supported by hundreds of active citizens, community and cultural organisations in the city and it is clear from your recent DDR research (MORI and Opinion Leader 2007), that this enthusiasm is shared by people across the UK, given that local

television was the **number one** new application demanded by consumers, ahead of both “extra SD channels” and “HD on Freeview”.

Given the extra capacity that will be created on DTT at Digital Switchover and the scope for more effective use of existing capacity, we believe that there is clear evidence that local television be included on DTT as public service broadcasters.

We would also respectfully ask you to recommend local television to Government for PSB status together with evidence as requested by the Department of Culture, Media & Sport.

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely,

Nathan ben Chaim Kripz

Director of the Board