

Rhona Parry,
PSB Review,
Ofcom,
Riverside House,
2A Southwark Bridge Road,
London,
SE1 9HA.

June 17th 2008

Dear Rhona Parry,

Re: Ex Prisoners Interpretative Centre (EPIC), Belfast response to the consultation: Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review – Phase One: The Digital Opportunity consultation

The Ex Prisoners Interpretative Centre (EPIC) objectives are to identify the needs of ex loyalist political prisoners and their families during the post release period and to provide resources and facilities that will help them and their families in the process of reintegration into family and community. We link ex-prisoners and their families with other existing agencies, where appropriate, and support them in making use of their services.

In response to your consultation and in relation to your main objective of furthering the interests of citizen-consumers; in particular, developing "*a new broadcasting licensing regime to foster self-regulation and broaden citizen/consumer choice*" we would recommend that Ofcom considers acceptance of local community television as public service broadcasters.

We have worked with Northern Visions/NvTv on programming about the issues faced in the post conflict period and we appreciate the social benefits, which community media and local television can deliver. Empowering citizens to become content providers and creating media which reflects and raises awareness of local issues and interests constitutes a valuable public service. It enhances skills, encourages a sense of place and ownership of the city and has the potential to foster greater citizenship.

Central funding provisions have been made in the Communications Act for community radio and local digital television. Ofcom should consider a fund, which could potentially be drawn from the licence fee and from top-slicing commercial broadcasting licences or other central government sources.

Regarding aspects of work required to bring about a UK map of local and community television following analogue TV switch-off post 2010, we would request your assurance that no planning, at this stage, precludes a network of local digital multiplexes.

In relation to the development of local television in Belfast, we should be grateful if Ofcom would support NvTv being carried on Freeview as a local public service broadcaster. Such a development would ensure that everyone in the city has access to a valuable local service and would support the efforts of all of us who are working to create a socially inclusive society as well as nurturing the city's cultural and creative assets and talent.

Yours sincerely
William P. Smith