

Ballymacarrett Arts & Cultural Society

143 Albertbridge Road Belfast BT5 4PS, Tel 028 90460707, Fax 028 90466687

Email: gnewell_bacs@hotmail.com. Charity No: XR50544

5th June 2008

Rhona Parry,
PSB Review,
Ofcom,
Riverside House,
2A Southwark Bridge Road,
London,
SE1 9HA.
PSBReview@ofcom.org.uk

Dear Rhona Parry,

Re: Ballymacarrett Arts and Cultural Society, Belfast response to the consultation: Ofcom' s Second Public Service Broadcasting Review - Phase One: The Digital Opportunity consultation

The Ballymacarrett Arts and Cultural Society was conceived to enhance the community of east Belfast through the mediums of dance, drama, music, poetry and fine art. We seek to educate through social interaction with other communities and facilitate endeavours to address questions of division, diversity, pluralism, heritage and pluralism with a view to enhancing understanding of such issues.

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 know from our own experience of the importance of breaking down the barriers between individuals, getting an insight into other people and their community, building relationships and taking responsibility for our own actions. 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 those of us who are working to achieve understanding of other groups in our city and their social environment. Such a development would also support our community arts and media sector to nurture the city's cultural and creative assets and talent.

Yours sincerely

George Newell
Director