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Belfast Library and Society for Promoting Knowledge

Rhona Parry,
PSB Review,
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18 June 2008

Dear Rhona Parry,

In response to your consultation - *Second Public Service Broadcasting Review – Phase One: The Digital Opportunity 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.

I have been a leading supporter of the arts in Northern Ireland over many years and have first hand experience of how community arts and media projects have been used to tackle a wide range of social and economic issues. The arts are a vital component in involving hard-to-reach groups and in eliminating social exclusion. 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.

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

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In relation to the development of local television in Belfast, I would 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 the community arts and media sector to nurture the city's cultural and creative assets and talent.

I am writing in a personal capacity, but as Librarian of 27 years standing of the Linen Hall Library, itself one of Belfast's most significant cultural institutions.

Yours sincerely
John Gray
Author

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