

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write in response to your document "Preparing for the Digital Future" being Phase 2 of your PSB Review.

It appears that Ofcom has shown a lack of concern for the future of Irish language broadcasting. Considering the special place of the language in Northern Ireland and its importance to the well being and progress of our society, this lack of concern is disturbing in the extreme.

All over the province, parents and their children are being deprived of educational and recreational advantages through their own language, provision that is considered normal in our society. Furthermore, those that would desire to learn and use the language are being barred from the necessary facilities.

We who are struggling to nurture the language and who are making every effort to promote the well-being of its speakers find it strange that Ofcom has not yet made a strong and definite policy statement in support of the language.

After all it is the "numero uno" (uimhir ah-aon) indigenous language of this country.

It is true that Ofcom has given much support in the past and this is widely appreciated. But we feel that at this time the extra mile needs to be walked. The special broadcasting fund for Irish, which has given a significant boost for new programming up to now, seems now to be wavering. This is creating great anxiety in our community. And we only ask that the good-will and legislation which has been such a great help should be continued and increased. The British Government has these duties under the European Charter for Indigenous languages, under the Good Friday Agreement and under the St Andrews Agreement. These measures are over and above the promotion and support which preceded these events and which continue as the basis of sound broadcasting policy.

Irish speakers are also licence subscribers and if the arithmetic were to be democratically applied, then one tenth of output would be in or about Irish.

I look forward to hearing a more positive declaration of support for the language, of which we are all curators.

Le meas,
Ruairí Ó Bléine