

Title:

Mr

Forename:

Alasdair Hutton

Surname:

Hutton

Representing:

Organisation

Organisation (if applicable):

Scottish Borders Council

What do you want Ofcom to keep confidential?:

Keep nothing confidential

If you want part of your response kept confidential, which parts?:

Ofcom may publish a response summary:

Yes

I confirm that I have read the declaration:

Yes

Ofcom should only publish this response after the consultation has ended:

You may publish my response on receipt

3i) Do you agree with Ofcom's assessment that television continues to have an essential role in delivering the purposes of public service broadcasting?:

Public service television is likely to continue as the major source of news and information. Unfortunately the scale of regional television has moved further away from the wishes of local audiences, no doubt to meet the constraints of cost. The services are perceived as urban centred and distant from the more rural areas, such as

Scottish Borders, which are poorly served. Both Ofcom and DCMS should examine how to meet this dissatisfaction.

3ii) Do you agree that UK-originated output is fundamental to the delivery of public service broadcasting purposes?:

Yes. But uncertain whether there are constraints from competition laws in this provision
On cost grounds local TV may need an underlying universal programming but with the clear ability to insert local and very local programming to meet the needs of audiences.

4i) Do you agree with Ofcom's conclusions about the way that other digital channels and interactive media contribute towards the public purposes?:

Internet and broadband at a reasonable speed provide the opportunity for a valuable way of local distribution of public service information.

5i) Do you agree with Ofcom's assessment of the implications of different economic scenarios for the UK TV market for the future prospects for delivery of the public purposes?:

The demand for local news delivered on television is growing and innovative new and local services should be allowed to evolve and respond.

5ii) Do you agree with Ofcom's analysis of the costs and benefits of PSB status?:

Local community radio has stimulated close interest in very local broadcasting and local television services have received a very high audience share. Delivery of public services by television and the internet would enable local authorities to redirect existing spending to local TV which is likely to have a greater local penetration. Ofcom has indicated the possible need for public support for public service broadcasting and local television is the primary candidate for such support.

6i) Do you agree with Ofcom's vision for public service content?:

Local TV and the internet using the digital spectrum will provide a cost effective base for distributing information, sharing local interests and even encouraging democratic engagement.

6ii) How important are plurality and competition for quality in delivering the purposes of public service broadcasting, and in what areas?:

Plurality is very important particularly in news and the arts. Competition for public funds on the basis of service relevance and quality in delivering public services is important.

6iii) In maximising reach and impact of public service content in the future, what roles can different platforms and services play?:

In the local setting local TV provides the broad framework and with commercial interest some of the revenue for news and programming. The Internet provides valuable support for further information. New technology is making the ability to deliver very local news and other material feasible.

6iv) Do you agree that the existing model for delivering public service broadcasting will not be sufficient to meet changing needs in future?:

Yes. The Reithian concept of a national public service was excellent but succeeding generations of broadcasters and viewers have been refining that to the point where now people wish to know more of what is happening on their doorsteps as well as nationally and internationally.

7i) What are your views of the high-level options for funding public service broadcasting in future?:

The BBC should remain the cornerstone of the national PSB. A new Scotland wide channel of the BBC would only refine this to a limited degree. There needs to be the ability to refine it to, say, local authority areas as well.

The proposed use of licence fee funds currently earmarked for DSO in the licence settlement should be open to consideration in restructuring PSB on three scales, as Ofcom's PSB scenarios mature.

7ii) Are the proposed tests of effectiveness for future models for public service broadcasting the right ones?:

Yes but the scales of 'local, regional and UK' are of equal importance. It will be important to establish what funds are needed for more innovative and flexible local services before the wider services have absorbed all the funding and stifled the appetite for local TV.

7iii) Of the four possible models for long term delivery of public service content, which, if any, do you consider the most appropriate and why? Are there any alternative models, or combination of models that could be more appropriate, and why?:

The public has moved beyond the national Reithian concept of the 1920s to expecting more localised information. Regulation now needs to reflect that.

Local TV needs to influence decision makers as well as National TV. The services need to emerge from the national and local perceptions of representation.

Future public service content should be regulated at the most appropriate scale and commercial channels regulated to provide income for PSB use at each scale.

8i) What do you think is the appropriate public service role for Channel 4 in the short, medium and long term? What do you think of Channel 4's proposed vision?:

Only when funding is found to deliver national and local services is the time to compare Channel 4's future as a state service alongside service delivery on the smaller scales.

8ii) Which of the options set out for the commercial PSBs do you favour?:

Model Four

9i) To what extent do you agree with Ofcom's assessment of the likely future long term issues as they apply to the nations, regions and localities of the UK?:

Ofcom's terms of reference for IPSOS-MORI seemed to curtail the way forward for local DTT. Access to spectrum provided on a PSB basis is needed before switchover commences in less than six months. If Ofcom proposes to look at local TV this must be before any spectrum auctions. PSB local TV should not be facing auctions.

9ii) Which model(s) do you think will be most appropriate in each of the nations and in the English regions in the long term, and why?:

A Scottish channel that is locally constructed, opting in a differing scale of Scottish programming according to each area's preferences.

9iii) What are your views on short/medium-term issues referred to, including the out-of-London network production quotas?:

An Out of London concept seems to underpin the urban centred view of television. Area by area Quotas would be a better assumption. The redistribution of broadcasting effort from London outwards should be in proportion to the renewed emphasis for PSB to work from the local upwards.

The target for London production over time should be no more than its regional need plus the state's requirement to locate centrally. This will still ensure London is the largest the centre of production.

Each local area and region has its own integrity.

9iv) What are your initial views on the preliminary options set out relating to ITV plc's regional news proposal? (Please note that Ofcom will put forward firm options on these issues, and consult also on ITV plc's regional news proposal, in phase 2 of this Review.):

Local TV can build the nation's programming upwards. The regional news proposition seems to push against that. DTT and broadband offers the chance to refine regional TV. Television is a powerful way of engaging with the public. If the network is built on regions with which people identify it will reflect that.

10i) Do you agree with our assessment of the possible short term options available relating to children's programming:

Yes a children's channel with children's internet and educational programming would be a helpful tool.

11i) Do you agree that new legislation will need to be in place by 2011 in order to ensure continued delivery of the public purposes in the medium and long term?:

2011 will be too late. Provisions for the introduction of services into the Borders need to be ready this summer.

Comments: