



Ofcom Consultation on the Third Review of Public Service Broadcasting

SDLP Response

Introduction

1. The SDLP welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation.
2. The SDLP is committed to the protection and promotion of the Irish language; therefore, the focus of this response concerns the treatment of the Irish language by Ofcom.

Key Differences in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

3. Ofcom has noted in its previous PSB Reviews that the Irish language has been treated significantly differently to both Welsh and Scottish Gaelic and that there was no coherent policy in place in regard to the UK wide indigenous language broadcasting. Irish receives very much lower levels of funding and there are almost negligible requirements put on the public service broadcasters in Northern Ireland (NI) compared to the situation in Wales and Scotland.
4. Accordingly, the SDLP would welcome greater detail in the consultation regarding the responsibility of public TV broadcasters in NI to provide Irish language content to their audience.
5. The SDLP notes that Ofcom has a statutory role to make recommendations to Government on how PSB quality can be maintained and strengthened. Furthermore, we note that Irish language broadcasting has been acknowledged by Ofcom in the past to be an essential part of the UK's public service broadcasting landscape.
6. Public broadcasters can also fund the creation of indigenous language content for broadcast on another PSB outlet not within their own corporate family. This option has worked well in other jurisdictions and may offer a solution in Northern Ireland also.

7. The SDLP would encourage Ofcom to commit itself to the creation and broadcasting of a wide range of Irish language programs on 'free-to-view' TV. Subsequently, we would encourage Ofcom to ensure support for program production in the Irish language by Northern Ireland to be broadcast on at least one service widely available in Northern Ireland.

Meeting the needs of as wide a range of audiences as practicable

8. BBC NI is the only public broadcaster licensed as a PSB in NI that broadcasts Irish language programs.
9. It is disappointing that other PSBs in NI do not offer Irish language programs and we would hope that Ofcom would encourage the BBC to develop further its Irish language programs and other channels to contribute to the Irish language creative industry in NI.

Greater Flexibility to PSB Institutions in their delivery of public service content

10. The possibility of giving greater flexibility to PSB institutions in their delivery of public service content should be explored fully.

Beir bua,

Contact

Dominic Bradley MLA

SDLP MLA for Newry and Armagh

Urlabhraí an Pháirtí ar an Ghaeilge

Deputy Chair of the NI Assembly Finance Committee

Fón: An tIúr (028) 302 67933 Fón: Ard Mhacha (028) 37526800

Guthán Póca: 07884070306 Ríomh-phost: dominicobrolchain@btinternet.com

Newry Office: 15 Trevor Hill Newry BT34 1DN Tel: (028) 3026 7933

Armagh Office: 19 Cathedral Road Armagh BT61 7QX Tel: Armagh (028) 3752 6800