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Cultural bonding through the arts

Rhona Parry,
PSB Review,
Ofcom,
Riverside House,
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June 18th 2008

Dear Rhona Parry,

Re: ArtsEkta, Belfast response to the consultation: Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review - Phase One: The Digital Opportunity consultation

ArtsEkta (which means bonding or uniting in Indian language) is the first arts-based organisation to provide a unique display of Indian and other ethnic arts within the North and South of Ireland. It is a cutting-edge, progressive organisation with an international outlook, based in the heart of Belfast. We work to enhance the practice, understanding and appreciation of Indian and other ethnic arts across North and South of Ireland within a contemporary artistic, social and educational context. We promote and support multicultural arts and artists in the community and we are dedicated to strengthening and deepening relationships between all the different cultures through an exciting and inspiring arts-based programme. We are the proud organisers of the Belfast Mela.

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.

Our vision is of an inclusive society, which is respectful, embracing and reflective of all people's cultures and backgrounds. We have known of the work of Northern Visions over a number of years and have worked with them on arts and multicultural based programming in connection with the local television service. 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, 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 for a socially inclusive society in Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely
Nisha Tandon
Director