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28/05/08

Dear Rhona,

**Re: Ashton Community Trust North Belfast response to the  
consultation: Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting  
Review - Phase One: The Digital Opportunity consultation**

The Ashton Community Trust was established as a community led intervention in 1991 and is now the premier grass-roots development conduit for the North Belfast area. It maintains and retains community development values and ethos with an emphasis on inspiring social regeneration and economic evolution by acting upon the issues of local marginalised residents. It is currently proactive in a range of "frontline" actions including: employment, health, education, enterprise, quality childcare and physical development. From humble beginnings of no assets and 3 staff it now employs over 100 people and has an annual turnover of £4 million.

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"** ACT would recommend that Ofcom considers acceptance of local community television as public service broadcasters. The Trust knows at first hand of the social benefits that community arts and media can deliver to local people. The New Lodge ward where the Trust has its central focal point for operations is regarded as

one of most socially deprived areas in the UK and North Belfast contains out a total 586 wards 9 of the top ten per cent in regards to multiple deprivation and disadvantage. It is committed to the social and economic regeneration of The local community and improving the quality of life for residents. Local Community Television complements empowering citizens to become valued and creating positive media which reflects and raises awareness of local issues and interests and is seen 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.

Central funding provisions have been made in the Communications Act for community radio and local digital television. Ofcom should consider a fund, which could potentially be drawn from the licence fee and from top-slicing commercial broadcasting licences or other central government sources.

In regards to aspects of work required to bring about a UK map of local and community television following analogue TV switch-off post 2010. ACT 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, the Trust 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 the community arts and media sector to nurture the city's cultural and creative assets and talent.

Yours Faithfully

Jim Deery-Development Officer