



Rhona Parry,
PSB Review,
Ofcom,
Riverside House,
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June 11th 2008
Dear Rhona Parry,

Re: AU, Ireland response to the consultation: Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review – Phase One: The Digital Opportunity consultation

AU (formerly Alternative Ulster) is a magazine written, designed and published in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Although predominantly a music magazine, AU covers other aspects of popular culture, such as movies, comics, games and the arts.

We started life in March 2002 as a radio show on Belfast community station Northern Visions Radio (NVR), one of fifteen Access Radio Projects launched as pilots by the Radio Authority, the experience of which concluded that there was more than enough evidence and support for the introduction of a permanent regime for community radio. The evaluation of these access radio pilots provided the basis for the Community Radio Order and legislative framework in the Communications Act 2003.

Today we are an Ireland wide music magazine and formerly winners in 2004 of the 'Magazine of the Year'.

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.

We continued our collaboration with Northern Visions and currently support the Kick Out The Jams series on NvTv. AU TV plays the best cutting edge videos and regional content along with exclusive acoustic and live sessions. The show is aired monthly throughout Belfast on local television and is also streamed on the Internet.

We have first hand experience of the social and artistic benefits that local television can deliver. Empowering citizens of all ages to become content providers and creating media which reflects and raises awareness of local issues and interests constitutes a valuable public service. It enhances the skills base, 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 all of us who seek to nurture the city's cultural and creative assets and talent.

Yours sincerely
Jonny Tiernan
Publisher

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