



Rhona Parry
PSB Review,
Ofcom,
Riverside House,
2A Southwark Bridge Road,
London, SE1 9HA.
PSBReview@ofcom.org.uk

5th June 2008

Dear Rhona Parry,

Re: Open Arts, Northern Ireland response to the consultation:

Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review – Phase One: The Digital Opportunity consultation

Open Arts promotes the inclusion of disabled people in arts activities and is committed to: valuing creativity, furthering artistic excellence among disabled people and promoting the rights and employment of disabled people within the arts and cultural sector. We work across all sections of the community in Northern Ireland, with every art form and with people of all abilities.

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 know at first hand of the social benefits that community arts and media can deliver. 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. This is particularly evident where disabled people are concerned. They often struggle to be a visible presence on national and local television and often, too, do not have the skills to take up employment in the national media. Local community broadcasting gives them on-the-job- training opportunities which allow them to develop their skills and have a more realistic chance of making broadcasting their career. It also gives a higher profile to disabled people and the activities of disabled people making them a more visible part of the communities to which they belong.

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.

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 the community arts and media sector to nurture the city's cultural and creative assets and talent.

Yours sincerely

Kate Ingram

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