

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

19 June 2008

Dear Rhona Parry,

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

Voluntary Arts Ireland is a charity that encourages people to take part in the arts or crafts because we are passionate about its power to transform lives and communities. We inform and enthuse the public and encourage local arts groups to grow so there are enough opportunities for everyone to have a go, whatever their needs, tastes or circumstances. □□ We provide support, information and advice to volunteer-led arts groups and represent their interests to government. We work in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and, we are part of the Voluntary Arts Network (VAN) with sister organisations in England, Scotland and Wales

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 work is primarily concerned with facilitating the development of a strong infrastructure, strategic thinking and good practice across the arts sector and we ensure that their interests are represented to policy makers, funders and politicians. Our vision is to improve the environment for everyone participating in arts and crafts and we celebrate the contribution of participatory arts to the well-being of communities, social inclusion, lifelong learning, active citizenship, volunteering and the arts in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Therefore, we have first hand experience of how important it is to involve local people in the arts and in community media, especially those who are hard-to-reach and eliminating social exclusion. 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 the community arts and media sector to nurture the city's cultural and creative assets and talent.

Yours sincerely
Brenda Kent
Chief Officer
Voluntary Arts Ireland