

Rhona Parry,
PSB Review,
Ofcom,
Riverside House,
2A Southwark Bridge Road,
London,
SE1 9HA.

PSBReview@ofcom.org.uk

10 June 2008

Dear Rhona Parry,

Re: Women's Research & Development Agency, Northern Ireland response to the consultation: Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review – Phase One: The Digital Opportunity consultation

The Women's Research & Development Agency (WRDA) is a regional organisation dedicated to advancing women's equality and participation in society by working to bring about social, political and economic change. We believe that women's rights are central and implicit in the pursuit of human rights for all. The WRDA represents the interests of the women's sector and offers leadership and support.

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 are strong advocates for promoting women's equality and know at first hand the importance of promoting positive role models for women in the media. 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.

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 would be grateful if Ofcom would support Northern Visions/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 to overcome inequalities and social exclusion in society as well as nurturing the city's cultural and creative assets and talent. As a regional voluntary women's organisation responsible for many events across Northern Ireland, we work closely with NvTv and have a high regard for their work in filming and screening

events, enabling the role of the voluntary and community sector to be appreciated by a wider audience.

Yours sincerely

Dr Margaret Ward
Director