



Our Ref: Docs 82953/LH/PC

Being dealt with by:

Ext:

Date:

29 January 2008

Mr Ed Richards
Chief Executive
Ofcom
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
LONDON SE1 9HA

Dear Mr Richards

Re: Belfast City Council response to the Ofcom consultation

The future of digital terrestrial television - enabling new services for viewers

Belfast City Council invests in our city's cultural and creative industries to make Belfast a better place to work in, live in and to visit.

Key objectives include ensuring that the people of Belfast have greater and more equitable access to the city's cultural assets; and that we work to harness the potential of our creative industries (with Film and Television being a priority sector) to benefit our economy.

We believe that Northern Visions (NVTV), whom we support through Council's Annual Funding for Culture and Arts programme, is making a very valuable contribution to achieving these objectives for the city - and indeed have further potential in the field of public service broadcasting.

In response to Ofcom's consultation on the Future of Digital Terrestrial Television - and in support of our funding client Northern Visions, I would encourage you to consider the following points 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*".

- I. Regarding the inclusion of local community television (RSLs) on the DTT platform, which Belfast City Council would welcome, it is recommended that Ofcom considers acceptance of local community television as public service broadcasters.

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- II. We support community media and arts initiatives and media literacy, particularly in areas of social need, given the social benefits that they 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 is certainly our experience that bringing the local community together creatively through community media production and distribution via local community television can enhance skills, encourage a sense of place and ownership of the city and therefore has the potential to foster greater citizenship.
- III. Digital television provides the opportunity for a vast array of highly specialized communities of interest and geographic channels, responding to local, educational, cultural and community needs. We would encourage Ofcom to consider the creation of a distinctive tier of local public service broadcasting, based on local and community television and radio channels, which actively encourages participation, community ownership and engagement.
- IV. 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.
- V. 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.
- VI. In relation to the development of local television in Belfast, we should be grateful if Ofcom could support NvTv being carried on DTT as a local public service broadcaster. Such a development would ensure that all our citizens have access to this valuable local service and would significantly boost our efforts to nurture Belfast's cultural and creative assets and talent.

With best regards

Yours sincerely



SHIRLEY McCAY
HEAD OF ECONOMIC INITIATIVES

