

Question 11: do you agree with our proposals for accommodating Five, S4C, TG4 and GDS on Multiplex 2?:

The Northern Ireland Screen Commission is wholly supportive of the proposal to accommodate TG4 on Multiplex 2. Over the past 3 years, the Northern Ireland Screen Commission has been administering the Irish Language Broadcast Fund which is government funding for the production of programming in Irish produced in Northern Ireland and featuring Northern talent both in front of and behind the camera. This programming is primarily intended to serve the Irish speaking community within Northern Ireland and given that the majority of this programming has been commissioned by TG4, it is absolutely critical that TG4 has the widest possible penetration within Northern Ireland.

Additional comments:

Northern Ireland Screen is a long term core funder of Northern Visions and its television service, which is provided under its limited analogue license from OFCOM. This television channel, NVTV, provides considerable opportunity for community groups to raise issues of concern at a grass roots level, offers opportunities for public debate to take place in a much less constrained environment than other television outlets and generally promotes active citizenship and grass roots access to the television medium.

Northern Ireland Screen is concerned that a consequence of the digital switch over will be the removal of NVTV's ability to transmit and to find its audience. Accordingly, we would urge the inclusion of NVTV on the appropriate multiplex. This must be consistent with the overarching rationale that Digital Switchover is intended to provide greater access to choice rather than the reverse.