

"Working for quality
and diversity in
British broadcasting"



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VOICE OF LISTENER & VIEWER RESPONSE TO DCMS CONSULTATION ON LOCAL TV JULY AND AUGUST 2011

Voice of the Listener & Viewer (VLV) is an independent, non-profit-making association, free from political, commercial and sectarian affiliations, working for quality and diversity in British broadcasting. VLV represents the interests of listeners and viewers as citizens and consumers across the full range of broadcasting issues. VLV is concerned with the structures, regulation, funding and institutions that underpin the British Broadcasting system

Introduction

VLV welcomes the opportunity to make further comments on the plans for Local TV but is challenged by the drip feed of information over the summer.

This submission is in response to a formal invitation dated 18th July to respond to the latest structure and specific details of *Pioneer Locations* dated 9th August plus comments by the Secretary of State on August 18th. Only a summary of the submissions received has been made available. It would have been useful to read the full submissions from other organisations to the original consultation on local TV. We could then fully understand the support for the project and the significant changes made to the original plan

1. Public Service Broadcasting Issues

In our submission of April 2011 we outlined a range of concerns around some key Public Service Broadcasting issues. Many of our detailed points have not been addressed or dealt with in subsequent responses from DCMS. In summary our key concerns are:

(a) The quality of the content; to quote Shott *'that audiences expect excellent quality television and the content must be sufficiently compelling to sustain audience viewership'* There must be a regulatory regime in place to ensure quality of content and that a minimum amount of time each day is given to local news.

(b) We are not convinced that there is adequate funding for local TV to sustain the range and quality of output to retain an audience even in the large conurbations outlined in the *Pioneer Locations* document. On August 18th the Secretary of State stated *"We are looking to find ways to enable them to get revenue in any way they can, and if we can find a way that allows them to get sponsorship of certain programmes in a way that doesn't breach the current broadcasting code, then that's what we'd like to do."* We are concerned that the drive to launch local TV will severely compromise the long standing reputation for the impartiality and independence of UK broadcast media.

(c) We are alarmed that, rather than take note of the cautionary approach in Shott on sponsorship and impartiality in news, the Secretary of State stated on August 18th *"News programmes at the moment can't be sponsored and I would like to find a way of getting around that if I can,"* This despite Shott stating they had been cautioned that with sponsorship *"the potential exists to undermine the current very high public confidence in broadcast news."*

2. Only Large conurbations will benefit

Large conurbations rather than local communities will benefit. In April VLV commented "local TV appears to be local urban TV, the word conurbations appears throughout the Action Plan." In the August 9th document on *Pioneer Locations* our concerns are confirmed "Given the factors listed above, it is highly likely that the largest conurbations will be licensed in the first tranche; we anticipate this will include London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow, Cardiff and Belfast.". This will disappoint many of the organisations who responded in the Spring indicating enthusiasm but few resources to provide local TV for their communities. This contrasts with local radio where relatively small communities have benefited from the start of these services in the 1960's

3. Long Term reliance on IPTV

The *Pioneer Locations* Document continues to hope that IPTV will be able to fill in the gaps in coverage. We remain concerned that the adoption of IPTV breaks with the fundamental principle of free and universal access to public services. Even when the technology exists to enable all citizens to access the internet via a television we expect that broadband providers will charge for the service.

Contact for this response

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Confidentiality Statement

No part of this submission is confidential

Saturday 17 September 2011