

Scottish Local TV Forum

digital local television for scotland

follow-up paper #2

FORUM REPORT



Institute of Local Television



COSLA



The Broadcasting Trust



media access projects scotland

Broadcasting and communications remain a reserved power to Westminster and yet it's through broadcasting and communications that the country - and each nation - represents itself to itself and to those beyond. Why isn't broadcasting and communications in Scotland being devolved to the Scottish Parliament?

Research for the *Ofcom Phase III review of public service television broadcasting* explores how best the three smaller nations respond and might benefit from reconfiguring public service television broadcasting to better fit their areas. A sample of viewers are questioned and research is conducted by MORI. This research shows that regional ITV (in Scotland) has a very poor fit in addressing (especially) viewers' national news-needs and local identities. (ref. *Speed Reading MORI's 'Programmes in the Nations'* sent to Ofcom as a response to the *Phase III* review). Scotland is a large nation with a small population, with a broad scale of centres from large urban cities to small sparsely populated island communities, totalling some 5.5 million people and a shrinking population. A large percentage of the population live in or around Glasgow, although Glasgow itself is only the size of the capital, Edinburgh, Glasgow snuggles up to several large neighbouring urban centres each with distinctive character and local governance. Scotland therefore requires a broadcasting infrastructure which is tailored to its own sense of its localities and requires a broadcasting policy able to respond quickly where commercial logic does not bring benefit, enabling Scotland as a whole as well as on a local scale to import and to export programming and build upon its distinctive tastes and historical interests. Of the thirty or more channels which digital terrestrial television will provide in Scotland for every viewer after switchover, how many of these additional channels will be made in or be broadcast from Scotland? Will the proportion of Scottish programmes be considerably less than it is already with the five analogue channels - both analogue and digital universally available for the price of a broadcast licence?

Public service broadcasting is principally a commitment to provide and support an infrastructure which ensures an equality of access - regardless of means or location. In the more commercial broadcasting environment of DTT PSB is seen as adopting an additional role by addressing what is perceived to be a deficit in provision where commercial services find no benefit or where localised poverty in resource or income limits access. But that recent responsibility in itself gives priority to the market on matters where public service broadcasting needs to retain the high ground. With switchover Scotland looks set to experience a greater reduction of its own views lost to each Scottish viewer as digital television expansion tsunami's more of the world broadcasting's commercial choice across a televisually impoverished Scotland

Regional television took on public service broadcasting responsibilities because the regions and (in particular) the nations demonstrated that they cherished in their different cultural and educational traditions a range of views and concerns which when combined still held distinctive integrity and difference from the UK as a whole or from each other. Yet regional ITV for all of its fifty years has captured far too large an area into its commercial pen to be able to nurture those cultural and social differences experienced across Scotland. To justify its own elephantine scale, regional TV has systematically obscured and bowdlerised these local identities (see 'Reading the 'ITC's Mapping Regional Views'' in *Citizen Television: a local dimension to public service broadcasting*, John Libbey, (1993). In Scotland the ITV regional footprint does not coincide with the nation while across Scotland there is diversity of geographical

identity and news-interest (supporting 60 or more newspapers) with a public left poorly served or ignored altogether by television. Strangely - for the nation-wide dimension - neither BBC Scotland nor the regional ITV television service have elected to locate in the nation's capital - as if the stubbornness of this errant nation will eventually conform to television's preferred representations of it.

Ofcom is withdrawing regional public service broadcasting responsibilities from the ITV companies in England and considering how public service television broadcasting might better address the 'nation-wide' devolved nations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and exploring more locally defined TV areas. With cable's failure to deliver localised community and voluntary TV services from 1984 (if not from 1976 and the 'community TV experiments') it is realistic to expect digital frequencies and broadband to be used to introduce a comprehensive local public service television to the UK with fine grain and local integrity. Does regional ITV - particularly in Scotland - have a future if its public service broadcasting responsibilities are withdrawn and the regions continue to encircle and take advertising from areas not generally accepted by the viewer as being 'regions'? (ref. *Speed Reading MORI's 'Programmes in the Nations'* .)

The prospect of more localised forms of TV is an opportunity to consider how public service television broadcasting might be redefined to include 'participation' and 'contribution', with citizens having access to broadcasting services they can 'own'. This is a different trajectory from the BBC's plans to narrow down and better 'connect' with viewers. Local TV as we describe it here is not a new possibility at all - only a new reality to the UK - because local TV already thrives and struggles in a variety of forms abroad. An independent local public service TV can now play catch-up with the switchover to digital. Local TV 'UK' emerges this time around in a better political climate, where the regulator acknowledges that regional TV (BBC and ITV) are too big and that in Scotland regional ITV is too small to provide a nation-wide service and this - very significantly - at a time when regional ITV's PSB programming responsibilities are to be phased out. So the question is not 'why local?' so much as 'why regional ITV?' at all - in digital form?

For Scotland there should be a new Scottish public service television broadcaster to strengthen Scottish identity and self-confidence and to develop a world-view from Scotland. This broadcaster could be a new channel replacing regional ITV's regional functions with a nation-wide service or it might be a combination (at different times of the day) of the Scottish local TV channels introduced from 2009.

2

Scottish Local TV Forum

The following offers some of the background informing the Scottish Local TV Forum held at COSLA on 23rd March and circulated to delegates. The Forum was organised and supported by the Institute of Local Television, The Broadcasting Trust, Media Access Projects Scotland (MAPS) and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). (Delegate, Contributors Papers and Workshop Notes have been sent to Ofcom as a response to the *Phase III* PSB consultation.)

Following research in 2004 on the audience's views of regional television Ofcom concluded that "people's attachment is greatest to their own neighbourhood, the settlement they live in (village, town or city), or to their nation as a whole, and that regional attachments, while present, are relatively weak (strongest in the south west

and the north east of England)" *Phase II Ofcom review of public service television broadcasting*.

Since mid 2004 Ofcom has begun to look favourably on the introduction of local digital television to provide local public service channels on a smaller scale than regional ITV. At *Phase III* Ofcom is still considering the ways these local digital services might be introduced - on digital terrestrial frequencies, on broadband, possibly via mobile phones or a mix - and is studying practical proposals as well as seeking a steer on the character and scale of local TV. The aim of the Forum was to provide some evidence of interest across Scotland in the scale and input to local TV. As indicated in one of our earlier submissions to Ofcom for *Phase III*, ntl suggest it would be practical to introduce local TV signals onto a mux via an add/drop box.

Ofcom has begun reducing public service broadcasting expectations from regional commercial TV for the English regions. For the nations there is an further requirement to represent identity and diversity within the three nations and strengthen plurality of supply. For Scotland, however, regional ITV is poorly shaped to represent the nation to itself, with three services covering the north, middle and a shared service over the south of the country. A point seldom considered is that the other major terrestrial broadcasters - Channel 4 and Five, as well as the new BBC TV channels (and 24 hour news services) represent the news from the UK with scant attention to the 'nations'. There is then presently very little plurality of supply for the nations, and in Scotland regional news (on ITV) is confused as nation news and local news.

The *Phase III* review enlists contributions from stakeholders on the scope of future public service television broadcasting for the nations - Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

The Scottish Local TV Forum was arranged primarily to involve *potential* stakeholders in considering how local public service digital television might be introduced for Scotland. As broadcasting changes, as more choice becomes available and as public service broadcasting is re-invented to address 'nation' and 'local' this will inevitably introduce new stakeholders into broadcasting. Since the Communications Act 2003 local authorities have been able to hold broadcasting licences. If local television is to be introduced then the possible varieties and scales of local TV need to be known together with the interest of local government. If a new 'nation TV' is to be introduced then the combined interests of local authorities, large public and civic bodies and the Scottish Parliament need to be gauged. Currently the retention of broadcasting powers by Westminster and the continuing centralised character of broadcasting regulation steers away from these new stakeholder interests who do not realise they have a voice lack an appropriate forum and over time an appropriate constitutional framework through which to debate their diverse requirements. The 'local and nation TV' debate requires independence from the established broadcast lobbying, distinguishing itself from the self-interest of current stakeholders. The opportunity Ofcom has provided with the *Phase III* review is for us all to begin (at least) to look at how citizens might become more involved in shaping public service broadcasting in the nations.

Because of its small scale local television can realistically extend the three PSB principles of Lord Reith to include a more citizen-active element - 'participation' - into the mix of 'education', 'information' and 'entertainment'. To achieve this the

viewers as ever more selective consumers in broadcasting's choice, need to be convinced of the value of their role as stakeholders and agents in digital local TV and not to view this prospect as merely an additional layer adding extra variety. At the root of such an understanding lies the view that radio spectrum is inalienable at any local or national scale: at low to medium power broadcast frequencies can only be used close to where they originate, this is where they belong, where they are 'owned'. For terrestrial television, the territorial emphasis is upon responsibility for a transmitter or relay site located locally and for the most part this will also be located within Scotland. The 'choice' we have with digital terrestrial television is to explore how this new spectrum might best be used - as our local and national (Scottish) choice. For public service broadcasting how can this intrinsically 'Scottish' spectrum be converted to a public good, which parts might be sold or licenced and for what services? Discussion of the central role of spectrum ownership in the public service broadcasting debate has barely even been started in the UK. But how spectrum is used - for radio, TV and telecoms - will structure access and representation of individual, local, social, economic and national interests - rendering some enabled or disabled. So this right of access to local and national broadcast spectrum must be brokered. Looked at another way, communications and transport are linked in the ministries of other governments (Australia). In countries - like Scotland - where physical transport links are often difficult or expensive to put in place then an emphasis on the 'virtual' links addresses some of the disadvantages experienced with physical isolation. This view on ownership would suggest that when public service broadcasting addresses the deficit of commercial or market choice - as Ofcom indicates it should - then the new digital infrastructure should tackle geographical disadvantage as well.

Ofcom has highlighted the difficulty it faces in exploring the views of new stakeholders who - almost invariably - don't realise they are stakeholders. These new voices have the capacity to change dramatically the character of public service television broadcasting (for example, ref. *Phase III Review*, 'Annex C' and *Speed Reading MORI's 'Programmes in the Nations'*). While acknowledging that there is a continuing role for existing stakeholders, their hands need prizing from the public tiller of public service broadcasting especially when they will over the next few years cease to provide PSB. There is an awkward desire to continue to occupy broadcasting space or spectrum and frequency once granted on the basis of serving regional distinctiveness and representation.

3

Media Literacy

The Communications Act 2003, which established Ofcom, set in play a duty for Ofcom to pursue greater public involvement in the understanding as well as formation of broadcasting and communications policy. This appears as part of the Media Literacy initiatives in the Communications Act 2003:

"Section 11

(1) It shall be a duty of Ofcom to take such steps and to enter into such arrangements, as appear to them calculated -

(c) to bring about, or to encourage others to bring about, the development of a better public awareness of the available systems by which access to material published by the electronic media [broadcasting and communications] is or can be regulated;"

The Institute of Local Television's earlier presentations on local government involvement in television broadcasting have suggested, "it is ... important - in the spirit of bringing about media literacy - for the citizen in broadcasting to become a stakeholder in the policy regulating media and especially media access.

"To this end the grander project in schools/colleges is to explore how media regulation might be developed on the principles of subsidiarity, of realising [bringing about] an involvement in local and community (of interest) media policy.

"What media might or could be more locally regulated? Local channels, local electronic publishing. In the form of access channels we might consider abolishing altogether the broadcaster's responsibility for what is broadcast in favour of the programme makers' or producer's responsibility to stay within the laws of liable, race etc. Open Channels (common in Northern Europe) provide access to broadcasting for social and democratic expression - and provide a neutral platform of delivery in broadcast media, as with telecoms and the internet here. In the Open Channels the broadcaster is transparent - in particular, the Offener Kanalen in Germany provides own language programming for ethnic and religious minorities, programming by and for the gay community, programmes from schools as well as student broadcasting opportunities." Rushton, D, *Paper for Westminster Media Forum on Local Government Broadcasting Licences*, 9th September 2003, and published on localtvonline.com.

The Media Literacy section of the Communication's Act continues:

"(1) It shall be a duty of Ofcom to take such steps and to enter into such arrangements, as appear to them calculated -

(d) to bring about, or to encourage others to bring about, the development of a better public awareness of the available systems by which persons to whom such material [eg programmes] is made available may control what is received and of the uses to which such systems may be put;"

In the home this 'control' over what programming is seen is a switch; at the local level the available 'system' is a democratic local or community channel; at the nation-wide (Scotland-wide) level it is a greater determination over policy for broadcasting and communications in, for and by the nation.

"(e) to encourage the development and use of technologies and systems for regulating access to such material [programmes], and for facilitating control over what material is received, that are both effective and easy to use;"

The Communications Act 2003 encourages us all to be active citizens of broadcasting and communications. But the democratic structures to manage broadcasting more locally have yet to be built. The digital technologies and systems should be regulated for mutual and individual benefit and not only for commercial benefit. Without democratic control over regulation each commercial broadcasting service becomes a Trojan horse - entering the nation-wide and local arena with products protected by policies over which the immediate governments and community interests have no control. The representation of multi-channel broadcasting as offering greater choice is misleading, insofar as the greater choice of reflecting the more immediate cultural, political and economic interests is not made. Scotland - in essence - is a third world non-broadcasting country, receiving disproportionately more from the

global and national cakes than it currently contributes.

In the Guardian of 28th March 2005 Simon Shaps, chief executive of Granada productions writes:

“In the last week for which consolidated ratings are available (week ending March 6) Granada, ITV’s production arm, provided 13 out of the top 20 programmes on British television. In 2004, Granada provided ITV with all of its top 350 programmes. No other UK commercial broadcaster has the ability to create and own its content, and certainly not on this scale. This will become more, not less, important to ITV plc.”

If regional programmes from Scottish and Grampian are withdrawn they are likely to be replaced by Granada (or at least ITV plc) programmes. It is proposed that more ITV money will be spent in the regions (and nations) but this would need to be in the order of 8-10% of total expenditure to tally with the Scottish population as a percentage of the UK population. But to disarm Simon Shaps somewhat totalitarian vision of Granada-land stretching up to the Shetlands - Scotland’s ITV spend will need to buy 8-10% of ITV viewing across the UK. The allocation of funds to the regions and nations is therefore only one element of the equation: this money needs to be spent on programmes which will feature Scotland in all UK homes for roughly 8-10% of all ITV viewing hours.

An important role for public service broadcasting and a more enlightened involvement of citizens in broadcasting policy is recognising the need to address the inequalities in supply and consumption and to tackle media colonisation.

In determining what is to be received (or, presumably, rejected) on the television set in the home, the viewer must first be able to explore what is not actually available that they might want to receive.

Thinking beyond what is available or what is not on offer is a characteristic of the ‘citizen’ while as ‘consumers’ our choice is either to ‘receive or to reject’. What forms of programme are not yet supplied in the digital domain which individually, locally and as a nation Scots might wish to receive? (See also ‘Noisy Channels’ in *Don Quixote’s Art & Television: seeing things in art and television*, School Press, (1998).)

Ofcom has identified some of the public’s answers to help shape future PSB in the nations in its MORI conducted research (published on the Ofcom website as ‘*Programmes in the Nations*’, but see also the Institute of Local Television’s *Speed Reading MORI’s ‘Programmes in the Nations’*) - but not yet in such a way as to propose how viewers might continue to be engaged in a continuous way as ‘citizens of broadcasting’.

It is necessary in reviewing public service television broadcasting (in the nations and locally, but arguably across the UK too) to consider the viewers’ selection and choice over what is actually ‘transmitted’ as well as what can be ‘received’. Control of transmission is a necessary corollary for a fuller media literacy which involves ‘writing & speaking’ as well as ‘reading & listening’. (See also ‘Media Literacy’ in *Don Quixote’s Art & Television: seeing things in art and television*, School Press, (1998).) In a round about way, if the programmes that we want to receive are simply not there to be seen - they are not being made - it becomes axiomatic that they are made in order

for us to be able to exercise our control over their reception. The worrying element here (to some degree) is that the viewer wanting local news on TV can be encouraged towards web-blogging and to skip the importance of a framework routinely available within their television landscape for sharing news from the local news-arena where it is potentially socially engaging. One news-form is not a substitute for the other, rather web-blogging is a new unregulated and unmediated phenomena that might enhance or distract from a reportage and commentary at any scale of news relevance.

So 'media literacy' as characterised in the Communications Act 2003 invites greater public access to all processes in broadcasting, from devising appropriate policies on transmission and regulation through to production and critical selection. Section 11 of the Communications Act 2003 interestingly invites the public, as a stakeholder, to grow its role into that of a gatekeeper and a regulator.

The strengthening of nation-wide public service television broadcasting and the introduction of local TV PSB is a reflection of the evolving and engaging policy advanced for media literacy by the Communications Act 2003.

We might try to look ahead a few years and picture the digital television landscape across Scotland. In addition to the long familiar terrestrial TV channels, Scotland will be populated with smaller-scale local television. The general digital television landscape will range downwards from the satellite channels, through the national TV networks and nation-TV to the local and community-based channels, working closely with formal and informal education.

These local and community-based channels can be built around media centres providing broadcasting and other communications services. They would

- offer a locally responsive news service;
- provide an accessible focus for making, importing and exporting audio visual content according to local interests;
- offer access for creative media activities by individuals and organizations.

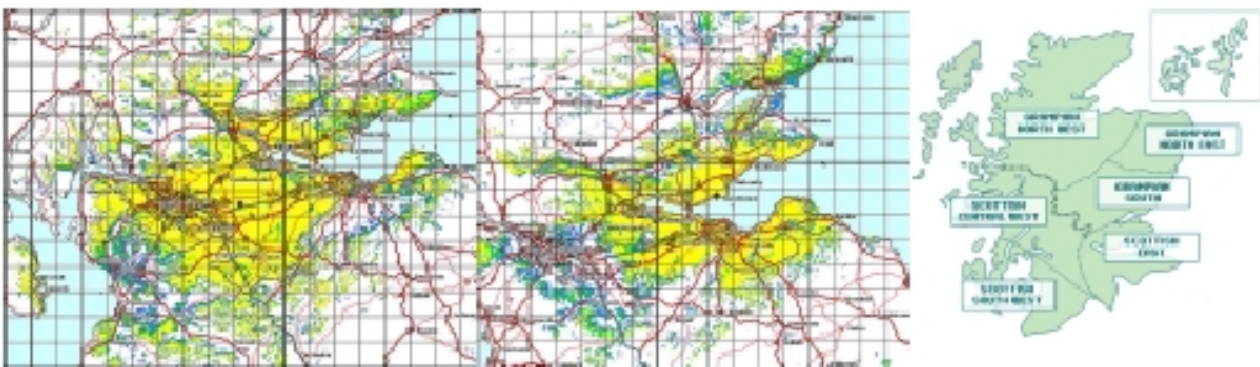
That input would be focused on production and managing distribution, whether informing channels and web-sites with editorial emphasis, performing administrative roles or advising local and national communications and broadcasting policy. The digital horizon includes a variety of broadcasting scales with opportunities and encouragement for involvement and participation.

But this is not the 'digital picture' being proposed in advertising the BBC's multi-channel digital Freeview, nor the promotion of Sky or in sales literature for the latest Sony plasma screen: for these digital visions the BBC and commercial operations and companies push 'digital' as an enhanced consumer technology offering *greater channel choice*. That somewhat limited and techno-centred view of the digital prospect ahead seems to be an attempt to retain in the less restricted spectrum of digital a social and privileged access once accorded the analogue stakeholders in virtue of analogue's scarcity.

The current Ofcom consultation in the *Phase III* review invites commentary on the future of public service television broadcasting in the nations (see 'Annex A Proposals

for the Nations and Regions: a consultation paper', page 95 *Phase III Ofcom review of public service television broadcasting*.) The commercial logic which Ofcom has applied to the ITV regions - to shed their regional programming responsibilities - applies just as well in Scotland, but here (for some reason) there is a compromise. In Scotland there seems to be a willingness - largely unfounded in Ofcom's research - see *Speed Reading MORI's 'Programmes in the Nations'* - to have SMG divide its two regions into smaller parts for news delivery. This initiative from SMG seems to be proposed in the belief that this will somehow move regional television closer to the public's demand for local television.

In welcoming SMG's initiative to provide a smaller scale of TV Ofcom has not acknowledged the potential confusion this will introduce: simply dividing regional TV in Scotland into two parts does not address the character of the local demand, it makes two small messes out of a larger one.



1) Blackhill transmitter and relays

2) Craigmally transmitter and relays

3) SMG micro-regions map

These three maps show 1) the Blackhill transmitter coverage described by SMG as Scottish Central West 2) the Craigmally transmission coverage described by SMG as Scottish East and 3) the map provided to advertising agencies to describe supposedly two distinctive micro regions.

40-45% of television reception in Edinburgh is from the Blackhill transmitter to the west of the city, parts of Musselburgh are served by Blackhill and a few receive their signal from Angus providing Grampian's regional TV. 50-55% of Edinburgh receives its TV signals from Craigmally over the Forth.

Use of the SMG micro-regions for news - which Scottish introduced for advertising - will not contribute to addressing local demand but will only serve to confuse more genuine attempts in the near future to address local television identities. Why should SMG be encouraged to take this route - particularly now that local TV is imminent?

5

Broadcasting territories

At a time when local television is being seriously proposed - not least by the regulator - it is crucial to ensure that in their gradual retreat from public service broadcasting the regional ITV broadcasters do not inhibit nor inhabit the frequency plan of local PSB channels. It is vital that, in the next few months, local frequency planning should be published by Ofcom to provide a framework for designing and establishing future citizen-oriented digital television services.

The Institute of Local Television began its work in 1989 - initially focused on Scotland and regional TV experience. Its papers, reports, research and analysis have been widely published and circulated since 1993. There remains a suspicion that in the past local TV has been a convenient stick with which to beat compromise from more established broadcasting interests, intent for obvious reason on preserving not only their own corner of a system of broadcasting in which choices will multiply but of retaining the form of television in the nations in which the choice is limited among choices given.

For wireless frequencies in Scotland - frequencies which can only be used in Scotland - their use and the services they carry - should be addressed as a Scottish issue because the deployment of digital terrestrial television - as has already been seen in the introduction of broadband - is vital to the economic, social and cultural well-being of this country: as a stimulus for making, and as routes for circulating and exporting Scotland's audio visual wares.

Ofcom has been enthusiastic in *Phase III* to encourage Scotland's regional ITV licensees to strengthen their role as programme suppliers to ITV plc, thereby to continue to represent views of Scotland within the programming transmitted to viewers across the UK as a whole. The published intention of ITV plc to spend more in the regions (and nations) is less the real issue here than ensuring that the 'watched programming' across the UK is more closely proportional to the populations of the nations and regions. It is no good SMG representing Scotland by acquiring an equitable percentage of ITV plc spend if it is for programmes outside peak viewing or insufficiently inspiring for UK viewers to watch a contemporary and stimulating view of Scotland. As Simon Shaps of Granada productions remarked, "In 2004, Granada provided ITV with all of its top 350 programmes". (Guardian 28th March 2005).

Programme supply to ITV is on its own not a justification for SMG to remain a 'regional broadcaster': making programmes for ITV plc is a job for one (or several) Scottish production company(ies). Programme making does not require 'ownership' of a broadcasting network, a network that - unless the Trojan Horse issue is addressed - will serve to funnel productions from the larger English regional ITV companies into Scotland on the network's terms. It is SMG's production company - not SMG as a broadcaster - which makes the limited number of programmes about Scotland that Ofcom has identified the public actually wants to see on ITV. So without a public service broadcasting role would SMG be occupying territory in Scotland on false pretences? Neither a nation-wide nor a local broadcaster it occupies a 'space' that requires a more sensitive reallocation.

While the changeover to digital currently permits some exploration, it would be a failure of regulatory nerve not to address the territorial occupation identified here: as regional ITV companies incrementally slip away from responsibility to deliver (an unwanted regional) public service television broadcasting they lose their right of tenure to that region - in favour of new services which can deliver a wanted form of public service to the footprints acknowledged by the viewers.

New forms of public service television broadcasting are required for 'digital' Scotland for 2009, and for 'digital' Wales for 2008 and 'digital' Northern Ireland for 2011.

Our proposal to strengthen public service television broadcasting accepts positively

that the UK - as the original ring-fence of PSB - has long been overrun. 'New PSB' would recognise that (not least) European programming - and European identity - is as much a missing component of the 'Old PSB' mix as a contemporary Scottish national service and several local PSB identities.

In effect, public service television broadcasting - like communications generally - is at once global and local as well as being everywhere in between. 'New' public service broadcasting shares its distinctive social character with some in the range of global-to-local channels, services distinguished by their PSB qualities from the wider spread of all services, channels and programmes.

It would not only be ineffective but in the long term very damaging to public service television model to simply tinker around the edges of the older obsolete national PSB model. The Communications Act 2003 seems to anticipate far more radical change in broadcasting and communications stakeholding than has so far been suggested in the Ofcom reviews - although a wider view seems evident in the responses of viewers its is perhaps less clear from their interpretation.

The political and social benefit of a 'new' public service television broadcasting in the Scotland will be that the viewer can identify with smaller, common-interest publics as well as with larger diverse international perspectives; the multiplication of smaller public service channels alongside the proposed national public service and commercial channels will provide fertile grounds to inspire more open forms of ownership, encourage new players to enter broadcasting and programme making, stimulate small businesses to emerge as micro- or niche-broadcasters, for community broadcasting enterprises to become established and public (local authority) channels. Why would the Communications Act 2003 encourage local authorities to hold licences unless to broadcast across their local terrain on digital means to be made available?

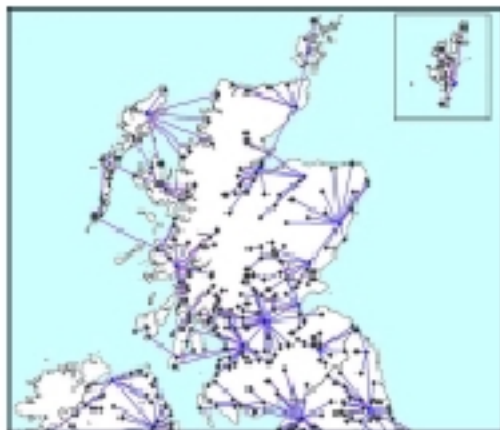
The local public service broadcasting agenda is not then a small offshoot of the BBC trying to connect better with the viewer (and the Green Paper on its future) but a means whereby the local community of viewers become broadcasters, interventionists and deliberators within their own services - which they in turn can influence as it makes links here and there, in the UK and abroad. There is the well-known public service broadcaster attempting to become flexible and there are publics waiting to become broadcasters of their own services. Through Open Channels for Europe! there is an emerging European network: in the UK much of the arts programming from the Edinburgh and Dundee local (RSL) channels is being aired on local TV in Belfast. Scotland and Northern Ireland share some common history which regional television has largely failed to address.

In short, the digital terrestrial future that Ofcom describes after switchover is going to be cast in the next few months, perhaps to last for two or more decades. Shifts in the balance of power in broadcasting have been recognised in offering local authority licenses and in media literacy in the Communications Act 2003 so digital terrestrial television cannot be accepted by Scotland simply as an abstraction of its own identity suffocated in a plethora of imported 'greater channel choice'.

6 Time to discuss the local TV plan?

In his presentation at the Scottish Local TV Forum Frank Brown of ntl showed that the old analogue terrestrial system might be reconfigured to provide distribution points

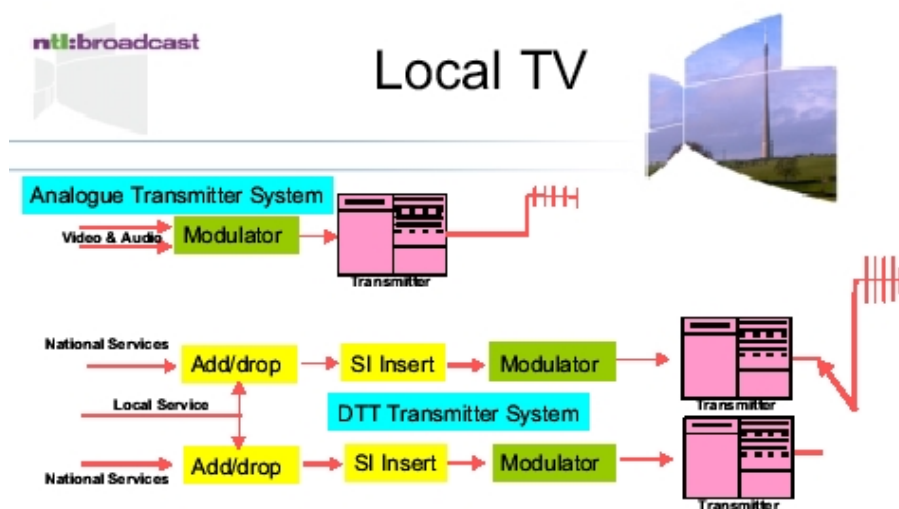
for smaller more localised scales of TV. Relays and transmitters can be connected more subtly with broadband to build smaller footprints closer to identifiable communities



The Institute of Local Television proposed to the Forum and to Ofcom (see *Local TV Network* forwarded to delegates and Ofcom as response to the *Phase III* consultation) that local services might work individually on a core local news agenda; work with neighbours and nearby centres of population on shared common interest programming and also establish smaller to larger networks of shared programme making and broadcasting according to identified communities of interest while if necessary drawing on a sustaining music video service (as the model discussed).

In France the government has required the present TV companies to build into their digital terrestrial plans bandwidth for use by local channels - numbering 1000 or more local channels.

In Spain a similar proposal has been made for coordination by local government, offering over 1000 local digital channels from 2006 onwards.



There is also at least one technical plan already proposed which suggesting that Ofcom allocate bandwidth for local channels on a mux at each transmitter and relay and drop the local channels into place - so these can link together (by taking signals off-air or by broadband links) to ensure coverage to locally identified communities.

6

What next?

We didn't have many completed assessment sheets returned to the Scottish Local TV Forum. From what we have the presentations from Ofcom, ntl and BT all received a unanimous 'useful' rating, the DCMS message was thought 'useful' by two thirds of responding delegates, while one third thought it 'not useful'. The BBC presentation was rated 'not bad' by two thirds of respondents and 'useful' by one third, with the ILT presentation rated two thirds 'useful' and one third 'not bad'.

One delegate wrote 'What next? - When is the next one?' and another 'It would be good to get copies of the notes/presentations/conference report. All in all a very interesting afternoon.'

But with only *three* written responses to our anonymous assessment sheets, this was not a scientific sample. Anecdotal evidence seemed generally positive though - including comments from the contributors about how unlike events of this kind this had actually been. But delegates rightly said we shouldn't have tried to squeeze a quart into a pint pot - and not leaving enough time for questions or tea/coffee, so a poor rating for time management.

Email feedback to date has also been positive - and The Broadcasting Trust and Institute of Local Television thinks there's sufficient interest from local authorities and other potential 'new' stakeholders to arrange a series of more focused events over the coming months.

Immediately following the Forum, The Broadcasting Trust circulated a questionnaire, responses from which will be forwarded to Ofcom for the 19th April *Phase III* deadline. These will also enable the Institute of Local Television - together with The Broadcasting Trust and Media Access Projects Scotland - to plan future local TV initiatives.

Q **The Broadcasting Trust - digital local TV in Scotland questionnaire**

- 1) We would like to register our interest in digital local tv being introduced to our area of Scotland.
Yes No
- 2) We would like our organisation to be kept informed, perhaps with details of smaller scale meetings held in our area addressing how local digital tv could be set up.
Yes No
- 3) Under the Communications Act 2003 local authorities are able to be broadcasters and this local authority would wish to be an active participant in a local digital television channel.
Yes No

Please complete and return by April 5th to the Project Director, The Broadcasting Trust at:- broadcasting.trust@virgin.net

Meanwhile the remaining contributor papers will be circulated and forwarded to Ofcom together with any further follow-up papers. At 7th April the following replies had been received to the questionnaire:

	Q1	Q2	Q3
Dave Arcari Scotland & Northern Ireland Regional Officer Musicians' Union 11 Sandyford Place Glasgow G3 7NB	√	√	n/a
Stewart Wilkie Marketing & Special Projects Manager Economic Development Unit, Chief Executive's Department Angus Council 9 Castle Street, Forfar, Angus DD8 3AE	√	√	√
Moira Methven Senior Manager Communities Department HQ Dundee City Council Central Library The Wellgate DUNDEE DD1 1DB	√	√	√
Cameron Taylor Seabridge Auskerry 1 Cannigall Park St. Ola Kirkwall Orkney KW15 1SX	√	√	n/a
Susan Neal Communications Officer Dumfries and Galloway Council	√	√	*
<p>* I cannot give a positive yes to this on behalf of our council as no decision has been made in committee; I am sure we would approve of Local Authorities being able to be broadcasters if they so decide, particularly as this is available to local authorities in other nations in the UK, but that this would be something to consider in the future. I hope that the legal barriers to Scottish LAs going down this route can be removed. We would try and facilitate local groups who wish to take advantage of new opportunities in TV, especially where such opportunities could influence economic regeneration.</p>			
George Paterson Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations Mansfield Place Edinburgh	√	√	n/a
Gordon Fyfe Public Relations Manager TheHighlandCouncil Glenurquhart Road Inverness IV3 5NX	√	√	√