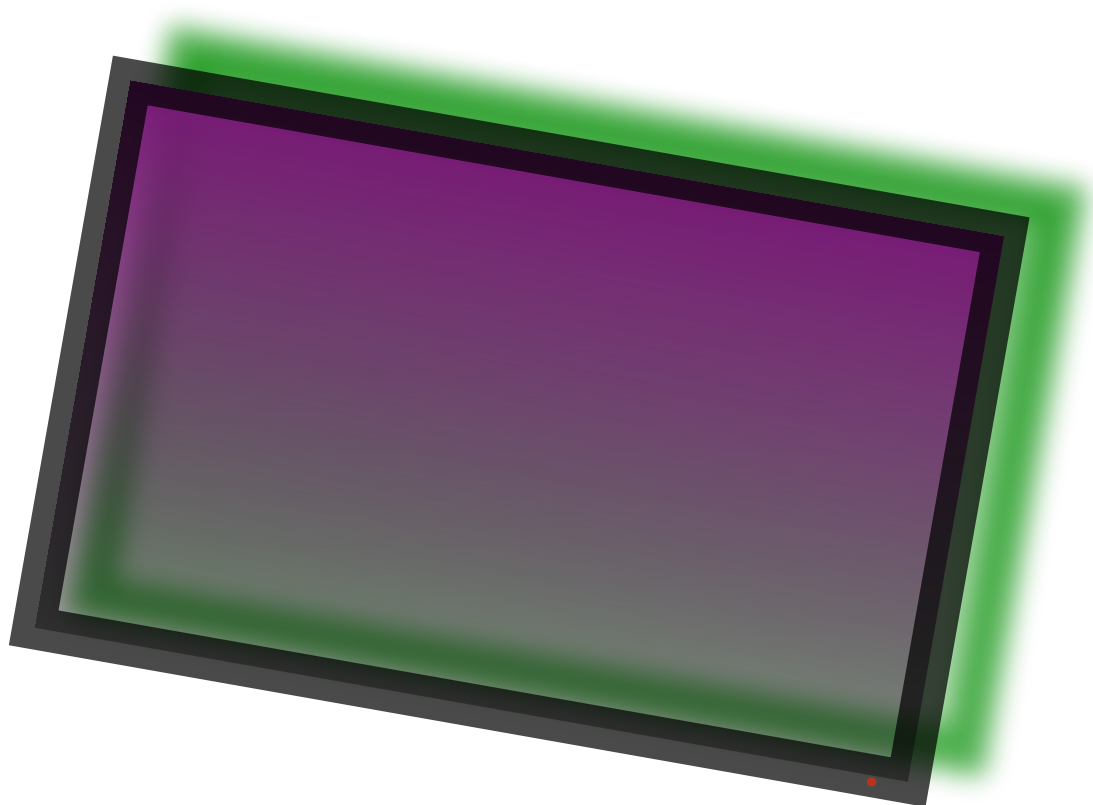


**FOR PUBLICATION**



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**LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE TELEVISION  
in SCOTLAND • FAQ SHEET • March '09**

## LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE TELEVISION IN SCOTLAND - FAQ

- ***What is proposed for local public service television in Scotland?***  
Sixteen local TV channels licensed on a metropolitan and regional scale delivered free of charge to each household across Scotland via Freeview. Strong channel identification offering video repeats through websites, including those of newspapers, tourist boards, arts organizations, councils and emergency services as well as newly established local TV sites.
- ***What is the public purpose of local TV in Scotland?***  
to better reflect and represent local political and cultural identity, and: to encourage commercial, economic and community media activity in the metropolitan and administrative areas of Scotland.
- ***Why a smaller scale of 'regional TV'?***  
The public has never been comfortable with the scale of commercial regional TV in Scotland<sup>1</sup>. Research by the IBA, ITC, BBC and Ofcom and most recently by TNS System Three shows that a more local TV service is required particularly for presenting news and current affairs. Viewers want their area to be more strongly and regularly represented, to see places and faces known. "Undoubtedly there was widespread and strong interest in seeing local news coverage, with almost eight in ten respondents claiming to be interested (79%) and over a third claiming to be very interested. This widespread opinion in favour of local news coverage was evident across all age and standard socio-economic groups"<sup>2</sup>.
- ***But should local TV be a new 'public service broadcaster'?***  
The UK's public service broadcasting represents the state and the nation as the top two tiers of democratic government. Local public service television should deliver a service that addresses the third democratic tier or regional and metropolitan council scales.
- ***But wouldn't council TV be dull?***  
Local public service television is not envisaged as being 'council TV', but as a broader reflection of life lived in a recognised region or city that happens - often - to be the centre for local news and information as well as social and economic activity. Arguably, viewers are less engaged with local political as well as cultural life because their area is not represented on TV news or current affairs and local arts programmes.
- ***What evidence of support is there for local public service television in Scotland?***  
The TNS System Three study of 2008 found that viewers rejected STV regions as the focus for news wanting a more local channel bounded by their own administrative or metropolitan region.

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<sup>1</sup> See Rushton, D 'Local Identity' in *Local Public Service Television*, ILT. (2008) while anecdotally in discussing local TV in Glasgow one response was why do we need local TV, STV is Glasgow's local TV channel.

<sup>2</sup> *PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO BROADCASTING IN SCOTLAND*, TNS System Three (2008) (p 17). Note in the TNS System Three Study region is 'local authority' not 'TV region'.

The BBC's *Scottish Journalism Review* of 2003 found 81% of viewers wanted local TV to be offered alongside national Scottish news<sup>3</sup>.

The Scottish Parliament and cross-party politicians support local TV as part of future public service broadcasting in Scotland.

The Scottish Government represented to Ofcom in December 2008 the importance of local public service television noting the support from commercial, municipal and community interests across Scotland for access to spectrum free of auction.

Scottish local authorities and the area offices of the Enterprise Agencies, as Community Planning partners, together with local newspapers and their regional groups are supporting the introduction of local public service television and are contributing to planning and on-going development.

- ***But wasn't regional non-news programming withdrawn because it was rarely watched compared with national or acquired UK programmes?***

Yes, And the argument was that the 'opportunity cost' favoured a centrally supplied single programme to replace the fifteen or more regional non-news programmes of the ITV network. But this analysis overlooked the impressive public testament pointing in the opposite direction: that regional non-news served too big an area with which viewers did not identify. The regional service was too vicarious and poorly watched because it failed to enhance viewer interest with where they lived<sup>4</sup>. For over fifty years the public has demanded that public service television represent their local area.

- ***But how could a smaller scale be provided if regional TV has been unable to deliver localness?***

By transmitting on spectrum called the 'seventh mux' that will be released with digital switchover a local channel can be provided throughout Scotland to cover each region or city population<sup>5</sup>.

- ***Who would run local TV channels in Scotland?***

Social Enterprise or Community Benefit Businesses involving the local, municipal, commercial and community/educational sectors is a model being considered throughout Scotland<sup>6</sup>. Each channel would deliver to the terms of license held in trust on behalf of its local community. Locally accountable channels would combine to form a Scottish federation to share programmes and allocate national funding.

- ***How would a channel's terms of licence be established?***

The licensing arrangements are still to be negotiated with Government and

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<sup>3</sup> Geographically, the strongest level of interest in this option was in East Central Scotland. The very highest levels of interest at 91% were from those who were also Radio Scotland listeners and, at 89%, from those who considered themselves "BBC advocates". BBC Scotland *Journalism Review* (2003) " (p 13)

<sup>4</sup> See for example the TNS System Three Study, op cit

<sup>5</sup> In Central Scotland some combining of local authority areas is necessary with the expected channel capacity on the mux. These clusters are formerly recognised boundaries and current patterns of combined service delivery.

<sup>6</sup> For example, SoSTV and Tay-Fife business plan submissions to Ofcom.

Ofcom acting in its public protection role. The current view favours time limited local licenses with some form of independent local accountability and comparative performance monitored by Ofcom to ensure delivery of 'public purpose'<sup>7</sup>.

- ***But won't 'public purpose' make services more or less the same in each area?***

No. Although there is universal demand for a staple of local news and for current affairs, what's on and reviews, transmission times as well as the duration and style of these programmes will vary. It is vital though that the 'public purpose' of each channel receive national funding to ensure that the service each viewer receives – regardless of rural or urban location – is of high quality offering the same opportunity for democratic engagement. Beyond the core public service each local channel should be able to provide programming that reflects local demand, diversity of area and that encourages participation.

- ***But urban areas will have more viewers than rural areas and will support more of their own local programmes?***

Yes. But 'local' was never only about local content, but also involved local engagement with programming imported into the area: under local control and through public participation. The local channels serving large populations will produce more programmes, and many of these could be distributed throughout a network of local channels, in Scotland and the UK.

Each channel will be encouraged to make programmes for exchange through barter and access to the competitive fund envisaged by Ofcom. Some programming - Scottish news and parliamentary coverage etc – might be produced on a Scottish or 'federal' scale, but scheduled locally to include alongside local discussion and comment.

- ***How will programme quality be assured?***

For news central or regional studios could be established to provide a shared facility to support local news presentation and delivery. Training in news and current affairs, in research and presentation are important to assure quality. In discussions this is welcomed by local newspapers by involving their staff and to introduce student-VJ placements into local papers. Over time local public news media will become platform neutral<sup>8</sup> although 'local TV' is being introduced now not simply to sustain local news but to add additional plurality with editorial independence and to introduce competition to drive up quality.

- ***How will all this be paid for?***

£2m is required from a national fund in the first year (2009-2010) for services launching in the South and North of Scotland. From 2011-2012 £10m will be necessary to support the core service of the sixteen channels transmitting by the conclusion of switchover in Scotland.

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<sup>7</sup> Ofcom's 'public purpose', offers a clear description of PSB ambitions on the local scale and was first published in its *Digital Local* (2005)

<sup>8</sup> Platform neutrality depends upon the viability and use of alternative platforms. Extracts from Ofcom's *The Communications Market 2008: Nations and Regions, Scotland*, Ofcom (2008) demonstrate that it is unrealistic to rely on alternative platforms to seventh mux to offer universal access.

The ratio of national to locally sourced public funding, and to commercial finance and project and competitive funding will vary according to size of population and advertising revenue. Broadly the national element will contribute between 10-60% depending upon these local and commercial prospects in each channel area.

In addition to the national fund the local TV business plans identify financial support from:-

- local commercials and advertorials.
- project funding for filming social and cultural activities
- alternative delivery of public services via TV and broadband, as part of public service modernization.

The objective of a differential allocation of national funding is to secure by combined national and local means an annual budget of between £700k-£1m for each channel<sup>9</sup>. This budget (including transmission and spectrum) is necessary to deliver the same quality public purpose objectives throughout the Scottish local TV network and as a core support will enable programme making irrespective of the channel's population size or rural/urban location<sup>10</sup>.

- ***Do you propose working with UK and Scottish network partners?***  
There is a very strong wish to share programmes with local TV channels throughout the UK as well as to work with the Scottish Network as its plans become clear.

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<sup>9</sup> An unquantified element of the national grant would be represented as regulatory assets, spectrum and favourable access to transmission.

<sup>10</sup> Currently 96% of Scotland's broadcast spend is in Glasgow (Scottish Enterprise evidence to Scottish Broadcasting Commission, 2008)

