

**Community Media Association response
to "Digital Television: The Principles for Spectrum Planning"**

INTRODUCTION

1. The Community Media Association (formerly the Community Radio Association) is the UK membership association, founded in 1983, for organisations working in the community media sector. It groups together local and community television operators, community radio stations and community based Internet networks. The CMA also administers the Local Independent Television Network which brings together broadcasting and aspirant TV RSL licensees. In this paper we outline the views of the CMA on the document "Digital Television: The Principles for Spectrum Planning.
2. The Community Media Association welcomes this opportunity to contribute to spectrum planning for digital television. In particular we are pleased to see inclusion of Question 4 " *To what extent should the future planning of the spectrum take into account the provision of local services?*"
3. The move to digital television and the potential for many new channels presents a unique opportunity to develop the provision of local and community television throughout the UK. Local and community television has long been part of the broadcasting provision in many other European countries and in countries throughout the world including Canada, the United States and Australia. In these countries it has been proven that local and community services can attract significant audiences and can contribute to the social and cultural development of the community. Digital television in the UK could offer truly innovative services for local audiences, encouraging social inclusion and diversity in programming, and contributing to local democracy and neighbourhood renewal.
4. There are already a number of analogue terrestrial services operating under the TV RSL scheme. They have proved to offer a unique role in their communities, providing services that other broadcasters cannot. There are many examples, but the strength of Midlands Asian TV in Leicester and of Channel 9 in Derry amongst others, demonstrate the diversity of local television and the special role it can play in the local community. The services have many dedicated regular viewers, and provision need to be made for viewers to keep receiving their free to air local service once analogue has been switched off.
5. It is difficult to predict the future of broadcasting but one trend that is demonstrably increasing is the move towards concentration of ownership in a small number of large groups, driven by market pressures and the need to compete in a global market. To counteract this and to ensure that local voice

and unique local perspectives are part of the broadcasting environment, provision needs to be made for local and community TV in spectrum planning now. Local and community TV can contribute to social inclusion, encourage participation in local democracy and create training and employment opportunities.

6. There is now ample evidence from the UK and abroad that a lively ecology of local and community services could develop in the appropriate conditions. Access to good frequencies serving local areas and long term licenses would enable a mixture of commercial and not for profit services to be established.
7. Spectrum planning for digital television should include provision for at least one good quality local multiplex in each local area, such as a town, city or rural district, throughout the UK. If current digital spectrum is not reconfigured it may be possible to interleave some of the local multiplexes within the national multiplexes. However the availability of interleaved frequencies has not been quantified and availability may be scarce in urban and highly populated areas of the country with a high density of additional relay transmitters for the national multiplexes.
8. A research study which investigates how best local services can be provided should be commissioned with some urgency. On current spectrum configuration it is highly probable that a solution can be found which does not require substantial additional channel allocation, however this will require mapping of the interleaved frequencies available and quantification of any shortfall. Under the reconfiguration model dedicated spectrum would be required for local and community television. The most spectrum efficient way of providing potential services throughout the UK should be established in the context of wider reconfiguration planning.
9. *Question 9 Clearing frequencies* - Clearing frequencies may have a detrimental effect on some local broadcasters operating under Restricted Service Licence. Research should be carried out as soon as possible to identify if there are any stations likely to be affected. Such stations should be offered carriage on digital, with no break in service.

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