

ACTO

local public service television directory

TRAINS WITHOUT RAILWAYS! Getting the engineering right first

• LOCAL TV'S ADD/DROP SOLUTION & LOCAL NETWORK CHANNEL

• HOW BIG OR SMALL IS LOCAL TV?

• CALENDAR OF EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

ACTO is an advisory committee of local television organisations working alongside the Institute of Local Television. ACTO's initial objective is to share information supporting the introduction of local digital terrestrial television as an independent form of local public service broadcasting.

ACTO was established in 2003 by local television members of the Community Media Association to focus on the introduction of local digital terrestrial television services - or 'local DTT'.

Through the Institute of Local Television ACTO is represented on **Open Channels for Europe!** the organisation representing European local and open channels in exchanging information on European practice and in negotiating with the European parliament on small-scale TV provision.

Personal and institutional affiliation to ACTO is by a small annual subscription (see page 18) entitling subscribers to copies of Institute of Local Television research and reports and to ACTO's research and feedback from involvement in local TV conferences, forum reports, workshops, offering support with submissions to regulators and government and related local-tv oriented activities.

ACTO - local public service television directory - summarises recent activity, encourages local lines of research and introduces relevant publications while promoting a wider engagement with small-scale local TV by alerting subscribers to forthcoming events and consultations.

This directory is proposed as a rolling electronic publication - accumulating information by adding articles, research activities and lists to take the form of an expanding updated pdf file. If you have information, research or events forward to **ACTO**.

WEBSITES

For information:

on local and community TV in Europe: www.obs.int/db/persky/eu.html

on community TV channels worldwide: www.openchannel.se/

UK's Community Media Association: www.commedia.org.uk/

UK examples of local and community TV programmes:

www.showcase.commedia.org.uk/

Ofcom - UK's independent regulator and competition authority includes sections on codes and guidelines, consultations: www.ofcom.org.uk/

In more detail:

MAPS and independent local television

Local digital television was the focus of the **Scottish Local TV Forum** held in Edinburgh in March 2005. As ITV's commitments to regional programming are reduced so the viewer's requirement for a more localised TV news has been recognised and answers are being sought on how local digital TV might be introduced. The Forum addressed the scale of local TV in Scotland, the demand for rural as well as urban services from closer to home - channels in which viewers can be contributors as well as participants, shaping services in their area as well as making programmes. The following PDF files are some of the papers circulated before, during and after the Forum. The Forum was organised by the Institute of Local Television, The Broadcasting Trust and Media Access Projects Scotland - with the support of COSLA, the association of Scotland local authorities.

Local TV files from MAPS - www.maccess.org.uk/members/ilt.html. FORUM-REPORT.pdf (327K, e-tv and Channel Six Dundee.pdf (150k), Local TV Reader.pdf (123K, Local Channel Atlas (2.16M)

Institute of Local Television
www.localtvonline.com/

The ILT website provides some background papers from conferences and presentations on local TV - in particular discussion of the promotion of media literacy in the Communications Act 2003. The Act proposes greater public understanding and responsibility for broadcasting and involvement in communications regulation as well as local authority broadcasting licences.

Website also outlines the 2.4TV trials using 2.4Ghz and highlights local TV videos available including Writers' Stories, Artists' Stories and Community TV 'Key Texts'.

ADD/DROP AND THE LOCAL NETWORK CHANNEL

The roll out of digital terrestrial television (DTT) in the UK is encouraging TV viewers to migrate from analogue terrestrial reception to digital reception.

The Add/Drop Solution for local TV

An 'add/drop box' is a device which enables a single digital channel to be removed from a stream of channels being transmitted together in a multiplex or 'mux' so that a new channel can be 'added' to replace the one being 'dropped'.

Because the mux must remain of a fixed size throughout distribution and transmission it is necessary that a channel of appropriate capacity is inserted for subsequent 'dropping'. Far from this introducing redundancy into the mux this new channel will serve to encourage viewers and entrepreneurs to develop local TV services in their area..

The 'local network channel' provides a locally oriented service including technical information which ensures each home's set-top or 'Freeview' box displays the necessary programme guide to locate the 'local network channel' alongside the other channels being received. The 'add/drop solution' will require 4mb or so of spectrum in each PSB mux.

Where a local TV channel is available in any area the muxed signal – combining the national PSB channels and the 'local network channel' - is routed via an add/drop box (sometimes known as 'cherry-picker') to 'add in' the local channel while 'dropping out' the 'local network channel'. In parallel an 'SI' inserter undertakes the same task substituting the 'local network channel's' programme guide with the 'local channel's' programme guide.

From each main transmitter the local channel is transmitted for domestic reception and to the transmitter's repeaters or relays for transmission further afield.

As DTT rolls out across the UK and as local channels begin to start across the country the 'local network channel' as placeman or herald of really local TV falls away until – as local TV services become universal - it becomes invisible to viewers. As DTT rolls out and local TV starts up Phase Two begins.

Phase Two

Phase Two requires a server to be installed at each local channel's transmitter site, to receive programmes from the local studio as well as some shared and network programming forwarded to it directly on ADSL by the 'local network channel'.

As local channels emerge and replace the 'local network channel' the local network channel's purpose becomes solely to keep the bandwidth open for local channels to step into and replace at each main transmitter site.

Local Network Channel

However, the 'local network channel' operator continues to have a coordinating or assisting role in providing an element of common programming for use at the discretion of each local channel. As a core service we favour music video clips for flexibility and repeatability as well as their popularity with the elusive 18-30 viewers.

As community of interest programmes are made for clusters of local channels the 'local network channel' can help broker their selective distribution to local channels across the country. In practice there need be little common programming shown at the same time as each channel controls its schedule and draws into its server only what it needs from the 'local network channel' for transmission when required - maintaining the local channel's editorial independence and local identity.

Programmes might consist of local, shared as well as network originated elements combined and transmitted to suit the differences in viewing patterns as well as the particular concerns of the local viewers in the areas in which they live.

Solving the issues associated with television broadcasting & local advertising

With the localised service combining local, network and shared elements advertisers won't need to mount a 'national' campaign only to find much of its reach wasted by simultaneous transmission to areas with the 'wrong' demographics, or find commercials being transmitted at times when a local football match is being played locally or screened on another channel.

New approach to regionalism

Local television represents a more sophisticated form of television broadcasting, providing network, shared and local programming in a more finely grained and locally sensitive schedule.

Between the 'network' and the 'local' lies a new approach to 'regionalism' - with variable scales of 'communities of interest', made up of small, larger and scattered transmission areas where disparate viewers are combined by several local channels working together - though again, not necessarily transmitting their combined programming simultaneously.

From Phase Two the 'local network channel' forwards programming supplied by local channels, specialist producers and other agencies specifically for 'minority' communities represented either in a scattered or clustered fashion across the country, and not only the obvious linguistic or religious communities but programmes for students, hill farmers, art lovers and so on.

Local Programming

The core of the local service will be its local news and current affairs – produced at a level of richness and complexity that different local scales of audience and revenue will permit. Geographical and neighbouring political regions will probably share news and current affairs programming among themselves by providing mutual access to their server to neighbourhood local stations in order to download time-sensitive programming or video clips. For example, news in Aberdeenshire might be enhanced with some news stories from the city of Aberdeen: while stories on forestry or land management innovations may be as relevant to viewers in Sutherland as they are in Dumfries and Galloway or Yorkshire.

The value of local news is its likely relevance to the lives of the viewers, and while this is local TV's major contribution not far behind lies the 'local network channel's' innovative approach to shift programming and video clips around to help build a unique contribution to a local schedule that is valued for its local sensitivity as well as relevance.

Universal Local TV for the UK

The combination of 'add/drop', a 'local channel network' and local servers will enable local digital TV development across all areas of the UK, leavening out some of the disparities between audience numbers, between rural and urban through flexible mutuality.

Where large TV transmitters serve almost a regional area then several local signals will be required throughout this footprint to provide the degree of localness necessary. This is why a local network channel will be required on three (or more) muxes.

Add/drop can be used to intercept the off-air signal sent from the main transmitter to one or more of its relays, offering scope for considerable fine tuning of localness in congested urban areas, though this option will be more costly to engineer than add/drop at the main transmitter.

Some planning work has been undertaken on using add/drop for some of the larger areas of the country - and many of the rural communities have main transmitter and relay footprints which more or less coincide with council boundaries.

With three or more muxes providing a local network channel a relatively fine granularity will be achieved on DTT.

Alternative Solutions to Add/Drop

Two alternative proposals to add/drop have been proposed.

Proposal 1: Proposals have been made after switchover to introduce local digital TV into interleaved frequencies. This could ensure that the local signal is readily received by household aerials picking up the national and regional DTT signals. Information about the channel won't be inserted into the programmed guide, so information vital for the location of the new service will not appear. Assuming suitable frequency can be found and programme guide issues tackled, further difficulties with local TV being set up after switchover are that transmitters and antennas will be required at each transmitter and relay site in order to put out a local signal - that's potentially 1152 transmitters and relays across the UK. Even where local service providers could contemplate investment in their own net-

work of transmitters and relays there's no guarantee the local signal could be transmitted from as high up the mast or at the same power as the national and regional DTT transmissions. So the transmission area would not be guaranteed the same quality of signal.

Proposal 2: The second proposal is still to wait for spectrum to be freed up after switchover but for the local spectrum to form part of one of the new muxes, which Ofcom will be proposing for international agreement at the Regional Radio Conference in 2006. There's no assurance that this conference will concede these extra muxes or if they do, that the new muxes will offer the same almost universal coverage of the UK's PSB muxes. There's likely to be competition for spectrum along the south coast and France has already staked its claim to DTT by publishing maps of its planned roll-out, while Ofcom are reluctant to make public their own proposals in case these don't get through clearance. Perhaps this is just brinkmanship but Holland and Belgium also have some claims to spectrum that could impact upon services on the east coast while Ireland too may have claims that affect Northern Ireland.

The 'wait and see' approach offered to local digital television in this country may be the policy that will result in local TV services not being available for many of the communities that would want them and especially for communities who would most benefit, those with poor broadband and no cable.

On the south coast 'wait and see' compromises options for the Isle of Wight RSL service in the bunfight for spectrum expected with France. Yet France has declared it will roll-out local digital TV as part of its national and regional DTT proposals, with a 1000 or so local channels planned. Spain too has a similar number of local channels in mind although Spanish plans will not directly affect digital transmission in the UK.

Conclusion

Add/drop is the current solution for local DTT, it avoids the loss of programme guide information, avoids vast numbers of new transmitters and antennas being installed for a single signal and it sidesteps fears of an exclusion of locations because of frequency compromises reached at the RRC in 2006.

Add/drop also solves the problem of dwindling audiences for the incumbent RSLs because the RSLs can replace the local network channel with their service as soon as the 'local network channel' is running in the mux.

Add/drop is a relatively simple and comparatively inexpensive universal solution for local TV. Significantly, it is probably the only option that will deliver a comprehensive and mutually supportive range of local TV stations for the UK. If that sounds like a public service ambition, then you're right it is: local television for everyone, everywhere, no less – and why not?

[For reference and discussion a number of presentations have been made on how local TV might be introduced using add/drop. These presentations are subject to revision so current versions are available as pdf files from www.maccess.org.uk/members/ilt.html. The presentations are titled *Local Channel Atlas: Scotland*.]

(Reproduced from Rushton, D, *Local Television Renewed: essays on local television 1994-2005*, (2005) School Press/ILT ISBN: 1 899405 03 8)

HOW BIG OR SMALL IS LOCAL TV?

building on the add/drop solution and the local network channel

In September 2005 we are three months from a major DCMS/Ofcom consultation on local TV's 'economics and sustainability' - and the single most obvious piece of information required to make sensible comment in these consultations is 'what local area do we have to transmit in?' and 'how much will DTT transmission cost?'.

Frequency plans for local DTT were promised by the DCMS for the end of 2002 - where did that work go - or was it never undertaken? Where are the current proposals for engineering local TV coming from - indeed, are there any?

The Institute of Local Television and the local TV industry group ACTO have been lobbying for local TV frequency planning since Ofcom launched in December 2003.

Following advice from ntl the 'add/drop solution' for local TV was proposed to Ofcom in March 2005 and submitted in the Ofcom *Phase III PSB* consultation in April. Discussions have been held with Ofcom since then - with much hesitation on frequency planning and its purpose.

The 'add/drop solution' seeks to provide a local DTT service to local authority areas. Local authority boundaries represent a tangible and appropriate local public space for local TV as well as potentially enabling a significant new entrant to contribute to developing local programming and channels.

The relaxation of rules in the Communications Act 2003 that once prevented local authorities from holding broadcasting licences encourages us to look at configuring local TV to council boundaries – these were the boundaries that once defined cable licensing in the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984.

Have we been this way before?

Cable & Broadcasting Act 1984

Part I – Matters to be taken into account

7.(1) In deciding whether or to whom to grant a licence, the Authority shall take into account all matters appearing to them to be relevant.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) above, in deciding whether or to whom to grant a licence for the provision of a prescribed diffusion service in any area, the Authority shall take into account the extent to which the applicant or each applicant proposes to do the following things, namely –

- (a) to include a range and diversity of programmes;
- (b) to include in the programmes matter which originates within the European Economic Community and is performed by nationals of member states;
- (c) to include in the programmes an increasing proportion of such matter;
- (d) to include programmes of an educational nature, programmes calculated to appeal specially to the taste and outlook of persons living in the area and programmes in which such persons are given an opportunity to participate;**
- (e) to include programmes provided otherwise than by himself or by associates of his;
- (f) to include programmes provided by local voluntary associations and to assist**

such organisations in the preparation and production of programmes;

(g) to include in the programmes matter which is calculated to promote the understanding

or enjoyment of programmes by persons who are deaf;

(h) to provide, or secure the provision of, related services.

(3) In this section "local voluntary organisation" include a local branch of a national voluntary organisation.

Before the Autumn consultations a national frequency plan should be published

While bigger city TV services are seen to stand-alone in North America in the UK our urban areas are made up of independent centres often bordering a bigger city mostly served by a large transmitter and relays.

Local TV should enable sufficient differentiation of services so that distinctive channels - or elements of channels - can reach smaller communities as well as the larger city areas.

It's important for the public service role of local TV not to have transmissions for one area overwhelm another neighbouring area and to soak up its advertising. We've found as much interest in local TV in the rural areas as in the cities.

The objective with local DTT is to launch a universal service that is local enough for viewers to identify with its core news and information content and to feel that this is *their* channel.

To support the relatively small programme making capacity of some local areas we need to provide ways to share whole programmes as well as elements of programmes between neighbours as well as to make common programmes of interest for screening in several local areas further afield.

With sufficient local services on-air across the country each area can import content to support their own programming.

From the TV Restricted Service Licensee experience a general sustaining service is necessary to allow local and shared programme hours to build up.

We've suggested music videos for the sustaining element which can be scheduled locally to suit taste and distributed according to demand.

Local TV Proposal: add/drop summary

The proposal ILT and ACTO has made to Ofcom has three elements:

Add/drop box – to insert three local channels at each main transmitter site and further refine coverage using add/drops at some relays.

Local Network Channel (LNC) – the channel that is introduced into the national mux that local channels then replace using an add/drop. The LNC programming provides a drive towards 'how to do local', carrying examples of programming from local channels on air early. We also envisage this as a music channel partly supported by dial up request revenue. Low cost, but high quality content and server based.

Local Servers – will be topped up by the local channel as well as by the LNC – with music videos and shared programming. In addition a sharing arrangement

with neighbouring channels would allow news clips and other time dependent material to be swapped between local channels.

When local TV develops in each area the Local Network Channel's visibility recedes and the role of the LNC operator becomes focused on delivering shared programming, coordinating market research, developing the common advertising and sponsorship required to support the local advertising, grants and other revenue. The LNC would stay 'in the background' on air as a fall-back channel; should a local service go off-air.

We realise that to support a local channel in a small area a lot of common interest or shared programming will be required. The core local supply of news, documentary, educational and current affairs programming is where the local production priorities – and costs - will probably lie. Here we need to look beyond the traditional stakeholders in TV, and beyond local or community production too.

There are new players out there - South Lanarkshire council budgeted £30,000 a year on their weekly news programme on Thistle TV. Aberdeenshire currently spends £1m per year on local advertising – a percentage of this could be secured by a local channel in which it might take a stake – but only if the channel reaches the majority of viewers in Aberdeenshire.

City Learning Centres - of which there are currently 105 across England are existing sites around which local TV development can take place. A recent survey found 33 of 85 CLCs contacted interested in being involved in local TV in their areas.

So there's some joined up thinking that needs to be done on who *might be* local TV stakeholders.

The critical feature for public as well as commercial investment in local TV is demonstrating the service will reach the largest viewing minority or ideally the majority of viewers in each local transmission area. This is vital for investment, to secure local advertising in competition with newspapers and radio and to vest authority in the local TV news service.

Programming can be shared across local areas with a similar demographic – this targeted approach improves on the scattergun of national and regional commercial channels.

Local TV can play out its shared programming at the optimum time locally and advertisers can target wanted viewers in relevant or key local areas. Sponsored programmes might have greater appeal if viewers were better profiled and the programme shown in each local area at the best time to reach critical viewers.

Why the Add/Drop Solution for local TV?

Good television reception in analogue and digital is determined by the alignment of the domestic aerial as well as by the strength of the transmitted signals, height on mast and so on.

It is very unlikely that local TV audiences will install new aerials just for one additional channel, so any new channels - national or local - need to work within the framework presented by the prevailing TV transmission and reception plans. Therefore local television needs to be integrated into the roll out of digital terrestrial television for a number of reasons:

The universal objective of local PSB is unlikely to be achieved if local TV is left till after

roll-out – the engineering and build at a late stage would be very expensive and the introduction of a local service at several transmitters and relays would probably be disruptive to existing channels

New frequencies – interleaved or otherwise - have not yet been identified to provide a universal service or - for that matter - been committed to provide any type of local TV service.

A 'new frequency' approach - while necessary in some areas to add a distinctive local multiplex – is not scheduled to happen before DTT roll out and certainly not in time for the DCMS and Ofcom consultation this Autumn. How 'new frequencies' will access set top boxes is also unclear. No one's sorted that out. Without guarantees on signal strength, heights on mast etc it is also not possible to quantify the reach, coverage or potential audience of a local service. Without information on the 'shape and reach of local channels' the consultation on sustainability, economics and licensing for local TV seems rather premature (if for other reasons extremely late).

SI information (channel guide data identifying location of each channel relative to others) needs to be inserted in the stream going to the home to ensure each channel is correctly identified – this too suggests that a comprehensive and planned universal strategy be adopted rather than a piecemeal wait and see approach.

The competition for spectrum released at switchover has been flagged up as a reason why local TV might never happen at all - that uncertainty undermines the consultation.

Government needs to make its commitment to spectrum and roll out clear and unambiguous to ensure that issues in consultation can be properly addressed. The add/drop solution doesn't require spectrum: doesn't necessitate waiting and seeing.

In conclusion: Add/Drop seems to free the prospect of local TV from some of the imponderables and from much of the current uncertainties. The planning that 'add/drop' encourages could establish well in advance of DTT roll out a crystal clear map of the scale and reach of local TV channels.

With a 'local DTT map' those invited to participate in the Ofcom and DCMS consultations in the Autumn and subsequently could make a realistic assessment of local service costs, understand service boundaries and make a reasonable estimate of the number of local DTT viewers.

Add/drop is also a low-cost solution - if not the lowest cost solution - for introducing local TV across the UK, for rural as well as city communities. (See below for details.)

'National' or 'asset' costs - why 'add/drop' is the most efficient and cost-effective option for local DTT

As a PSB service the 'local network channel' might not itself incur the cost of transmission on the multiplex. [Revising this (on 17/09/05) Tessa Jowell is reported in *The Guardian* as considering offering Channel 4 extra 'free' spectrum.] The three Local Network Channels (LNCs) suggested for local TV could either be streamed in one mux or split across three muxes. If they were part of one mux then only one add/drop would be required to insert the three local channels proposed at each main transmitter site. This would be at a cost of around £20k per main transmitter site – varying with redundancy required and so on.

As an example: An add/drop at the Selkirk transmitter would introduce a local signal

for Scottish Borders reaching 110,000 potential viewers entering the signal at the main transmitter and extending across all the twelve or so local relays. The alternative approaches all require individual frequencies or local muxes and require separate transmitters and antennas as well site building and mast allocations at the main site and at relays – which could make the cost impossibly expensive – assuming that an individual new frequency can be found or is even offered.

Further fine tuning of the reach of local signals in some areas can be carried out as necessary with additional 'add/drop' boxes at key relays.

Local and neighbouring services

The broadcasting regulator Ofcom has found that viewers want local TV but that many viewers also want news and information from neighbouring towns or cities with which they are associated.

The add/drop solution offers viewers their own service as well as two neighbouring services. Local broadcasting licences could define transmission areas to protect neighbouring local areas from advertising being taken over by nearby channels.

Summary and stab at comparative costing ...

I'll try and outline some figures on why add/drop may be the best financial option to date.

To summarise the ground rules first. A solution for local PSB TV must:

- be available for every household in UK able to receive national DTT - it's a public service and local news should be as readily accessible as national and regional TV news - pluralism and universal principles of PSB upheld
- offer same sense of identity for viewers - council areas encircle locally relevant news areas for all viewers
- have its prominent delivery method reach the largest minority or majority of TV viewers in each local area - to provide critical mass guarantee for investment (whether this is public or private or both)
- not prejudice a solution for an adjoining local TV area - so bigger channels don't neutralise a neighbouring borough's prospects for launching their own service next door

Going the add/drop route What do we know of possible cost?

Three channels on mux +/- £15m

81 add/drops +/- £1.6m (assuming three channels on one mux - otherwise multiply by 3)

What will this combination achieve?

Three 'local network channels' to 81 transmitters and extend without further work to a total of 1152 transmitters and relays. This will deliver 81 x 3 'local' channels - 243 in total. However if the approach in *Local Channel Atlas: Scotland* is adopted to the configuration of these local channels - with the addition of some extra add/drops on relays - then the footprint can be better localised. Since we don't know the additional cost of add/dropping at relays yet - let's assume for now it is to be born by the local services themselves - but I'll include a figure later.

If we look at a more piecemeal approach to frequency use, then the following figures provide a guide:

Take two examples: Scottish Borders and Edinburgh - town & country and city.

The scenario canvassed hitherto by Ofcom uses interleaved, or 'new' frequencies recovered from analogue switchoff. Let's assume they are being offered before the Autumn 2005 local TV consultation - so on both add/drop and new frequency approaches we're not talking 'hypothetically' in the forthcoming consultations (but finally have something concrete around which to discuss types and costs of services).

To offer a local TV channel for the Scottish Borders area (pop 110,000) from the Selkirk transmitter with 'new frequencies' would involve a transmitter and antenna for the main transmitter site as well as for each of Selkirk's twelve relays: that is 13 sets of kit installed at 13 sites. Based on the analogue costs per site - ranging from £20-50k per annum per site - a transmitter/antenna cost of (say) 1 x 50k and 12 x 20k or £290k per annum lease (supply and maintain).

Looking at the Edinburgh example: there's the main transmitter at Craigkelly plus coverage from Black Hill - at national DTT power to reach the considerable distance - plus two or three smaller city-based relays. Transmitter and relay costs would be £30k for Craigkelly, £60k for Black Hill and £20k each for two smaller relays - £130k per annum for a population of >500,000.

Let's assume that in the interface between Edinburgh's local TV signals from its main transmitter at Craigkelly and those of Scottish Border's signals from Selkirk any clash of frequency use can be resolved. To make that assumption there has to be plenty of spectrum allocated to local TV to ensure (eg) West Lothian, Dumfries & Galloway, South Lanarkshire, Northumberland, Fife (and seven or so other nearby or adjoining areas) are able to have clean spectrum for their own services once Edinburgh and Scottish Borders have been supplied.

(It seems a big assumption that spectrum will be available to provide discrete services to all local households using this 'new frequency' method. What might the value or cost be of this spectrum? The problem is finding sufficient spectrum to offer signals from 1152 transmitters configured to local boundaries without causing interference and so offering the same benefit of service to all. It would be hard to argue for a portion of the PSP or licence fee to fund local TV if local TV weren't available for all as a public service.)

Also, I'm not sure whether a single channel can exist in digital - wouldn't each of these frequencies form a mux and if so there would be lots of unused channels in each area?

One caveat on the add/drop - some main transmitters will need a local mux (or maybe two) - Black Hill the only one in Scotland (one of 14 main transmitters) needs one local mux. I see the introduction of these muxes as a second stage - when DTT has rolled passed, not as part of roll out itself. So no conflict with waiting till after RRC 2006 for the second stage.

If we compare the two scenarios - add/drop and the 'new' or discrete frequencies approaches

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On the 'new frequencies' approach clearly some cities might benefit by requiring only a handful of transmitters and relays: while other cities and rural areas require several transmitters and relays. On the 'new frequencies' approach - the burden will fall hardest on the more sparsely populated areas to support several relays. This burden was explicitly avoided for ITV - where transmitter costs were shared across the network, not a burden on one regional TV enterprise more than on others.

So if we start off local DTT with an analogue RSL approach (the Restricted Services Licences approach had each applicant identify the transmitter site and sometimes the frequencies they wanted to use) each local area cost could only be estimated on its own - and provision of some frequencies on an ad hoc basis would inevitably be to the detriment of others. Moreover areas requiring many relays would be penalised.

If laissez faire were to be adopted for local DTT - who is carrying out an impact study to ensure that neighbouring applicants could have spectrum too? In other words - in order to offer spectrum to (in our example) 'Edinburgh' someone (and who will this be? - the Institute of Local Television, Ofcom, DCMS - who is the de facto broker here?) has to begin the local DTT work by ensuring that spectrum is available for Fife and the Scottish Borders too - even if they're not in the first wave applying for a local channel. What sort of public service would start out denying access to large swathes of the country? So ...

Looked at as a stand-alone local TV area that had to support its own transmission infrastructure the cost of start up and running transmitters for Scottish Borders would seem prohibitive (£290k per annum for a 110k population) while the cost to Edinburgh might just be possible (£130k for 500k population) assuming (say) the channel had a 70% reach on DTT.

Would the total spectrum that will be needed for a 'new frequencies' approach be identified and set aside for local TV across the country? Significantly, will its value be less than the £15m per annum estimated for add/drop local TV?

Putting aside (miraculously) the spectrum cost for the 'new frequency' approach (because we've no idea what it might be worth - and nor has anyone else) - on top of frequency costs the Scottish Borders would still have to find £290k per annum for transmitter leasing/mast rental while Edinburgh would have to find £130k.

If we go back to the add/drop solution.

The capacity for 'local' channels derived from the spectrum set-aside for three 'local network channels' is 243 channels. Share the mux leasing cost between these evenly (though I'd favour a per capita/homes reached based costing) and this would throw up a per local channel contribution of £62k per annum. The add/drop box cost I would see as a leasing possibility - at say £3-6k per annum per box - or £1-2k for each of the three channels at the main transmitter - plus a further £3-6k or so for each relay requiring its own add/drop to 'fine-tune' each local service by adopting out of area relays for local use.

Add/drop then is the most efficient and cost effective solution to provide a universal local public DTT service ...

Note: We may be able to reduce bandwidth required for local TV from 4 down to 3 or 2mbs - but (I'm told) risk losing subtitling and possibly stereo and HDTV ?

Local TV – checklist for launch of local TV in DTT Roll Out

SEPTEMBER 05 Suggest a local DTT spectrum sub group within DTG to develop a version of the *Local Channel Atlas* in time for the Autumn consultations from Ofcom and DCMS

WINTER 06 Persuade SwitchCo and government that general local PSB TV advice needs to accompany SwitchCo information in each area.

SPRING 06 Launch LoCo(!!) with a budget of £50-100,000 per year to support early planning discussion for the introduction of local digital channels with DTT roll-out.

SUMMER 06 LoCo and a local TV DTG sub-group to cost the roll-out of local TV – based on national muxes and the 'local network channel', with add/drop at main transmitters and as required at relays. Monitor requirement for local muxes.

SPRING 07 LoCo becomes the 'local network channel operator' and oversees the introduction of local TV across the UK from 2008.

DR-ILT-ACTO 2-7/9/05

CALENDAR OF EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

Assessing the Future of Local Television and Interactive Services: a Survey for Stakeholders

Survey closed on 14th September ... but if you *might be* or *could become* a stakeholder in new local TV services then email Caroline.O'Dwyer@ofcom.org.uk.

Ofcom is holding a local TV stakeholders meeting in Manchester on 1st November.

ACTO is in discussion with CLCs, local authorities and creative industry sector, media access projects and voluntary organisations - to ensure this sector is represented - contact Dave Rushton at local.tv@virgin.net if you could make the November 1st meeting and are currently establishing a strong case for local TV partnership/initiative in your area.

Local TV in Dumfries & Galloway

Thursday 25 August

A very positive gathering with a wide cross section of community organisations and council staff from this 'front-line' DTT region. The meeting juxtaposed an outline of digital switchover with local TV prospects. The positive community benefits of local DTT were quickly established and warmly embraced.

The Add/Drop Solution Presentation

Friday 2 September

Presentation on add/drop and local network channel proposals to the Digital Television Group, Spectrum Group, Twickenham. Add/drop solution well received and Institute in dialogue with DTG members on assessing optimum solution. Conclusion of meeting was 'Local TV is an important part of the new world'.

DCMS Presentation

ACTO & Institute of Local Television

Wednesday 7 September

Presentation and discussion with DCMS Minister James Purnell MP on local public service television. Meeting postponed, rescheduled for November. Meeting **7th October** with Minister's special advisor on media.

South West Council's 'Bulletin' October

Local TV in the South West from 2008?

The engineering proposal for local digital TV in the UK - known as the 'add/drop solution' - offers an affordable local digital terrestrial television channel across the UK on the scale of local authority areas. The local DTT service could be introduced in the South West as soon as 2008 as part of the switchover from analogue to digital terrestrial TV.

Local authority boundaries define a public space for a news based local public TV service.

The 2003 Communications Act relaxed rules that once excluded local authorities from holding broadcasting licences and which prevented councils from taking a significant stake in broadcasting companies. The 2003 Act therefore encourages local digital television to correspond to council boundaries.

To participate in the Autumn 2005 consultations on local TV or for further information on the potential for local TV in your area contact Dave Rushton, Director, Institute of Local Television - local.tv@virgin.net

Local Authorities & Local TV: Workshop

Institute of Local Television & The Broadcasting Trust

Friday 30 September 2.30-5.00pm

A meeting to explore scale and prospects for local TV services in following areas HIGHLAND, MORAY, ABERDEEN, INVERNESS, ABERDEENSHIRE, WESTERN ISLES, ARGYLL & BUTE, SHETLAND and ORKNEY. To be held at Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Cowan House, Inverness Retail and Business Park, Inverness, IV2 7GF

Further local authority workshops in Central Scotland planned for October.

Get Your Hands On Local TV!

Institute of Local Television

Saturday 29 October 9.30am-3.00pm

An informal hands-on local TV session for council and voluntary sector staff from across Scotland. We'll look at some local TV examples from Scotland and Europe, work out how they were made, estimate costs involved and try our hand at making short news and interview clips using miniDV and computer equipment that can readily be found in schools throughout Scotland.

Local TV Digital Forum

Saturday 26 November 9.30am-3.00pm

Discussion of the Autumn's major local TV consultations from Ofcom and the Department for Culture Media and Sport.

Further details will be available in the coming weeks on this Saturday workshop to explore frequency and business plans to coincide with the Autumn Ofcom and DCMS consultations on the introduction of local digital TV. Presentation from Ofcom on their local TV plans.

These **October 29** and **November 26** events are part of Drummond High School's community programme. The course fee for each event is £25. Payable to "Drummond Community High School". Book early by email to: local.tv@virgin.net with your name,

postal address and invoice address (if different) so that Drummond can forward invoice.

Invitation to the Berlin European Media Literacy Conference IV

Media and Social Intervention

November 11 - 13

Location: Offener Kanal Berlin, Voltastr. 5, 13355 Berlin

General aim

An increasing number of media initiatives across Europe show a wide range of different content, contexts, audience groups and local media output. This Media Literacy Conference invites people from these initiatives to develop a better expertise in the approach and results of their media work and to deepen democratic and direct media impetus in Europe.

The topic of "**Media and Social Intervention**" focuses on methods and examples which helped people to develop their own critical voice through the use of independent media.

The Media Literacy Conference IV would like to continue the dialogue which was started three years ago. Project presentations, workshops and open discussions will contribute to develop our coalition of European partners supporting media literacy within the wider framework of the new organisation "Open Channels for Europe!".

ONE THOUSAND REASONS FOR A LOCAL TV CHANNEL IN MY AREA

The **ACTO** interactive participation slot

Please add your reasons for having a local/community/open access TV channel broadcasting to all or most of the viewers in your local area. Email contributions to local.tv@virgin.net ... for inclusion in the next updated **ACTO - local public service television directory**.

Extract from response to the recent Ofcom survey from NvTv in Belfast

Policy considerations

1. What do you think is the purpose of Local TV i.e. what is it actually for? What are the benefits for citizen-consumers?

Local television can better inform the public on local issues to enhance the level of public discussion and debate and facilitate that discussion to reach a wider audience. It can offer creative and imaginative ways to communicate and an inroad into using new technologies through programme making and related activities.

Given local television' much smaller catchment area and limited budgets, compared to national and regional broadcasters, local television through necessity will be different; it will look different and should strive to be complementary to the major broadcasters. Its strength lies in the fact that is local and reflects what is happening at grassroots, it removes intermediate barriers and should support the notion of active citizenship through participation in the media and extend freedom of expression.

It's crucial for media literacy - has potential to respond to the evidence of inequalities within the information society and strengthen marginalised communities/groups role within mass media through citizens participating in making programming.

Fulfils a number of briefs which are impossible on national TV and possible only occasionally on regional TV:

1. Creates a new and dedicated public space where it is easy to address policy issues in a city or smaller rural area. Planning downtown, waste management, community services, crime, policing, local government, community development, physical fabric and regeneration, whatever – everyone knows what you mean, no long explanations needed because you live in Birmingham or Ballycastle not Belfast. Nature of programming very different, immediate, more in depth and longer discussion generally possible with the citizen because there isn't the problem of tight schedules and isolation from the centre you find with regional and national TV.
- Invaluable in promoting community and their efforts. Again, this comes down to being local but might also be more prevalent to Belfast where there is an underlying need for dialogue, for positive thinking, case studies (invaluable information for decision makers at policy level), peace/reconciliation. I think some of our experiences would translate well to ethnic communities/race relations/white community/Muslim/Christian - combating racism, integration, identity, diversity in English cities.
 - Builds confidence in the use of the media. However, this takes time given that people expect a traditional top down approach from the media. We discovered that re-education was necessary. Citizens' expectations were that they had to pay for an ad on TV to communicate to wider public or they could get lucky once every ten years and get a 2 minute sound bite, the idea that they could contribute to programming and produce it themselves was often absent. (We've some further research on this, which I will send). It was important to show local TV as an independent forum where citizens could have confidence in their ability to assess their situation, make judgement, assert their opinion and relay to others – used once this forum is seen as vital to modern life – groups, individuals, authorities repeatedly come back and there are often surprises – for example, we featured an ad for a charity supported locally and two months later the international development worker brought back footage from a regular visit to a project in Africa. Knowing there is a local distribution outlet empowers citizens to think outside the box.
 - Important platform for information, events, activities, especially those of a smaller nature, which don't have big advertising budgets. These are often organised by local people – for example the Mela by Indian Community Centre, Feile by West Belfast community groups – they don't have the marketing budget of ColdPlay or 'drink' corporations. There's generally social gain in promoting these events so ties in with all the other aspects of local TV too.
 - Invaluable to promote local business for similar reasons. Has proved an important incubator for networking between business and government and marginalised communities/groups at grassroots level.
 - Invaluable for work in the field of cultural diversity at local level, good relations, single identity work reaching wider audience etc. Breaking down barriers – sectarianism within social & environmental structures which shape society. Interfaces, mixed neighbourhoods, education & work place. The audience is the right one for localised issues such as this. Brings localised problems into mainstream at earlier stage.
 - Generally - Enhances the link between local government agencies and the citizen.

BOOKS, REPORTS & PUBLICATIONS

NEW LOCAL TV BOOK

LOCAL TELEVISION RENEWED: essays on local television 1994-2005 published by School Press for the Institute of Local Television, August 2005. 112 pages, available in pdf format at £7.00 from 5th August or as a softback book at £13.50 inc p&p from 30th August 2005.

REVIEW COPIES - to order FREE copy for review please email and advise of journal and publication date. Review copy will be pdf 620KB.

LOCAL TELEVISION RENEWED provides a vigorous critique of the political impact of public service broadcasting since 1990 and argues for two hundred plus independent local, community and municipal television channels in line with developments under way across Europe. **LOCAL TELEVISION RENEWED** outlines how these proposals for local TV channels can be introduced as part of digital switchover from 2008 and expanded via broadband.

LOCAL TELEVISION RENEWED is the fifth volume on local television to be published by the Institute of Local Television - published with John Libbey, the Community Radio Association (CRA, now the Community Media Association) or on the ILT imprint: School Press.

LOCAL TELEVISION RENEWED: essays on local television 1994-2005, ISBN:1 899405 03 8

Dave Rushton, published by School Press (2005) £13.50 inc p&p 112 pgs Softback (or £7.00 for single copies in pdf format downloaded to your email address.) Preamble; Introduction; Technical Background; Virtual Reality; Vicarious and Experiential TV News; A General Theory of Spectrum; Defining the Social Geography of Local News Identity; Assessing opportunities for local digital TV across Europe; Add/Drop and the Local Network Channel. APPENDICES: A Local Television Reader; Scottish Local TV Forum Report; Some pointers for filming local TV news and short documentaries

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AND FINALLY



To add to this directory - offering further reasons for local TV in your area, examples of local TV activity, expressions of interest in local TV, forums, events etc - email to local.tv@virgin.net

To be removed from the **ACTO** electronic mailing list please advise local.tv@virgin.net