

Ofcom review of ITV public service broadcasting requirements

I welcome the review that Ofcom is undertaking of the public service broadcasting requirements placed upon ITV plc and others. As the regulator for television in the UK, you are about to make some of the most fundamental decisions ever to affect broadcasting in this country and, in particular, you will set the scene for the shape of regional broadcasting for many years to come. It is vital that you weigh up all the different issues across the country and, in particular, give proper weight (and, if necessary, protection) to the special challenges and needs of rural areas like the one I represent.

Please find enclosed a joint submission from my colleague Jeremy Purvis MSP and me setting out our views on the issues currently facing the future shape of the ITV network. We reject the proposals that have been put forward by ITV for the replacement of the ITV Border regional news operation and we set out broader concerns about the options being canvassed for the future shape of the network. At this crucial moment, when we are about to embark on the switchover to digital television, it is vital that you, as the regulator, recognise the shortcomings which already exist and the pitfalls of what may come to pass. We are very concerned that, in an era when we are being promised more and more choice, the reality will be that we are simply offered 20 or 30 minor variations on a general theme. We want to see a television system which recognises the differences around the United Kingdom, promotes diversity, and avoids a metropolitan monoculture emerging.

In short, we see the current ITV proposals as lacking in vision, limiting choice, and spelling the beginning of the end of proper public service broadcasting across the United Kingdom.

The submission is made in our capacities as constituency Member of Parliament and constituency Member of the Scottish Parliament respectively; as such we do not do so as official spokesmen for the Liberal Democrats.

If you wish to clarify any of the points made in our submission, or to talk through the points in any more detail, we would be very happy to meet to discuss matters further.

With kind regards,

Michael Moore MP and Jeremy Purvis MSP