



UNITED FOR LOCAL TELEVISION

Press Release

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OVER 120 MPs DEMAND LOCAL TV ON FREEVIEW

Over 120 MPs have signed an Early Day Motion demanding that the Government introduce a local television channel in every part of the UK on Freeview.

Members of Parliament from across the political spectrum are backing a plan put forward by United for Local Television, a coalition of local TV operators and campaigners. This would see the introduction of "Channel 6" as a new local channel broadcasting on the Freeview platform. No matter where you live in the UK, Channel 6 would be a local channel offering local news, local programming and local advertising. Channel 6 would also carry 'networked' public service content covering interests such as the arts, business, industry, rural affairs, tourism, health and social issues.

The Early Day Motion has been proposed by Ian Stewart MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Community Media, and is rapidly gaining support from MPs.

Ian Stewart, MP for Eccles, said:

"UK citizens are amongst the least well served in the entire democratic world for access to local news and information from television. It is vital that at least one channel (out of a potential 30+ channels on Freeview) is protected as a local channel providing a forum to debate and discuss local issues. I feel very strongly that local TV must be extended so that everyone has access to a local channel on Freeview no matter where they live and without the need to subscribe to pay-TV or the internet."

The Government is committed to the expansion of local TV. Section 244 of the Communications Act 2003 gives the Culture Secretary the ability to enact a Local Digital Television Order which would roll out local TV services across the UK. MPs are now calling on the Government to enact these provisions.

Jaqui Devereux from the Community Media Association, spokesperson for United for Local Television, said:

"We are receiving the message loud and clear from MPs that they want the Government to introduce local TV on Freeview as soon as possible. Local TV is established and successful in almost all other free countries. We believe that no UK citizen should be denied access to local news and information on television. This is even more vital now that ITV is reducing its non-news regional programming."

Early Day Motion number 1013, Local Public Service Television, has amassed the support of over 120 MPs since it was proposed on 21 February 2008. The motion states:

"That this House congratulates Ofcom in finding a means to deliver local television to every household across the UK on Freeview; and looks to the Department of

Culture, Media and Sport to introduce a licence for the provision of local public service television during the rollout of digital switchover."

Local TV is the most demanded new application in Ofcom's Digital Dividend Review research. According to Ofcom, "*local TV on Freeview*" is the number one new application personally demanded by the UK public, ahead of both "*extra SD channels*" and "*HD on Freeview*".

It is proposed that local TV would be more 'focused' on local content than existing regional TV 'opt-out' programming on the BBC or ITV. Local news bulletins would be complemented by documentaries, current affairs and social action content produced by local and regional programme makers.

ENDS

EDITOR'S NOTES

TWO OPTIONS FOR LOCAL TV ON FREEVIEW

The Government is due to switch off analogue TV signals between now and 2012. This will enable the expansion of the Freeview digital platform from around 70 per cent household coverage today to almost 100 per cent coverage at switchover.

Members of United for Local Television have worked with transmission operators and Ofcom, the communications regulator, to seek an effective technical solution to roll out local TV throughout the UK. There are now two proposals for the development of local TV on Freeview:

- The first option is that local TV operators seek to acquire new spectrum at auction or in the market on an 'ad hoc' basis. This proposal has been rejected by United for Local Television as unrealistic and impractical, denying the efficiencies and benefits of a universal local TV network available to all UK citizens. However, United for Local Television has suggested access to so-called 'interleaved' frequencies should be protected for 'ultra local' TV operators, alongside PMSE (radio microphone) users who have already been promised special protection by Ofcom.
- The second proposal is that local TV is granted access to one video stream in the UK-wide spectrum which the Government has reserved for Freeview. This would become a local TV channel with local programming inserted at all major transmitter points using 'add/drop' technology. United for Local Television is calling for Channel 6 to become a UK-wide network of local channels, launching before the conclusion of digital switchover.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR LOCAL TV

The current government has consistently expressed support for the development of local TV on Freeview. In March 2005 then Broadcasting Minister, Lord McIntosh, told the Scottish Local TV Forum:

"We envisage that local television will play a valuable role in keeping communities informed and in particular, help keep in touch those most socially isolated members of the community who may not have access, or are uneasy about using, new technology. Local television will also bring economic benefits to areas in terms of employment and training..."

EARLY DAY MOTION PROGRESS

Progress on the number of MPs signing the Early Day Motion can be monitored on the Parliament website here:

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=35211&SESSION=891>

Contact for further information

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About United for Local Television

United for Local Television is an umbrella group representing a number of local television practitioners, advocates and voluntary organisations from the commercial, community and municipal sectors. The current membership of United for Local Television is set out below.

Local Television / Restricted Service Licence (RSL) holders:

- Capital TV, Media4Creative (1 RSL – Cardiff)
- MATV, Midlands Asian Television (1 RSL – Leicester, Virgin Media and Sky)
- SIX TV, Milestone Group (5 RSLs – Oxford, Fawley, Southampton, Portsmouth and Reading)
- York TV and Norwich TV, EBS Newmedia (2 RSLs – York and Norwich)
- Northern Visions/NvTv (1 RSL – Belfast)

Community and Local TV Operators and Campaigners:

- Association of Community Television Operators (ACTO)
- Institute of Local Television
- Mimir-Rushes, Fife and Media Access Projects Scotland
- Peter Williams Television
- Rural Media Company, West Midlands
- Somerset Film
- Southwark TV & Community TV Trust
- Station House Media Unit, Aberdeen

Public Voice Steering Group Members:

- Association of Chief Executives for Voluntary Organisations
- Broadcasting Support Services (BSS)
- Community Media Association (CMA)
- CSV (Community Service Volunteers)
- Media Trust
- IBT (International Broadcasting Trust)
- National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)
- Timebank