



Department  
for Culture,  
Media & Sport

## **Consultation outcome**

### **Government response to the consultation on the renewal of local TV licences**

February 2024

# 1. Executive summary

In 2011, the government announced the creation of a new framework for local TV across the UK. The framework aimed to establish a new generation of local TV services with access to the digital terrestrial television (DTT) platform for the first time and ensure their prominence on electronic programming guides. At the time, the government identified a gap in the broadcasting landscape and an opportunity for local TV to act as a new voice for local communities.

The government was also keen to ensure that these services contributed to economic growth in the creative industries, fostered local journalism and engaged with communities to bring them together around a shared voice and interest. This framework was the catalyst that eventually led to the creation of the 34 local TV services that we know today.

The licences for the local TV multiplex, and for all 34 local TV services, are due to expire on 25 November 2025. In the Broadcasting White Paper, Up Next, the government committed to changing the local TV licensing regime to enable the renewal of the local TV multiplex licence until 2034. This would mirror the changes to the licensing regime for the national DTT multiplexes made in 2021. We also said we would consult on options for the renewal or relicensing of individual local television services at the same time.

The consultation on the renewal of the local TV licences, which was open to both industry participants and members of the public, was launched on 7 June 2023 and ran for 14 weeks. It was supported by a consultation document, containing an analysis of broader issues impacting the local TV sector and an implementation timeline. The consultation sought views on the following three areas:

- the arrangements for the renewal of the local TV multiplex licence and the conditions that would form part of this
- the arrangements for the renewal, or relicensing, of the 34 individual local TV services currently operating across the UK, and the conditions that would form part of this; and
- the relevance of the existing statutory objectives for local TV

The consultation also sought to collect views on other related areas such as the opportunities, risks and challenges facing the local TV sector and the equalities impacts of the proposals set out in the consultation. Finally, the consultation provided opportunity for any further comments or feedback on matters not captured through the formal questions posed.

After considering responses to the consultation the government now intends to:

- continue with the approach to renewal of the local TV multiplex licence put forward in the consultation. The government remains of the view that this approach will secure the best outcome for the local TV services, providing them

with stability over the next licence period to lay the foundation for greater collaboration and investment across the sector

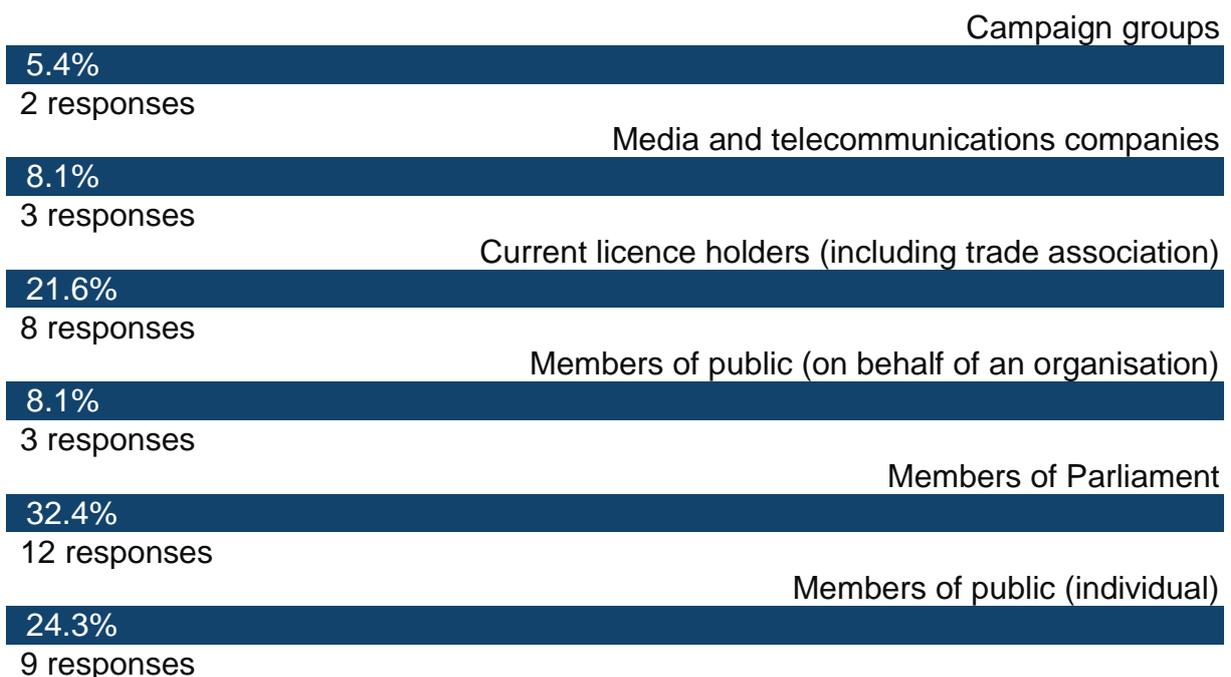
- progress its preferred option of a conditional renewal process, led by Ofcom, for all 34 local TV services. The government remains of the view that this approach is most likely to successfully deliver our ambitions for the sector and address challenges faced by some local TV services, including in relation to their distinctiveness and financial sustainability; and
- Maintain the current local TV objectives which it believes still act as a pivotal framework for local TV services to operate in, providing clarity for when they engage in the making of local content and ensuring that the main beneficiary of local TV output is the viewer

To implement these decisions the government intends to make an order under section 244 of the Communications Act 2003 to enable Ofcom to take forward the processes for the renewal of the local TV multiplex licence and all 34 individual local TV service licences.

## 2. Respondents and breakdown of responses

1. The consultation had 37 responses, excluding incomplete and invalid responses which could not be processed. We are grateful to everyone who took the time to respond and share their experience, views and suggestions. All valid responses were considered in the development of policy and this government response.

2. The total of valid responses received were attributable to members of the public (some on behalf of organisations working in the sector), Members of Parliament, current licence holders, media and telecommunications companies and campaign groups working in the sector. The breakdown of respondents by demographic is displayed below. A list of industry respondents is presented in Annex B.



### **3. Renewal of the local TV multiplex licence**

3. The local TV multiplex carries all 34 local TV services, as well as a number of national services. A multiplex compresses and bundles a number of television services into one single frequency, transmitting them digitally where they are then decoded by either a digital TV or a separate set-top box. A multiplex enables broadcasters to use the spectrum (electromagnetic waves) allocated to television more efficiently, giving consumers more choice when watching digital television.

4. The current multiplex provider is Comux UK Ltd and the current 12-year licence came into force on 26 November 2013. The issued share capital of Comux UK Ltd, is 34 shares, with these shares being held by the providers of the 34 local TV services on the basis of one share per service.

#### **Approach set out in consultation**

5. The consultation outlined the preferred approach of the government to the renewal of the multiplex licence, which is that renewal should be subject to satisfactory completion of a review process conducted by Ofcom as the independent regulator. The consultation detailed this process in two stages as set out below. Renewal of the multiplex licence would also be conditional on the incumbent provider (Comux) agreeing to the same “spectrum management” break clause as the main national TV multiplexes.

1. Ofcom would undertake a performance review of the multiplex, including appropriate scrutiny of the current provider’s regulatory compliance to-date. Ofcom would ensure that appropriate due diligence has taken place, and the multiplex provider would have an opportunity to make representations. We expect Ofcom’s conclusions to be made available to Parliament, and published online.

2. The current multiplex provider would be invited to submit revised technical and promotional plans. When detailing these proposals, the multiplex provider should evidence how it would support local TV services over the next licence period (2025 to 2034) – with appropriate consideration given to the local TV objectives set out below – and address any concerns identified by Ofcom. Ofcom would be expected to publish both the technical and promotional plans online, subject to any necessary redactions.

#### **Consultation response**

6. On the subject of whether respondents agreed with the government’s preferred approach concerning the arrangements for the renewal of the local TV multiplex licence, there was a 59% response rate. The majority of respondents (59%) fully or broadly agreed with the proposed and preferred approach. A smaller number of respondents (18%) fully or broadly disagreed, whilst a slightly larger number of

respondents (23%) felt neutral towards the approach, neither agreeing nor disagreeing or only welcoming the consultation itself.

7. Several industry respondents articulated apprehension around the proportionality of the preferred approach and suggested that it would be time-consuming and involve burdensome administration for both sides (licence holder and Ofcom). This led to a call for streamlining and expediting of the process with some suggestion to progress the process directly to stage two, which would involve omitting the Ofcom-led performance review element of the preferred approach. This suggestion, from a number of respondents, was underpinned by the argument that Comux is already regulated by Ofcom, though respondents did suggest a strengthening of legislative duties on Comux to create a regulatory backstop. Notably, there were no suggestions for entirely different approaches to renewing the multiplex licence (beyond expediting the process set out in the consultation) from respondents who fully or broadly disagreed with the government's preferred approach. A number of respondents welcomed the renewal process as an opportunity for the incumbent licence holder to demonstrate their strengths.

8. A number of local TV services presented issues around the formation of the Local Television Charitable Trust, which formed one aspect of the current licence holder's promotional plan. Those services also put forward concerns around the redistribution of profits accrued from the national channels also using space on the multiplex, and other commercial activities which contributed towards operating and promoting local TV services and supporting the local licence holders. A few respondents expressed that their agreement with the preferred approach to renewal of the local TV multiplex licence was contingent on their concerns around the redistribution of profits and support of local TV services by Comux being addressed.

9. In addition, those respondents raised concerns around the structure of Comux with particular reference to the shareholding structure (each of the 34 shares in Comux are distributed to each of the 34 local TV services) against a backdrop of consolidation with the local TV sector. Such concerns also referenced the influence that particular services may have within Comux and the fair and just treatment of all shareholders.

## **Government response to renewal of local TV multiplex licence**

10. The public consultation responses show broad support for the government's preferred approach to the renewal of the local TV multiplex licence, subject to the satisfactory completion of a review process overseen by Ofcom. Respondents to the consultation acknowledged the vital role that the local TV multiplex plays in the structure of the local TV ecosystem. Multiple responses noted that this role was important in providing stability and clarity for the sector, and therefore was central to supporting the ongoing investment it needs to continue to deliver the government's objectives for local TV. Whilst some concerns were highlighted about the Local Television Charitable Trust and the redistribution of profits, issues which the government was aware of when the consultation was launched, other respondents suggested the current licence holder was well placed to continue this role and support individual local TV services due to their experience, expertise and existing infrastructure.

11. Considering the above, the government's preference therefore is to continue with the light touch approach to renewal of the local TV multiplex licence put forward in the consultation. The government remains of the view that this approach will secure the best outcome for the local TV services, providing them with stability over the next licence period to lay the foundation for greater collaboration and investment across the sector.

12. The government recognises the concerns raised by some respondents that the process should not be disproportionately burdensome for Comux, and in particular those responses which questioned the necessity of requiring Ofcom to undertake a performance review of the multiplex and the current provider's compliance. As set out in the consultation, the government's view is that this performance review is important from the perspective of ensuring an appropriate level of transparency in light of some of the concerns raised about Comux's performance to date in particular areas.

13. A few consultation respondents suggested that in order to ensure the proportionality of this approach any review should be carried out under Ofcom's existing powers and that it was not necessary for the performance review to be provided for in legislation. For the reasons set out above, the government remains of the view that it is necessary for Ofcom to consider Comux's regulatory compliance to date, and capacity for future compliance, as part of a statutory renewal process. However, we will ensure that the requirements associated with any such review are proportionate in the context of position set out in the consultation document, that is, that we understand Comux has largely been successful in delivering its obligations under its technical plan, as well as the core requirements of its promotional plan.

14. Concerns about the proportionality of the proposed process were generally limited to step one (the Ofcom performance review), with most respondents who addressed the issue of multiplex licence renewal suggesting that inviting Comux to submit revised technical and promotional plans would be a sensible and prudent step. Some respondents noted that it would be particularly helpful to understand Comux's proposals for supporting local TV services during the next licence period which was likely to see the acceleration of the transition from delivery of TV predominantly over DTT, to a greater focus of delivery of TV via the internet (IPTV). For these reasons the government intends to progress with its preferred approach to invite the current provider to submit revised plans. Ofcom will have powers to include new commitments in the multiplex licence, should they decide this would be appropriate.

## **4. Renewal or relicensing of individual local licences**

15. Currently, there are 34 local TV services across the UK. All of which are individually licensed by Ofcom and are carried on the aforementioned local TV multiplex. Since the launch of the first individual local TV service in 2013, the sector has seen significant and rapid consolidation. As a result two licence holders now own more than 75% of all individual licences across the sector, though there has been no further consolidation or changes of ownership since 2018. The below table

details the individual local TV licence holders, the number of licences held and the locations those licences pertain to.

<b>Licence Holder</b>	<b>No. of Licences Held</b>	<b>Broadcast Location</b>
That's TV Broadcasting Limited	20	Across the UK
Local TV Limited (formerly The Made TV Group)	8	Across the UK
Northern Visions Limited	1	Belfast
ESTV Limited	1	London
KM Television Limited	1	Maidstone (Kent)
Latest TV Limited	1	Brighton
Notts TV Limited	1	Nottingham
Sheffield Local Television Limited	1	Sheffield

### **Approach set out in consultation**

16. The consultation outlined the preferred approach of the government, which is the conditional renewal of individual local licences. This was identified as the preferred approach from a number of options that also included a full competitive relicensing

process and an automatic (“fast track”) renewal process. The consultation detailed the preferred approach to conditional renewal in three stages:

1. Ofcom would undertake a performance review, including appropriate scrutiny of the licensee’s regulatory compliance to-date. Ofcom would ensure that appropriate due diligence has taken place, and the service provider would have a chance to make representations. We expect Ofcom’s conclusions to be made available to Parliament, and published online.

2. Ofcom would invite the provider of each local TV service to submit proposals outlining the ways in which it anticipates its service(s) meeting the objectives for local TV over the next licensing period (2025 to 2034). This would give providers the chance to detail their vision for their service(s), and evidence how they hope to deliver these ambitions. Ofcom would be expected to publish these proposals online, subject to any necessary redactions.

3. Ofcom would assess the provider’s proposals and only approve renewal if they were satisfied the provider would be able to maintain current (2023) levels of service delivery over the next licence period.

17. In the instance that a current licence holder does not apply for the renewal of the individual licence or Ofcom does not approve the renewal, the consultation document suggested that the government would invite Ofcom to progress towards a competitive relicensing process in line with its existing powers.

## **Consultation response**

18. On whether respondents agreed with the government’s preferred approach concerning the arrangements for the conditional renewal of individual local TV licences, there was a 92% response rate. Respondents were equally split between full or broad agreement (29%) with the preferred approach, full or broad disagreement (29%) or felt neutral (41%) towards the approach, neither agreeing nor disagreeing or only welcoming the consultation itself.

19. The majority of those respondents (61%) highlighted concerns about the proportionality of the preferred approach to the conditional renewal of local licences and that the process would be time consuming and administratively burdensome for licence holders. Several of those respondents suggested that this would involve resource, cost and time implications for licence holders when attention could alternatively be focussed on the operation and development of their respective services. This led respondents to suggest that the process be streamlined and expedited in light of Ofcom already maintaining regulatory oversight.

20. Respondents also shared their views on the other options for the renewal or relicensing of the individual local TV licences. As a few respondents explored what benefit an automatic renewal approach could bring to the process in terms of new and ‘local’ ownership, several respondents articulated their opposition towards

competitive relicensing by highlighting that this would bring disruption to the sector with no corresponding benefit (as, in their view, there was no possibility of new providers attempting to enter the market). Some respondents suggested that automatic renewal may be preferable for those services that have a smaller operation.

21. A small number of respondents also put forward other suggestions for renewal mechanisms additional to those listed in the consultation. Suggestions included a renewal process based on a qualitative review of a 'best of' presentation by respective services; and a hybrid renewal approach whereby channels with authentic 'local' content have their licence renewal fast-tracked. One respondent suggested the entire regulatory framework for local TV required a comprehensive review underpinned by a wider public consultation at a later date.

22. Several respondents highlighted concerns around consolidation within the sector and the majority of individual local licences being held by two providers. Such concerns were presented against a backdrop of broader concern around the quantity and authenticity of local content shown on local TV services. This was a recurring theme prevalent across a number of areas within the consultation response. In particular, respondents cited a lack of local content hours and the simulcasting of content from other channels, the latter of which posed questions around the level of prominence afforded to that content.

### **Government response to renewal of local individual licences**

23. The government considered four options for the renewal of licences of local TV services in the consultation document. There was very limited support from respondents for a competitive relicensing process or for a 'twin track' approach, where some licences were renewed competitively and others were 'fast tracked'. It is particularly notable that, of the responses in favour of these options, none clearly identified potential alternative providers. By contrast, a large number of respondents agreed with the government's position that competitive relicensing would not be beneficial to the sector, nor would it address any of its existing challenges, but could nevertheless create additional uncertainty for licence holders. Those respondents were also likely to be opposed to a 'twin track' approach for the same or similar reasons. For these reasons the government will not be progressing with competitive relicensing or 'twin track' approach.

24. There was some support, particularly from licence holders themselves, for an automatic renewal process or a substantially streamlined version of the government's preferred approach. However, the government remains of the view, shared by other respondents, that an automatic renewal risks not sufficiently addressing the existing challenges faced by some local TV services, including in relation to their distinctiveness and financial sustainability, particularly as we move into a more competitive digital landscape. Therefore, after reviewing the evidence provided, the government has decided, on balance, to progress with its preferred approach for securing the conditional renewal of the licences for all 34 local TV services. We remain of the view that it is this approach which is most likely to successfully deliver our ambitions for the sector. This means progressing with the

process outlined in the consultation, which will include a requirement for Ofcom to consider licensee's regulatory compliance to date.

25. However, as with the case of the new renewal of the local TV multiplex licence, the government does acknowledge the concerns raised, particularly by the current licence holders, that the renewal process should not present a disproportionate administrative burden on providers. Some respondents expressed concerns that the process would involve up to a year (or longer) of reviews, assessment and business planning. Concerns about the timings of the process, and the government's aspiration that the renewal process should be completed by the end of 2024, were also raised by respondents in relation to the renewal of the local TV multiplex. In this context it might be helpful to clarify that the government's indicative timetable takes into account the time it will take to prepare the secondary legislation required to enable the renewal of the local TV licences, and for the legislation to be approved by Parliament, as well as the Ofcom-led renewal process itself. We would also add that references to Ofcom making materials available to Parliament and publishing them online are consistent with Ofcom's usual practices in relation to their role as the regulator for local TV services, rather than suggestive of a novel Parliamentary process as some respondents thought might be the case.

26. As such, the government does not think the risks to current providers' core business activities and resources are as severe as suggested by some of the consultation responses. However, we will explore opportunities for streamlining the processes we propose to take forward, where appropriate

## **5. Statutory objectives for local TV**

27. The current statutory objectives are established in the Local Digital Television Programme Services Order 2012. A local digital television programme service must meet the following conditions:

- be intended only for reception within a particular area or locality
- meet the needs of the area or locality where it is received (meaning it brings social or economic benefits to that area or locality, or to different categories of persons living or working in that area or locality; or catering for the tastes, interests and needs of some or all of the different descriptions of persons living or working in the area or locality)
- broaden the range of television programmes available for viewing by persons living or working in that area or locality
- increasing the number and range of the programmes about that area or locality that are available for such viewing, or increasing the number of programmes made in that area or locality that would be so available

28. Following the decade since the application of those statutory objectives, the local TV landscape in the UK has changed considerably. Subsequently, the government has considered whether market consolidation, changes in technology, loss of distinctiveness and other challenges mean that the original and aforementioned

objectives as set out in the 2012 Order are no longer appropriate for the local TV sector.

## **Approach set out in consultation**

29. The government set out that the licence renewal process provided an opportunity to review the current objectives for local TV. In particular, the government considered whether the objectives could be refreshed and with a renewed focus, perhaps on the sustainability of local journalism, growing the creative economy, or levelling up across the UK. A refreshed focus could, for example, see local TV playing a greater role in local devolution, particularly by supporting local democracy and fostering greater discussion of local issues.

30. The consultation asked respondents whether they thought the local TV objectives in the Local Digital Television Programme Services Order 2012 were still fit for purpose. It also asked respondents if they had any evidence to contribute relating to the benefits and/or costs of any alternative approaches. Whilst stakeholder views were welcomed as part of the consultation, the government outlined their belief that the current objectives still act as a pivotal framework for local services to operate within and provide clarity for providers making local content.

## **Consultation Response**

31. On whether respondents agreed that the local TV objectives set out in the Local Digital Television Programme Services Order 2012 are still fit for purpose, there was a 65% response rate. The majority of respondents (54%) were in agreement that the objectives remain fit for purpose. Of the remaining respondents, (8%) were in disagreement that the objectives remain fit for purpose, whilst (38%) remained neutral on the subject and, though they responded to this section with comments or feedback, did not directly express their agreement or disagreement with the objectives.

32. Across all respondent categories (agree, disagree, neutral), a variety of suggestions emerged for both amending or maintaining the current objectives alongside keeping them under review. Some respondents suggested that the current objectives should not change as they already provide a clear framework to support local TV providers and any change could be risky and complex, and may compromise local programming.

33. Other respondents put forward suggestions for revisions or amendments to the objectives to affirm the importance of educational (training and skills development), cultural, social and economic benefits to regions. Additionally, other suggestions for revisions and amendments were put forward with the aim of improving clarity of interpretation, including for Ofcom, around exercising discretion on programming commitments, developing objectives around the role of local TV services in UK devolution, and incorporating IPTV and service access additional to DTT.

34. A number of industry respondents and members of the public highlighted views around the quantity and authenticity of the 'local' in local TV when responding to the

question on statutory objectives. Such views were presented by respondents questioning whether local TV providers were maintaining the distinctiveness of their services and delivering effectively in instances where multi-channel offerings are involved, airtime is contracted to other broadcasters and simulcasting takes place. There was some suggestion around the appropriateness, in this case, of renewing individual licences or new and existing licence holders being obliged to demonstrate how their services support or enhance local journalism.

## **Government response**

35. The overall view from the consultation is that respondents agree with the government's position that the current objectives for local TV still act as a pivotal framework for local TV services to operate in, providing clarity for when they engage in the making of local content and ensuring that the main beneficiary of local TV output is the viewer.

36. The government has considered, with interest, some of the suggestions for updates to the local TV objectives particularly those related to providing an enhanced focus on related areas of government policy, such as the sustainability of local journalism and growing the wider creative economy. Weighing against this, the government also considered the concerns of some respondents that, in the context of ensuring a timely licence renewal process, making changes to the local TV objectives at this time might inadvertently cause delays to this process, the prompt resolution of which was a priority for a majority of respondents.

37. We also noted the concerns raised by some respondents that the objectives should contain stronger requirements around what constitutes 'local' content, particularly in light of current offerings provided by multi-channel groups, and in instances where services subcontract airtime to other broadcasters. On the latter point, the government set out its view in the consultation document that there are potential benefits to innovative approaches to service delivery, including, as appropriate, partnerships with other media organisations. We were equally clear however, that the benefits of these partnerships should be reinvested back into the sector.

38. As such, having considered the evidence, the government remains of the view there is not currently a strong enough evidence base to support any alterations to the current objectives in a way which would drive meaningful change in the sector while complementing the current legislative framework. The government is minded therefore not to amend the existing statutory objectives.

## **6. Other issues**

39. Whilst the consultation was focussed primarily on the conditional renewal of the multiplex and local licences as well as the purpose of the statutory objectives, respondents were also invited to provide comments or feedback on other issues relevant to the local TV sector.

## **Other opportunities, risks and challenges for local TV**

40. On the subject of what respondents regarded as the opportunities, risks and challenges facing the local TV sector over the next specified licence period, there was a 76% response rate. A number of respondents highlighted the continued importance of local broadcasting and journalism to preserving the 'local voice' in communities and contributing to media plurality. Respondents also highlighted the importance of the local TV sector establishing itself as a trusted source of local news and democracy in light of the regional closures within the broader local media landscape.

41. On the particular matter of opportunities for local TV, several respondents focussed on the venture into digital spaces and put forward the opportunity for further development of online delivery of local services across live (IPTV) and on-demand platforms to widen access to local programming. This included IPTV fallback for smart TV set-ups in cases where live DTT services were not available.

42. A few respondents indicated opportunities for the sector to continue to demonstrate their commitment to the training and development of those wishing to enter and progress within the sector, including groups with protected characteristics, through educational partnerships, work experience, training offers and apprenticeship provisions. Some respondents also suggested increased collaboration and cooperation between local TV services, national public service broadcasters and other partners. For example, partnerships with educational institutions presented opportunities to improve the sector's sustainability, the quality and quantity of content delivery, and enrich the local TV sector more broadly.

43. In regard to the risks facing the local TV sector, the overwhelming majority of respondents articulated uncertainty around the long-term future of local TV and pace of transition to IPTV and on-demand viewing. Such uncertainty also related to the sustainability of local TV services as they face declines in linear advertising and viewership alongside the overall challenge of maintaining DTT revenues whilst delivering local content. This uncertainty accompanied the concern of some respondents about maintaining prominence and securing prominence on IPTV and smart TV set-ups. Several respondents brought attention to the Media Bill not capturing formal recognition of local TV's contribution to the wider public service broadcasting (PSB) ecosystem. This was in addition to presenting the concern that the Media Bill does not contain provisions for local TV services to secure carriage and access alongside prominence on smart TV set-ups.

44. The government has noted the consultation respondents highlighting concerns about the ability of local TV services to secure prominence for their content in the context of changing technologies and methods of distribution. In particular, the request from a number of respondents for local TV services to benefit from the updates to the prominence regime which will be afforded to national PSBs through the Media Bill.

45. The government remains committed to securing the most effective framework for local TV operators going forward. We will continue to engage with the sector to ensure local TV has the tools to deliver its statutory objectives as it continues its transition into the digital era. To support this, the government will continue providing the regulatory benefits that local TV services have received since 2013. This

includes not only access to DTT, but prominence on regulated electronic programme guides for both their main DTT services and any simulcast satellite, cable and IPTV services. The Media Bill does contain provisions intended to ensure the availability and discoverability of the national PSBs' internet programme services ("apps") on major TV platforms. The government is not currently aware of any existing apps from local TV providers that would benefit from this intervention, but acknowledges that this might change in the future and will keep the matter under review.

## **Equalities impacts of consultation proposals**

46. On whether respondents had any evidence of the equalities impacts resulting from the consultation proposals, there was a 27% response rate and respondents presented a range of views with some concurrence across those views.

47. A number of respondents highlighted the importance of DTT to those who would form part of what could be considered vulnerable demographic groups. A variety of examples presented in this case included people who would be considered as older, digitally excluded, hard to reach or living in rural areas or localities and those reliant on DTT more broadly.

48. Respondents also brought attention to the training, learning and development local TV services offer and in particular how some local TV services aim to provide pathways into local journalism, television production and on-screen roles for those with protected characteristics or those who would not ordinarily be able to access the industry. This was accompanied by concerns that a reduction in local TV services or delays in the renewal of individual licences would affect the fulfilment of these aims. Other respondents from across industry in particular described how local TV services have developed programming around equality and diversity that has benefited communities and is aimed at particular protected characteristic groups within the area or locality.

## **Further comments**

49. As part of the consultation, respondents were provided with an opportunity to provide any comments that the structured questions did not sufficiently address. This section elicited a 30% response rate.

50. Responses from industry reflected on some of the operational challenges within the local TV sector amid funding and resource constraints and generating sufficient audience numbers (and therefore advertising revenue) to support the creation of local news. This was related to diminishing linear audiences and local TV not being Barb rated, which further impacted the ability of services to then secure advertising and maintain revenue streams. This led to comments on the scope for the government to explore public funding for the local TV sector.

51. Respondents highlighted the importance of local TV and DTT more broadly (now and beyond 2034) - not just to local journalism and democracy but also supporting government objectives around training, education and skills development within the media and creative industries.

52. Responses from industry also highlighted the relationship between Comux as the multiplex licence holder and the individual local licence holders as requiring some resolution. This is in light of consolidation within the sector that has resulted in two providers now holding 28 of the 34 individual local licences and therefore a comparable shareholding in Comux. Respondents who raised this issue were of the view that Comux should function as a standalone company without shareholders and with an independent management structure accountable to Ofcom.

53. Respondents from both industry and the public brought attention to the achievements of existing local providers and their continued efforts in such areas as the collaborative and cooperative sharing of content, establishing an online presence and the provision of training and development for those from backgrounds that are perhaps underrepresented in the sector.

## **7. Next steps and implementation**

54. As the consultation document set out, the government intends to make an order under section 244 of the Communications Act 2003 to allow the conditional renewal of the local TV multiplex licence and the conditional renewal of the 34 individual local TV service licences. The licence renewal process will be administered by Ofcom in accordance with the requirements established in the aforementioned order. The government and Ofcom share the view that the renewal process should be completed by the end of 2024. In the event that the renewal process is not likely to be completed by this point, the government will, if necessary, consider making provision for the temporary extension of the existing multiplex licence and existing individual local licences.

## 8. Annex A. Consultation questions

**Question 1:** Do you agree with the government's preferred approach concerning the arrangements for the renewal of the local TV multiplex licence?

**Question 2:** Do you have any evidence you would like to contribute relating to the benefits or costs of this approach? Please consider both monetisable and non-monetisable benefits and costs; and both one-off and ongoing benefits and costs.

**Question 3:** Do you agree with the government's preferred approach of renewing the existing licences for local TV services, subject to the conditions outlined above?

**Question 4:** Do you have any evidence you would like to contribute relating to the benefits or costs of this approach? Please consider both monetisable and non-monetisable benefits and costs; and both one-off and ongoing benefits and costs.

**Question 5:** Do you have any evidence you would like to contribute relating to the benefits or costs of other approaches? Please consider both monetisable and non-monetisable benefits and costs; and both one-off and ongoing benefits and costs.

**Question 6:** Do you think the local TV objectives in the Local Digital Television Programme Services Order 2012 are still fit for purpose?

**Question 7:** Do you have any evidence you would like to contribute relating to the benefits and/or costs of any alternative approaches (e.g. adding, amending, or removing an objective)? Please consider both monetisable and non-monetisable benefits and costs; and both one-off and ongoing benefits and costs.

**Question 8:** What do you see as the main opportunities facing the local TV sector over the next licence period (2025 to 2034)?

**Question 9:** What do you see as the main risks and challenges facing the local TV sector over the next licence period (2025 to 2034)?

**Question 10:** There is a duty on public authorities to consider how their policies or decisions affect people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Do you have any evidence of the equalities impacts of any proposals set out in the consultation?

**Question 11:** Do you have any comments that you feel the questions above did not sufficiently address?

## **9. Annex B. Industry stakeholder respondents**

Arqiva

Comux

KMTV

Latest TV

Local TV Ltd

Local TV Network

London Live (ESTV)

Media Reform Coalition

News UK

Notts TV

That's TV

Virgin Media - O2

Voice of the Listener and Viewer

As noted above, a number of additional responses were received from individuals and Members of Parliament. All valid responses were considered in the development of policy and this government response