

Local TV no more?



This week's launch of STV's new television service STV2 is, I feel, a disappointing missed opportunity.

STV2 has been created by STV by weaving together several local TV franchises it successfully bid for covering Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee and Ayr into one single output. The idea behind the local franchises had been separate, local TV output at each one and that STV has undermined the spirit of the local TV franchise deals by creating just one TV service spread across all 5 areas.

Katie Martin of STV's public relations and communications team advised me :

"STV2 will deliver a single schedule across Scotland that includes local material from all five local licence areas in line with individual licence commitments; all programming will air across the channel with no local opt-outs. Content will come from all areas with production bases and staff in all five licence areas and will be clearly marked as such, covering Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee and Ayr."

This is not the local TV output that STV originally promised. Whilst some additional local output from Dundee on STV2 is a step forward, the station will be, as is usually the case with both STV and the BBC, dominated by Glasgow and Edinburgh. STV has fallen well short of what it originally promised and I am doubtful that what it is proposing truly meets the local and regional commitments of the Ofcom franchises covering Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee and Ayr that it won.

STV has attempted to create a second STV national service by the back door.

I am sure that there will be some good content on STV2 and I wish STV well with its venture, but for the many people who thought that, in winning in separate local franchises, we would see truly local and regional services in different parts of Scotland, STV has fallen short.

Bobby Hain, director of channels at STV, had confirmed "STV2 is the new channel for Scotland."

A new national channel has been created at the expense of local television and it is surprising that Ofcom, the regulator, has allowed this to happen.