

CABLE

Public Hearings on Cable

Jointly sponsored by the GLC and Sheffield City Council

Room 6b The County Hall London SE1 7PB 01-633 1321
Secretary: Nicholas Garnham

Hearings conducted by:
Michael Ward, Chair, GLC Industry and Employment Committee
David Blunkett, Leader, Sheffield City Council

In May, the Government produced the much-delayed White Paper The Development of Cable Systems and Services outlining its plans for the future. However, since public discussion of its contents was further delayed by the intervening General Election campaign, the public hearings on cable which are being jointly sponsored by the GLC and Sheffield City Council will represent the first substantial occasion for public debate on what are now the government's firm policies in this area.

The White Paper proposed the immediate allocation of up to 12 pilot cable franchises without local public consultation as a sign of its commitment to the cable industry. In a number of ways, however, it also revealed the continuing contradictions in the Government's position between, on the one hand what is presented as the long-term economic need for a broadband communication system and for the interactive services on which the so-called information society will be based, and on the other, the economic and cultural realities which television has to face.

The public hearings will be the first opportunity for these issues to be discussed before franchises are allocated and legislation is drafted.

The first hearing will be on 11 JULY in the Council Chamber of SHEFFIELD TOWN HALL starting at 9.30am. In the morning speakers from the BBC, British Telecom and the POEU will discuss the implications of an electronic grid and the interactive services which that will make possible. The afternoon session will look at what cable will mean for local authorities, what role they can play in ensuring genuine local access, and at the uses of the technology in education when speakers from Rediffusion, the Open University and South Bank Polytechnic among others will discuss experiences and possibilities in this field.

The second hearing will be on 20 JULY in the County Hall, LONDON, starting at 9.30am, and will be devoted primarily to the impact of cable on the media. In the morning representatives of the main media trade unions, the alternative programming sector and the BFI will look at the opportunities and dangers which cable will bring, while in the afternoon representatives of the voluntary sector including Age Concern, the Deaf Broadcasting Campaign and the National Consumer Council will discuss how cable could affect their work and how cables potential benefits can best be realised.

Both hearings will be open to the public and anyone who is interested is welcome to attend and participate. We hope to see as wide a range of individuals and organisations taking part as possible.

If you have any queries please ring or write to

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