

SUBMISSION BY “THE CHAMPIONSHIPS (WIMBLEDON)”

FREE-TO-AIR EVENTS REVIEW CONSULTATION

Q1. Do you think that the UK should continue to protect certain major events through live or deferred coverage on free to air television? Please give a reason for your response.

The first list to protect Free-to-Air Events was drawn up in 1956 and last reviewed in 1998. In that time, the broadcast market place has changed considerably and the penetration of digital technology continued apace. The economics of sport has also developed, with an increasing reliance on broadcast income to fund the development of sport within the UK. In the case of the Wimbledon Championships, the net profits are invested by the LTA directly back in to the sport.

Wimbledon does recognise the importance to the sports public of free-to-air coverage. That said, the Listed Events legislation has the capability of distorting the broadcast market place, in effect giving a potentially beneficial position to free-to-air broadcasters. Such distortion in the market place can impact significantly the amounts of money sports rights holders can generate by comparison to an unfettered market place. At Wimbledon, we take very seriously the balance between achieving wider broadcasting coverage for the benefit of the sports public generally (recognising the positive impact this can have on encouraging people to play tennis) and the vital need to optimise a key revenue source used to develop and invest in the sport in the UK. We believe that such judgments of balance should be left to the rights holder.

We do not believe it appropriate to comment on the need in overall terms for Listed Events legislation, nor do we wish to comment on the case for individual sports or events – this is a matter for them.

In summary, we believe that the Wimbledon Championships should not be covered under the Listed Events legislation. The economic and technological environment has changed significantly since 1956 and this, coupled with the potential distortion of the market place, leads us to the view that the sale of such important rights should be left in the hands of the rights owner and not influenced by legislation.

Q2. Do you think that events other than sporting events should be listed? If so, please give your reason. You will have an opportunity to suggest appropriate events at a later stage in this consultation document and do not need to do so now.

In our response, we can only provide the views of the All England Club and Lawn Tennis Association and do not wish to comment on other sports or other events. Our general response, as above, means strictly that Question 2 is “not applicable”.

Q3. Do you agree that this should remain the essential criterion test? If you do not agree, please explain why and please indicate what you consider should be the essential criterion in a sporting context.

Again, this question is "not applicable", bearing in mind the answer given under Question 1. If, however, an essential criterion test remained, we would be content with the existing test.

Q4. If your answer to Q2 was that non-sporting events should also be considered for listing, what might an essential criterion be?

Not applicable.

Q5. Do you consider that these characteristics remain appropriate? If you do not, or consider that additional characteristics should be included, please explain why.

Not applicable.

Q6. Are these the appropriate other factors that the Secretary of State should take into account when considering whether or not to list an event? If not, or you consider that additional factors should be taken into account, please explain why.

Not applicable.

Q7. Do you agree that both an A and B list should be maintained? If not, please explain why.

Not applicable.

Q8. Are there any issues that you would wish to bring to our attention in regard to the way in which the listing arrangements are given practical effect by Ofcom?

No.

Q9. Do you think that the Secretary of State should:

- leave the current arrangements unchanged;
- move existing events between the A- and B- lists;
- add any entirely new events; or
- remove any events that are currently listed?

See the answer to Question 1 above.

Q10. If you have suggested that live coverage of any such tournaments should be listed do you think that:

- the entire tournament should be listed; or
- only selected stages, events or matches involving national teams or representatives.

Please give reasons for your view and, if you favour selected listing, please specify which tournaments and which stages, events or matches.

See the answer to Question 1 above.

Q11. Please suggest which non-sporting events you would like to see listed and why.

We do not believe the list should be extended to include non-sporting events.

Q12. Do you have any other issues that you would like the Panel to take into account in considering what its recommendations should be?

Nothing to add.