

DGC/kjh/28-09



David Collier
Chief Executive

6 July 2009

David Davies
Chairman, Listed Events Review Group
c/o Tony Dyer
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur St
London SW1Y 5DH

Dear David,

Listed Events Review – supplementary submission

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is grateful to you and the panel for giving us a slot to give evidence to you last month, including allowing us to open the session with a short demonstration of the positive outcomes we have achieved within the *Building Partnerships* programme through the investment of resources secured largely from increased broadcast revenues in recent years.

It is a record of investment, across our game, that can have been objectively and independently measured as one of the leading programmes in any sport.

Since we met last month, the ECB has staged the ICC World Twenty20 and Setanta has ceased trading which has had a major impact on the sports broadcast market. Both of these issues are addressed below.

England's staging of the ICC World Twenty20 tournament, the first major international event in a 'decade of sport', was a great success and demonstrated that cricket continues to flourish in this country. We were all delighted when our women's team followed up their ICC World Cup win by also winning the tournament in the final at Lord's, in the process securing rave reviews from the cricket press for the standards they are setting.

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England and Wales Cricket Board



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This success is the best illustration we can put forward of the benefit cricket has secured from having resources to invest in the game and we plan to continue our investment programme in the grassroots game including further advancement of women and girls' cricket.

The women's team have already been recognised by the All Party Cricket Group at a Parliamentary event and next week the Prime Minister is hosting them at a No.10 reception to celebrate their achievements and the wider progress the ECB has made in growing women's cricket in England.

During our evidence session you asked us some further questions which we committed to respond to in writing. These are set out below.

1. *You asked whether there would be a detrimental impact on our sport if there were to be a small amount of Test Matches added to the 'A' list. The implication being that the Lord's Test match or the Ashes Series could be listed.*

As we stressed when first asked this question, we cannot convey strongly enough the very damaging impact on cricket if this approach were taken.

Let's firstly look at the Ashes Series. This is not comparable to one-off sports like the other domestic events on the list. It is 25 days of Test match cricket played over almost two months with rapidly changing narrative. It is a significant component of our ITT package and constitutes a major part of the value of our rights.

We will not repeat the arguments we have already put before you about the scheduling requirements for just one Test match let alone a whole Series, nor the difficulty in defining moments of special resonance in 25 days of play. This is clearly demonstrated by no free-to-air broadcaster showing any interest in broadcasting even one Test match per year.

We also understand that you have now met with all of the broadcasters. Their answers to the questions you said you had on scheduling issues, and their wider views on listing, may have helped settle the panel's conclusions. We hope that having heard both their and our evidence that the panel is not considering going against our views, and those of the previous three inquiries, and considering adding some cricket to the 'A' list.

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If there is still consideration of this option, then the ECB would request as a matter of urgency a further meeting with either the panel, or yourself as Chairman, to set out further the rationale for our concerns that this would be extremely detrimental to English cricket. But we would urge you to ensure that you take independent advice on both the financial and qualitative impact listing could have on the value of rights and the quality of the broadcast offer.

If necessary, we ourselves would also look to commission further evidence to demonstrate to you the serious commercial impact such a decision would have. I am sure you understand our determination to explore this thoroughly with you given that broadcasting is 80% of our revenue and trust you will accept our call for further dialogue should it be needed.

Secondly, the idea raised of listing the Lord's Test. This suggestion seems to completely miss the test of special resonance or national significance. There is no guarantee that the Lord's Test match delivers anything above the normal cricket experience. Indeed in the 2005 Ashes Series the significant moments could be said to come on a number of days as the series was hosted in various corners of the country rather than the first Test at Lord's. To list Lord's Test matches would be an arbitrary decision based on little logic or sporting merit.

Lord's, like every other Test match ground in England and Wales, has to bid to stage Test matches. Lord's present staging agreement expires in 2011. Listing matches at Lord's could place that venue at a competitive disadvantage to other venues across the country which is a decision we feel may be difficult to defend from a legal standpoint.

A Lord's Test, whether in May or July, would also present scheduling issues for many broadcasters in the hectic period of high summer - clashing either with the British Grand Prix or, as in this year, with the Open Golf Championship. In May the Lord's Test often clashes with other significant sports events – such as the FA Cup final. Indeed during a summer it is rare, if not impossible, that the Test matches which involve a maximum of 35 days of cricket would not clash with at least one other significant sporting occasion.

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2. The 'B' list and cricket's position on this

Michael Pescod asked about the 'B' list and our views as to whether it had any continued benefit. In principle the ECB would advocate that there is no need for an 'A' or 'B' list and it is preferable to let sports take their own decisions supported by a voluntary code applied through a structure such as the CCPR.

We set out in our discussions with you the importance we place on our free-to-air highlights. Since 2005, the ECB has made it a mandatory requirement within our ITT that broadcasters must ensure that our highlights package is shown just an hour after the day's play has ended in the family friendly slot of 7pm. This programme is currently shown by Five and now it is a fixed point in the schedules it is drawing a very good audience and attracting viewers such as children and working people who cannot watch Test matches during the day when they are at school or work.

The highlights package allows wider access to the sports' daily narrative and is of course there to pick up those occasional moments of national resonance that cannot be predicted in advance. This year, for the first time, the ECB is also making a short end of day clips package available to media outlets for use on their on-line news services as well as continuing with free news access for all broadcasters.

The ECB remains committed to this approach whether or not listing continues and cannot envisage a scenario where we would not ensure a free-to-air highlights package were available. We would therefore support your panel retaining the B list and believe it is the appropriate place for Test Matches to be placed. In addition, we would like you to consider augmenting this listing process with an additional expectation that in return for the listing status, broadcasters are obliged to show the highlights at a family friendly slot before the watershed.

As we have demonstrated to you, the ECB does all it can to enable terrestrial broadcasters to bid for live rights by making packages available and having set criteria for highlights. We would urge the Committee to consider using its report to the Secretary of State not to list sport, but to remind broadcasters, especially those funded directly by the public, of the duty upon them to be fair

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to all sports and make genuine bids for their rights and putting highlights packages on at a time when families can watch them. Sadly this did not occur for the highlight packages for the World Twenty20 tournament with highlights being regularly shown on the BBC in the 11.30pm slot.


The final issue I would like to return to is the impact the recent collapse of Setanta and wider economic challenges are posing for all sports bodies. We urge you to reflect carefully on the impact listing has in restricting the choice of broadcasters that any sports National Governing Body can work with. With the field having already narrowed following Setanta's demise, listing would be an even further restriction on the number of broadcasters who could bid for our rights – an outcome very detrimental to our prospects of having a thriving sport.

Like all National Governing Bodies ECB strives for the best balance between financial income and television exposure. However in the absence of a terrestrial bid for ECB rights (other than Five's highlights packages), ECB believes that it presently has the best deal available to cricket. It also shares the CCPR view that NGBs should be allowed to make the judgement on the best deal for their sport.

In addition to this, many National Governing Bodies for sport, including cricket, are facing a reduction in their public funding due to the impact of London 2012's costs and of course there are further pressures on the public sector finances. Any changes to the listing regime likely to exacerbate these pressures on our funding by restricting our commercial flexibility in the broadcast sphere.

As stated above, the ECB would be pleased to give further evidence you might request and specifically asks for further consultation with you should you be proposing any changes to the current listing arrangements for our sport.

Yours sincerely,



David G Collier
Chief Executive

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