

Ref: NJW/MG

5 June 2009

David Davies OBE
Chairman, Free-to-Air Advisory Panel
c/o Tony Dyer
Programmes Directorate
Department for Culture Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London
SW1Y 5DH

Dear David

FREE-TO-AIR EVENTS REVIEW

Thank you for your letter of 8 April 2009 and please accept this letter as the RFL's formal response on behalf of Rugby League.

The RFL is content to make its submission at this stage in writing. However, if for any reason there was to be consideration that the Challenge Cup Final was not to remain a Group A listed event, then we would wish to make representation directly to the Panel.

I can also confirm there are no other rights holders in Rugby League that need to be consulted by the Panel.

In response to the specific questions in the consultation the RFL responds as follows:-

Q1 Do you think that the UK should continue to protect certain major events through live or deferred coverage on free to air television?

The RFL believes that the evidence is by no means overwhelming that there is still a need to have major events protected on free to air television. The definition itself is open to debate, what in this day and age really constitutes free to air? Furthermore the broadcasting landscape has changed so much since the concept was introduced and will change again in the foreseeable future. It is doubtful there is any longer a need for protection. The overwhelming majority of people have access to events either through digital platforms or new media such as the internet.

Q2 Do you think that events other than sporting events should be listed?

The RFL does not feel there is any need to extend the list beyond sporting events for reasons outlined in Q1. If a list is to continue we believe the criteria is correct.

David

*Could you please
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*to
Panel?*

*T.
2659*



Red Hall
Red Hall Lane
Leeds
LS17 8NB

Tel: 0844 477 7113
Fax: 0844 477 0013
Email: info@rfl.uk.com

www.rfl.uk.com

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.

We do agree.

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.

We do agree.

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.

We believe they are the appropriate factors.

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

We do agree.

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?

There are no issues we are aware of.

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?

We believe very strongly indeed that if the lists continue, the Rugby League Challenge Cup Final (RLCCF) should remain an A list event. There is no doubt that for a large part of the country, particularly the north of England, the RLCCF has a special resonance. It has a long proud history, produces iconic sporting



moments (towards the very top of old Wembley's most watched footage was the Martin Offiah try), achieves a reach far beyond the normal Rugby League viewer and has a unique family, across the sport, atmosphere that is not replicated in any other sport anywhere in the world.

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.

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

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

Given the existence of Listed Events the RFL places great value on having the RLCCF as one of the events. It brings well deserved prestige and arguably some spin-off commercial value to the sport. The RFL is proud of the RLCCF and believes the nation is as well.

On behalf of the RFL I would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity for consultation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Nigel Wood'.

Nigel Wood
Chief Executive Officer

