



The Scottish Football Association

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Patron: Her Majesty The Queen.

David Davies
c/o Tony Dyer
Programmes Directorate
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
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16 July, 2009

Dear David,

Review of Free-To-Air Listed Events

Many thanks for the opportunity to present our thoughts on the above review. This is an issue which the Scottish Football Association views most seriously and, while we welcome the debate on the issue of listed events, we must stress that we are wholeheartedly opposed to any change to the current system.

As a general principle, we understand that it is undoubtedly a good thing that major sporting events in the UK receive as large an audience as possible. However, it is our strongly held view that broadcasting of sport should not take precedence over the direct promotion of sport at the grassroots and youth levels.

There is no question that any increase in listings regulation upon Scotland's home international rights or the Scottish FA Cup would dramatically impact on our ability to go to market to raise funds. As a consequence of this, our ability to bring new players into the game through our work in coaching, development and volunteer recruitment would suffer drastically.

Our recent experience of contract renewals has demonstrated the inability of terrestrial broadcasters to be in a position to be competitive. Based on this experience, we can say that should our ability to go to an open media market be restricted, the shortfall to Scottish football could be up to £12m per annum.

To put it simply, Scottish football cannot afford to lose this amount of money and be expected to continue to exist in the future.

We work in partnership with Government at a UK, Scottish and Local level in order to deliver on their healthy living agendas. They see football as a hugely important way of getting young people more fit and active. Should our ability to raise funds be restricted in any way, then we would not be able to continue this work and Scotland's overall health will suffer.

In the past year alone, our work has seen thousands of people take up football right across Scotland:

- 10,000 primary school pupils from over 400 schools taking part in a 20 week football programme
- 552 new boys and girls teams created through our work on the Soccer One initiative. This is now being rolled out across the whole country and at different age groups.
- 119 Midnight Leagues created across Scotland
- 272 Street Football venues created - with over 7500 youngsters taking part
- 6 New Schools of Football
- Thousands of school children taking part in holiday schemes and other Scottish FA community initiatives
- 4528 volunteer coaches attending free, in-service coaching sessions
- 9730 volunteer coaches attending other Scottish FA coaching sessions
- 100 Community Clubs given the support and guidance they need to qualify for our Quality Mark

As you can see, tens of thousands of children and volunteer coaches rely on the Scottish FA for their participation and development in the game. Obviously this comes at a price.

In terms of the current situation, all Scottish home internationals are currently shown live on Sky Sports - with highlights on BBC Scotland on the same day. This balanced, partnership approach between a satellite and a terrestrial broadcaster means that Scotland games are shown throughout the UK and Ireland. Not only does this ensure that Scots living in other parts of the UK can see their national team play, but the reach across the country also makes us more attractive to sponsors and other commercial partners.

Over and above the financial contribution made to Scottish football, the Scottish FA's relationship with Sky Sports - which dates back to 1991 - has meant that it is not just the so called 'big games' that are promoted. Unfettered by the scheduling restraints that terrestrial broadcasters face, Sky Sports have been able to cover games at various age levels - from Under 16 to Under 21. This is undoubtedly good for the game.

The Scottish FA Cup is also broadcast live and delayed on both Sky Sports and BBC Scotland. Like the partnership approach to our international games, this sharing of rights across satellite and terrestrial platforms for our National Cup Competition allows us to reach supporters and potential commercial partners right across the UK.

The Scottish FA Cup Final is, as you know, an A Listed event in Scotland. Since 1991, the Cup Final has been broadcast by both BBC Scotland and Sky Sports. Again, this ensures that we have a reach across the UK and Ireland. It is an approach that works well and we see no benefits in having further legislative requirements added.

In an ever changing media environment, we also feel that it is no longer just a simple question of satellite versus terrestrial when it comes to the sale of media rights. Putting aside issues such as internet and mobile rights exploitation, the digital switchover, means that by 2012 people in the UK will not just have access to the 5 terrestrial channels they did in 1998, rather they will be able to freely access as many as 50. Does this mean that all of these channels will have equal right to broadcast free to air events?

In conclusion, the Scottish FA is entirely opposed to any change in the current situation regarding the listing of Scotland home internationals and Scottish FA Cup matches. We believe that should Government move to restrict the current market, then the responsibility should lie with Government to plug any financial black hole caused by such a move.

If we are faced with a stark choice between allowing people to watch football, or encouraging kids to play the game we will always chose the latter.

I look forward to the outcome of your deliberations and am, of course, more than happy to contribute anything further should you feel it necessary. However, I must reiterate our position in that we are completely opposed to any moves to alter the listing status of Scotland home international matches.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gordon Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gordon Smith
Chief Executive