

Free-to-air Events Review

Department for Culture, Media and Sport Consultation

Introduction

- 1 **sportscotland** is the national agency for sport in Scotland. We passionately believe in the benefits of sport, from the enjoyment, sense of achievement and health benefits that participation brings, to the shared pride that national success generates.
- 2 Our mission is to encourage everyone in Scotland to discover and develop their own sporting experience. Working with partners to support the delivery of *Reaching Higher*, the Scottish Government's national strategy for sport, we help to increase participation and improve performances in Scottish sport.
- 3 Research shows that sport is an intrinsic part of Scottish culture:
 - 3.1 63% of adults and more than 95% of children in Scotland take part in sport and physical recreation at least once a month.
 - 3.2 A fifth of adults in Scotland are members of a sports club, with some 13,000 clubs in Scotland reaching every Scottish community.
- 4 Sport must therefore be a key component of cultural broadcasting. Coverage of sporting events encourages people to take part in sport which leads to health and social benefits. Television exposure is also a key driver for sponsorship which plays a critical role in funding sports development work.
- 5 Coverage of Scottish athletes competing and achieving success on the world stage as well as coverage of sporting events that are distinct to Scotland generate a sense of national identity and pride. All of these factors have a distinctly positive impact on the health and vibrancy of Scotland as a nation.
- 6 **sportscotland** is thankful for the opportunity to contribute to this important consultation. Please feel free to contact us if you require any further information.

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.

- 7 Yes. Sport is a major draw for television audiences and one of the most important cultural activities for Scottish people. Sport coverage entertains and

inspires people and helps to develop Scottish sport as well as national culture and pride.

- 8 Viewing figures for sporting events continue to be amongst the highest. For example over one weekend in March 2007, 23.8 million people in the UK watched the six nations or FA Cup on the BBC alone, that's four in ten of the population. Match of the Day is consistently within the top ten ratings programmes on TV in the BARB weekly ratings. Major events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics can draw even higher figures.
- 9 Ensuring important sporting events are available on free-to-air television allows people across the UK, regardless of circumstance, to experience and enjoy the excitement of sport.

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.

- 10 There are likely to be major events out with the sporting world that have a special national resonance for Scottish people and if this is determined to be the case, we see no reason why they could not be listed as well.

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.

- 11 We would not recommend removing any of the essential criterion at this time.
- 12 It would be worth considering strengthening the criterion to include consultation with the bodies which govern the listed events. This will ensure that the potential impact of events being listed (or not being listed) is fully understood from both an economic and sport development point of view.
- 13 As a minimum we would recommend this consultation should analyse the following in detail:
- 13.1 economic opportunities for sport governing bodies to obtain the best market price for an event,
 - 13.2 the impact of rights income being re-invested into the development of the sport; and,
 - 13.3 the impact of the widest possible television coverage on increasing interest and participation in the sport.

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

- 14 It would be relatively simple to revise the first criterion to make it more generic. For example:

14.1 The event has a special national resonance, not just significance to those who ordinarily have an interest in the subject area; it is an event which serves to unite the nation, a shared point on the national calendar.

15 The criteria following this could be tailored to the individual subject areas concerned similar to the sporting context categories. Criteria should ensure that cultural aspects of major sporting events are also protected within the lists (e.g. the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games).

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

16 The characteristics outlined are appropriate and we would not recommend any additional characteristics at this time.

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.

17 Yes, the factors are appropriate; however, as indicated above, we would recommend engaging with the appropriate governing bodies of the sports concerned across the UK to fully determine the impact of listing on income, participation, performance and facilities.

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

18 Yes. Separate lists illustrate that some sporting events are more significant than others on a UK-wide basis. Furthermore, it allows for longer-running events to be available for deferred coverage or highlights meaning that they don't overtake the schedules of broadcasters.

19 It would be worth considering the level of influence that home country governments and sports governing bodies have on the events included on each list in order to better tailor them for the people of individual nations.

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?

20 The lists themselves as well as Ofcom's Code of Conduct around exclusivity restrict viewers' freedom of choice in terms of being able to choose a provider based on individual preferences for viewing and opinions about quality of programming.

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?

Please give reasons for your answers.

21 The current arrangement should not be changed. **sportscotland** would not recommend removing any events currently listed on list A or B.

- 22 This is however a good opportunity to consider the frequency of the review process. The Secretary of State could consider reviewing the list more often and perhaps instigating an application process whereby, sports governing bodies can apply to have events listed. Applications could be reviewed by a panel similar to the panel overseeing this consultation, which would ensure the list stays relevant in changing times.
- 23 It would also be worthwhile exploring the research available to support further tailoring of lists for individual countries. As an example the 2005 Mintel survey indicates that there are slight variation in sporting interests across the UK with a below average percentage of people in Scotland wanting to watch tennis, motorsports, cricket and athletics, while more people in Scotland were interested in golf and snooker.
- 24 It would seem that coverage in general does not necessarily reflect this interest. The logistics of this in terms of the listing process could be explored further by engaging more closely with home country governments to ensure that broadcasters strike the right balance between showing events that are more popular in Scotland and events that are popular across the UK.

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.

- 25 **sportscotland** would support the Scottish Government's statement that the men's national football team's qualifying matches (home and away) for the European Championship and the World Cup should be listed, provided this statement has been made after consultation with the Scottish Football Association.
- 26 This would indeed allow Scotland to enjoy the same coverage of men's national football that is enjoyed by countries like Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland and Italy. However, we are not aware of the availability of free-to-air and commercial broadcasters in these countries which could obviously impact on the number of events that are listed.

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

- 27 As **sportscotland** is particularly interested in television coverage of sporting events, we have not considered non-sporting events which could be listed. However, as previously stated, we believe that cultural aspects of major sporting events should also be protected.

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

- 28 Understandably UK legislation around broadcasting has to comply with European legislation meaning that further devolving responsibility for listing

events may not be possible since free-to-air television channels are generally UK-wide.

- 29 However we would like the panel to consider more frequent reviews of lists that actively engage with home country governing bodies and governments to ensure lists are more representative of what people in each UK nation want to see. Furthermore we would like the panel to explore the merits of an application process that could see individual sports apply to have events listed using evidence-based research to illustrate that the event meets the agreed criterion.