

The Church of Scotland

Presbytery of Annandale and Eskdale

The Border Kirk

95 Pinecroft,
Carlisle,
CA3 0DB

27 NOV 2008

25th November 2008

Ofcom,
Riverside House,
24 Southwark Building Road,
London.

Dear Sir,

Lookaround

I write to you in my capacity as the Convener of the Church and Society Committee of the Church of Scotland Presbytery (Regional church body) covering the area from Moffat in the North to Carlisle in the South, Annan in the West to Newcastleton in the East. We have many people, both in our churches and in the communities we serve, who are deeply concerned about the possible loss of the Lookaround regional news programme.

As a committee we feel it essential that there remains a programme wholly dedicated to the events and lives of the people of this distinctive region. ITV show little understanding of this region if it believes that their viewers in this area can be adequately served by a programme produced in the distant and very different north-east of England. Sadly we have an unfortunate precedent on which we can base our judgement. The BBC presently seeks to offer a similar north east driven service to viewers in Cumbria and a cursory glance at the programme and especially the Ceefax page will tell you that Cumbrian news stories take a very secondary place to stories reflecting events in the likes of Newcastle, Sunderland and Darlington. At the very moment I am writing this letter on 25th November at 11am the BBC Ceefax page for the North East and Cumbria has eight stories listed relating to the North East and none to Cumbria. In that light, you can surely appreciate our anxiety about a similar bias on ITV.

We appreciate that brief local opt outs have been proposed but know that they will simply cover the core news stories of the day and will fail to do justice to the artistic life and sporting interests of the region. Furthermore one of the strengths of Lookaround is that it has featured on a daily basis matters of interest in small rural communities which are so numerous both in Cumbria and Dumfries and Galloway. A shortened programme and a diminished journalistic team will struggle to reflect rural life and in particular the agricultural and tourist focus of this region.

Church Office:

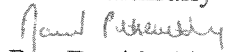
Chapel Street – Carlisle Cumbria CA1 1JA Telephone: 01228 591757

Bridge Street - Longtown

We are deeply concerned that ITV have moved already to close their Carlisle studio and to lay off a largely young staff, many of whom have been honing their talents on Lookaround.

People of all generations, perhaps especially those of more senior age value the friendly and homely feel of Lookaround and its endeavours to represent and speak up for our area. It is notable that while Scottish Television have sadly swallowed up the old Grampian Television they have retained a distinctive half hour news bulletin for the north and north east of Scotland. We do hope that the Border region would be given similar respect following a very strong and positive local campaign which thus far you seem determined to ignore. We are saddened by the lack of sensitivity to the needs of this significant and substantial area of Britain and hope there might still be openness to a late re-think.

Yours faithfully



Rev David Pitkeathly