

Ofcom Advisory Committee for Wales

Advice to Ofcom: Renewal of Channel 3 Licence

1. Proposed changes to the licence area:

The Ofcom Advisory Committee for Wales (ACW) has previously expressed its support for changing the boundaries of Channel 3 licence areas to create a separate licence for Wales. In our 2012/13 work programme, we said:

“The ACW supports a Wales-only Channel 3 licence so that the licence arrangements can reflect Wales’ specific needs and underpin the public service obligations of the C3 licensee towards Wales.”

The ACW is pleased that a separate Wales licence is now being incorporated into the terms for renewing ITV’s licence for C3 for the next ten years. We also welcome the fact that ITV has indicated its consent to this proposal.

The ACW supports this change for the following reasons:

- it recognises the reality of a modern Wales with its own devolved democratic institutions.
- a separate C3 licence for Wales will help to bring greater accountability to the people of Wales for the service provided by ITV.
- it will help to ensure that Wales is not treated by ITV as just another English region, as it has at times in the past.
- it recognises the heightened role of public service content on public service broadcasting channels in Wales and the need to sustain plurality of programme provision in Wales.

2. Proposed obligations on C3 for the next licence term

The ACW has previously voiced concerns that the requirements on the C3 licensee in Wales to provide news and non-news programmes were at risk of being reduced to the point where it no longer provided an adequate alternative to the programming for Wales produced by BBC Wales.

We are therefore pleased that ITV are proposing to make no changes to the current requirements for news and non-news programmes broadcast in Wales for the next licence period.

The ACW would, however, like to make the following points:

- ITV Wales is proposing to maintain an overall minutage per week of 5 hours and 30 minutes per week for the duration of the next licence period. The ACW regard this as the minimum level of programming necessary to ensure sufficient plurality to enable continued civic engagement with our devolved institutions.
- Ofcom must not permit ITV to resile from the commitment made in this C3 licence renewal process. We note that ITV consider that this level of obligation is sustainable for the duration of the new licence period, and that is a commitment to which the C3 licensee must adhere.