

ITV Regional News - Territories & Timing

A qualitative and deliberative research study assessing audience response
to proposals to review and refresh ITV's regional news services
Analysis based on fieldwork undertaken September/October 2011
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1) Background to the Project

The provision of regional TV news from what were formerly the separate ITV franchise holding companies which are now mostly consolidated under ITV plc ownership has been part of the ITV programming offer since the foundation of ITV in 1955. It is generally accepted, and is supported by the findings of previous research, that ITV regional news formats have a unique affinity with regional communities due to their intimate broadcast footprint, accessible tone of voice and human presentation style. The approach is sufficiently different and distinctive to provide a genuine alternative to BBC regional news services.

ITV plc commissioned TWRResearch to undertake a viewer research exercise to assess reactions to a series of concepts exploring potential changes to the current levels of regional TV news provision. The ITV proposals were created to explore a range of format, timing and territory options. ITV regional news has an enviable heritage and reflects a longstanding affinity and empathy with audiences in the regions.

The increased economic pressures on the funding of this valued ITV service along with changing patterns of media consumption accompanying the plethora of platform and channel options resulted in a need to review current provision and aspects of the broader approach to news between 6 and 7pm.

For this reason research was undertaken both to test audience response to proposals for a different model of provision suitable for a changing media and economic context and also to identify potential strategies to refresh the format and revitalise approach.

2) The Brief

ITV regularly commissions qualitative research to review performance and audience satisfaction levels with specific regional news programmes and regional programming. (*TWRResearch have regularly undertaken projects for ITV regional news over a period of twenty years as well as news projects for BBC and other broadcasters*).

The brief for this project was to assess and respond to public reaction to a range of proposals to change the current format of regional news provision, primarily focusing on the 'half-hour' programme broadcast at 6.00pm. The proposals for change meant that the research concentrated in particular on discussion about the particular geographic coverage and also the dedicated minutage for the territory for each regional bulletin.

ITV was keen to involve viewers in their thinking and to ensure that they understood the rationale behind proposed changes – in particular economic pressures and broader changes in the media market that in part prompted the need for a review. Testing and exploring public reaction to the 'need for change' argument whether supportive or not was integral to the brief.

ITV was also keen to understand the response to the proposed changes within the context of the audiences' overall relationship with ITV and to identify relative importance and value placed on regional news in the context of the wider ITV offer.

ITV's brief also sought to identify alternative future-facing options for broader refreshment rather than simply seeking sanction for changes to regional news. Accordingly, the research project also explored a range of approaches and concepts designed to refresh and revitalise ITV's broader news provision during the 6.00-7.00pm scheduling slot. Though the emphasis in the research as a whole was on the regional news audience the research tested options for a more cohesive approach to both network (in this report often called 'main' news) and regional news provision.

3) Methodology and Recruitment Criteria

It was decided that a qualitative approach would be the most appropriate research methodology for a project that (a) involved some preparatory viewing, (b) needed to explain the economic factors shaping proposals for change and then (c) progressed to consider the proposals themselves in a number of different geographic areas. In addition it was essential that the research project reached as many geographic locations as possible as evaluating responses to the proposed changes to territory footprint and accompanying sense of relevance of representation to location was core to the brief.

The ambition of the research brief necessitated a very substantial commitment and resulted in an extensive project of twenty 120 minute focus groups conducted over the period of September and October 2011. The project covered ten different research locations each selected for relevance to an ITV region and the ability to reflect the full range of audience needs and dynamics. This was a large project by any broadcaster's standards however it was justified by ITV due to the complexity and importance of the issue.

Research locations were selected in ITV's West & Westcountry, Granada, Yorkshire, Meridian, Anglia news regions. Two two-hour focus groups in each of ten locations ensured the project had an extensive geographic reach and involved audiences in at least two different locations in each ITV region selected (see map). Research locations were selected to ensure a representative spread of geography and domicile environment (cities, market towns, metro and rural). The sample also clustered groups according to age, lifestyle and socio-economics. All respondents were selected to offer a representative sample with appropriate levels of access and engagement with ITV regional news.

The sample was designed to reflect a range of regional news relationships and audiences that extended from ITV heartland and loyalists to the more occasional and pro-BBC inclined. All respondents were available to watch regional news between 18.00 to 19.00 and viewing a minimum of 15 minutes for at least two week day evenings. Distinctions of viewing frequency were set and a relevant spread recruited ('Regulars' watch more than two nights a week – 'Occasionals' watch twice or at least once a week).

In each focus group there were eight participants. The emphasis was on five of the eight participants in each group actively preferring the ITV regional format and with the remainder preferring BBC but not actively rejecting ITV. Groups were clustered by age & lifestage (25-44 and 45-69) with an equal gender split in each session. Groups were also grouped according to class demographics BC1 or C2D with a rotated sequence across the sample.

It should be noted that other approaches to research methodology were considered. It was concluded that, while larger deliberative forums deliver the aura of public consultation they can lack the intimacy of a smaller group. Deliberative forums would certainly have limited the project to a smaller number of

big events and thereby lack the geographic coverage that was achieved. As the report consistently identifies, and the ITV region teams know from experience, regional news offers more than an objective information service and it was therefore important to create intimate discussion forums in the maximum number of locations to gain the most accurate and appropriate response.

A total of one hundred and sixty citizen participants meant the substantial numbers involved could also provide a modest degree of quantitative measurement of individual opinion. That said, the analysis of the data that appears in this report is offered as anecdotal rather than robust evidence.

Two focus groups in each location rotating the following model

C2D aged 45-69

BC1 aged 45-69

BC1 aged 25-44

C2D aged 25-44



(NOTE – all graphics feature in a larger readable format elsewhere in the report)

The following information board was used to prompt the 'Need for Change' discussion and provide an overview of context. The argument was then supported by a comparative range of production budgets (popular quiz shows, entertaining documentary and drama) to ensure the respondents could appreciate the level of ITV expenditure on regional news in a broader programming context.

ITV NEWS - THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Regional news is expensive – costing £250,000 per hour

Not a source of profit for ITV
Subsidised by profitable parts of the schedule

In the analogue, 4 to 5 channel world, channels such as ITV faced limited competition, and made healthy profits making regional news affordable

But the world has changed – 93% of households have digital multichannel TV with a choice of up to 500 channels

Increased competition and choice has reduced ITV's share of viewing and revenues making regional news more difficult to afford

So tough decisions have to be made:

How do we continue to deliver a valuable regional news service within the budget constraints we face?

Maintain main programme duration but reduce quality?

Maintain main programme duration, but less local focus?

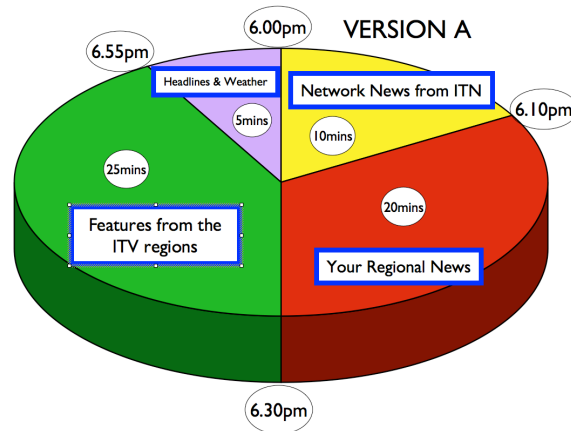
Shorter main programme, but more localised?



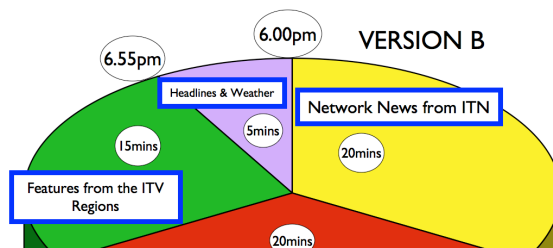
more apparent integration of the regional and network news bulletins during the 6 to 7pm period. It

was not presented as a formal or named programme but rather described as a centrally hosted production from the ITV News network studio which included twenty minute opt-in bulletins from appropriate regions and feature content seen by all regions. Understanding of the concept was enhanced by the provision of a twenty-four minute pilot example specific to each region. The pilot material primarily focused on the regional material and surrounding studio links from the network news desk.

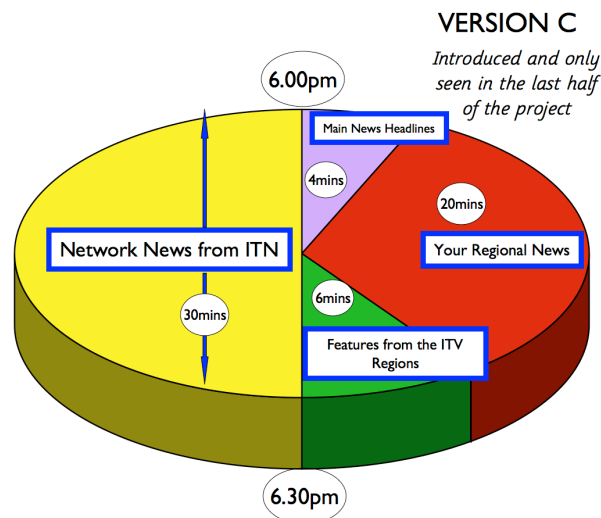
In terms of the broader News Hour format, all the groups were presented with versions A and B below. The only change in later groups (following the clear feedback described from the first 8 groups) was the introduction of a third programme concept and timing model. This demonstrates a clear advantage of the approach which involved research on a large scale (with 20 focus groups in ten locations) – this approach enabled an iterative process of proposal development, allowing a third programme (Version C) to be developed based on the feedback from the earlier focus groups.



Version A breaks the hour into 4 segments. The sequence begins with 10 minutes of network news setting out the main stories of national and international agenda. This is followed by 20 minutes of regional news (sub-regionalised where applicable) running up to 6.30. At this point the regions hand back to the network for 25 minutes starting with a re-cap on the main news headlines and then going into a series of items, some developing the main news stories of the day, some adding further background, and some news related features covering the main talking points and issues of the day. The whole sequence ends with national and regional weather.



Version B also breaks into 4 segments. This begins with a 20 minute section of national and international news, the substantive early evening bulletin. At 6.20 it is followed by regional news (sub-regionalised where applicable) for 20 minutes. At around 6.40 the regions hand back to the network for a re-cap on the main news headlines for the day, further development and background on the main stories and news-related features covering the main talking points and issues of the moment. The whole sequence ends with the national and regional weather.



Version C also breaks down into 4 segments but is more closely related in structure to the current early evening sequence on ITV.

This begins in the regions with regional and local news headlines. The regions then hand to the network for a short national and international news headline sequence which in effect trails the main bulletin at 6.30. Following the national headlines there would be 20 minutes of regional news (sub-

regionalised where applicable). The first half hour running up to 6.30 – would be completed with material drawn from other regions but which has clear resonances for the audiences elsewhere and which can be given a purpose and a relevance for the specific audience watching. This material would be presented from the regional studio by the familiar faces of the local programme. This element ends with regional weather. At 6.30 the nations/regions hand to the network for 30 minutes of national and international news.

In terms of research approach the process incorporated both a consultative forum that reviewed public reaction to the funding and media context that encourage change, and also provided a creative development process to consider the appealing and most appropriate format for a refreshed news approach.

5) Management Summary of Conclusions

Audiences are consistently surprised at the scale and cost of ITV regional news provision. In eighteen of the twenty groups the argument for change (revenue decline & changing media context) was supported and prompted agreement with the need to cut-back a service that could not pay for itself.

Virtually no one is aware of ITV having public service obligations and the universal consensus was that a commercial company should only be expected to fund that which can be supported by advertising. Though ITV regional news is valued and commands an affectionate loyalty, if considered in the wider context of ITV programming it is seldom the primary priority and focus of the relationship.

Any negativity toward change tended to reflect a strong loyalty to an existing ITV regional format and a reluctance to see a valued service compromised for any reason. This was specifically the case in Hull where there is a strong loyalty to Yorkshire's Calendar and to a lesser extent in both Granada locations. There were also some minor concerns regarding enforced centralisation, a London driven agenda and the loss of regional autonomy when the discussion progressed to the specific news hour concepts.

Consistently and conclusively the most popular choice of the three change options offered in the '*Need for Change*' argument was the proposal for a '*shorter main programme, more localised*'. Granada also welcomed the proposal specific to their region involving a shorter bulletin but the same geography.

Frequently many felt the current regional news offering could be improved and that refreshment was welcome. Focused content and coverage in a shorter twenty-minute bulletin was popular. The lighter and human touch of ITV regional news remains a strength however there were frequent suggestions that the current shows can be too long and encourage "waffle" and inconsequential filler.

The time focus of a twenty-minute bulletin implies a fuller news agenda and by implication suggests less need and opportunity for questionable content. As such the initiative was considered to promise a potentially improved programme and service.

The focused format approach was consistently popular and often extremely welcome. It came with the reassurance of retained commitment to territory and in most cases a promise of improved coverage of a more tightly defined area. The focus created by a shorter bulletin was expected to improve the quality and interest of the bulletin though it should be stressed that this was seldom a call for a more serious approach.

The positive reception to the idea of a twenty-minute programme was not simply indicative of a willingness to accept compromise in order to maintain the service. Instead it revealed that many

believed that refreshment would be timely and welcome and that the current thirty-minute programme could be improved.

The specifics of time commitment to regional news throughout the day was a less contentious consideration for all groups than the discussion focussed on the half hour regional news programme. The primary concern was the existence of the main regional programme, the running time and the specifics of geographic territory. The time commitment that ITV allocate to regional news provision through the day (across all summaries, bulletins and the 6.00pm regional new programme) was of less importance (within reason) than the future of the regional news programme at 6.00pm. For all respondents the 6.00pm programme is the landmark of ITV regional provision and along with the BBC programme, virtually unique as a TV format.

The sharing of content that has an elastic appeal and relevance across territories was felt by the majority to be appropriate. Audiences valued the reassurance of a news agenda created for what might be called their "personal geography". Lifestyles are more mobile now and it was also valuable to reassure the audience that they would not miss out on stories that had the 'elasticity' to appeal beyond a source region.

The 'news hour' concept was explored in a relatively undeveloped form and offered with a two and latterly three timing and structure options. Consistently the News Hour presented as an overtly branded and named entity was unpopular with the majority as it seems to impose an intimidating level of seriousness and a daunting and assumed time commitment.

The timings and break structure of the two initial concepts (Versions A & B) challenged many established early evening behaviours and loyalties (the 6.30pm junction signals leisure viewing for many of the sample). Equally too many content blocks can break the flow and many feared this would result in overly frequent coming-up reminders and time lost to content repetition.

There were some benefits accompanying a more seamless flow between network and regional news that appealed to a minority of the sample. Many also assumed a more centralised concept would help address the problem of limited resources (whether they prefer this outcome or not). However, those who liked the more overt news hour concept tended to be those inclined toward serious news and often with a greater leaning toward BBC services. It is important to acknowledge that ITV regional news often reaches an audience who actively avoid the assumed "*stiffness*" and "*seriousness*" of BBC news and prefer the warmth and humanity of the ITV approach.

The news hour concept carries inevitable risks for ITV if executed in a formal and structured way. The pilot material for the twenty minute regional bulletins was often considered to be tonally too serious and lacking the distinctive warmth of the familiar ITV approach. The fear was that this could be too

serious and thereby inappropriate for the fluctuating interest and background status of TV in many busy early evening homes. There was also a frequent opinion that in both timings (such as the network summary on the hour) and tone of treatment it would more directly challenge the established and often considered superior strengths of BBC News.

There were also some minor concerns regarding enforced centralisation, a London driven agenda and the loss of regional autonomy when the discussion progressed to the specific new hour concepts. This is perhaps not surprising given the greater integration between national and regional news that was proposed under some of the options.

By contrast, the promise of refreshment was very welcome in the form of the third version (C) which retains the familiar flow of half hour regional news at 6.00pm and Network bulletin at 6.30pm. This was not conservative aversion to change rather it incorporated positive innovation (such as brief network headlines at 6.00 that effectively trail the network bulletin at 6.30), the promise of a more focused regional bulletin for the bulk of the programme plus the new element of two or three topical stories from around the UK regions that potentially set quality standards and enhance the current magazine mix. This suggests that there are ways in which a new pattern of regional news can be incorporated effectively into a broader hour of news and features between 6 and 7.

6) Analysis in Detail

i) The scheduling and viewing context 18.00 to 19.00 weekdays

The prevailing domestic context of the 18.00 to 19.00 scheduling period carries significant implications to the nature of audience interest and attention levels when 'watching' the half-hour regional news bulletin.

It was evident that the audience feel they have abundant and constant access during the daytime to a variety of media platforms and sources providing them with both headlines and depth as required on UK & International news. This can prompt a feeling of news overload (even if it is only the awareness of constant access rather than tangible consumption) and encourages many to believe they *know all the news they need to know* by the time of an early evening homecoming.

In this context the early evening half-hour regional news bulletins from ITV and BBC are valued as a rare source of TV news from immediate territory. The news agenda of these bulletins is considered to shift priority from an imposed agenda to a menu that offers news, stories and anecdotes that are directly relevant to the interests and priorities of the regional community. News prioritised according to what matters to the audience rather than an imposed agenda.

Throughout the research groups and among all ages and demographics there was the opinion that many felt themselves sufficiently aware of what they frequently called the "main" news by early evening and that the regional news satisfied both specific information and more ephemeral emotional needs.

It was clear that there is a particular relationship between the viewer and the early evening regional news programme (which people clearly regarded as the landmark ITV regional news provision). It was this programme that was the particular focus of the research.

The regional news programmes, and in particular the ITV formats frequently prompted a fondness and warmth of response through having been a regular presence in their homes throughout many respondents' lives. Frequently loyalty and preference is inherited. Respondents often watch what they watched with their parents as children and often routine, continuity and comforting familiarity prevail.

Regional TV news is often 'watched' as a background rather than foreground presence and secures erratic attention levels. In many households (particularly family homes) it is a routine presence that shares attention with tasks, teatime, child-duties and homecomings. Seldom is it a sit-down half-hour

TV experience but instead it is a dip-in-and-out experience where audio references provide the triggers to attract attention. Irrelevant and less interesting content provides a useful break for non-TV diversions. Older audiences are often able and more likely to offer focused attention but here too there tends to be a preference for affirming and ultimately reassuring news rather than 'hard' news. Anecdotal and historical information from home turf was often as welcome as the news of that day. Consistently an ITV strength was the ability to make the news relevant and appealing to audiences who prefer a more affirming and uplifting perspective on regional events.

It is important to note that this is frequently a shared and communal TV experience and the presence of children will influence the content protocols & limits, the degree of seriousness and tonal values required. For many parents "serious news" is postponed to a later more adult time-slot.

"I just would not want to lose the happy stories" 45-69 Southampton

"I always find the ITV one is enjoyable and light hearted. More colourful" 45-69 Newbury

The characteristics of the scheduling slot, the distractions of the household and the communal nature of the viewing experience carried the following implications to the reaction to the concepts introduced in the research sessions:

- The ITV audience expect credible news but tonally (and if appropriate) ideally an uplifting approach
- Relevance to personal interests and geography is essential – news where they have a vested interest
- Serious news can be intimidating and, in some family households, unsuitable for the early evening
- Attention fluctuates – should not assume or imply the need for focused or long attention spans
- BBC & ITV have complementary offers – BBC is considered more stiff & formal than 'friendly' ITV

ii) Response to the 'Need for Change' argument and the three possible options for change

The 'Need for Change' stimulus board was introduced after having discussed the respondents' existing relationship with regional news and without any explanatory context alluding to the specifics of possible refreshment options or the concept of the news hour. It was a simplified explanation of the circumstances facing ITV and the options and actions that, in ITV's opinion, could safeguard the future of a valued ITV service.

In all cases the moderator offered additional explanation as required to assist understanding and provided programme budget examples so that spend on regional news could be considered in a comparative context.

"In this day and age. Everyone needs to look at how they deliver things. We are not in the country we were in five years ago financially" 25-44 Newbury

The majority of groups (eighteen of the twenty) accepted the argument for change at face value. There was very little challenge, seldom any questions and generally a quiet acceptance of both ITV's rationale and three proposed options for response. To an extent it was unrealistic to expect the audience to act as media trend analysts and acquiescence was common when facing what was considered a market-led inevitability.

The fact that virtually no one is aware of any public service commitment or requirement on the part of ITV significantly influenced the response to the 'Need for Change' presentation. There was virtually unanimous agreement (in 18 out of 20 focus groups) that as a commercial company ITV could not be expected to fund a service that is a 'loss-making' venture if that service cannot be supported by advertising revenue.

The lack of motivated response also suggests the apparent status of regional news. Though fondly regarded and clearly valued it is seldom the driving benefit of many relationships with ITV. When compared to high value peak time shows there was a greater willingness to see regional news as the expendable option.

In addition to budgets being under pressure respondents also revealed that personal routines based around watching the news were less essential and inflexible. Home and work routines are less structured and the competitive attractions of TV alternatives of multi-channel alluded to in the argument were very familiar. News is treated as less of a 'civic duty' and frequently leisure alternatives steal the attention of those who want to escape the bleaker realities of the world when they settle down for the evening.

The example of the scale of spend £250,000 on regional news was often difficult to appreciate without context. The inclusion of comparative examples and spends (such as the cost of a week of *The Chase*, a one-off *Connolly on Route 66* documentary and a 'slice' of *Downton Abbey*) were essential to give the audience a sense of perspective. Budget comparisons revealed that the majority would rather ITV spend

money on the programmes they make appointments to view than on a 'nice to have' regional news service.

Three proposals for change were proposed in the 'Need for Change' summary:

- 1) Maintain main programme duration but reduce quality.
- 2) Maintain main programme duration but less local focus.
- 3) Shorter main programme, but more localised.

The first option was consistently dismissed. Audience have high quality expectations and their patience threshold is very low. There is seldom any tolerance with intimacy of reach being used as an excuse for 'amateurishness'. News is expected to be polished and professional. A visibly inferior service is less likely to be credible and carries implications to trust and advocacy.

There was a widespread belief that the current service is looking strained and further resource cuts would carry very painful implications.

The second option of a programme of the same duration covering a larger areas was primarily dismissed because it threatened to compromise the basis of the connection with regional news. The bigger the territory the harder it is to find a point of connection and relevance with content. A greater sense of intimacy and authenticity of territory (made in the regions for the regions) was often considered a competitive ITV strength over BBC. Again, this option threatened to compromise a point of distinctiveness of ITV.

Consistently and conclusively the most popular option of the three change strategies was the proposal creating a '*shorter main programme, more localised*' proposition (or 'shorter main programme, same area' as the proposal unique to the Granada area). When the moderator subsequently clarifies that 'shorter' could potentially be a twenty minute version this was often actively welcomed as a realistic and appealing alternative.

"I think if it needs to change I would rather have quality over quantity" 45-69 Southampton

This outcome reflected an overwhelming opinion that relevance and intimacy of territory are consistently the primary criteria for the objective judgement of service.

The positive reception to the idea of a twenty-minute programme was not simply indicative of a willingness to accept compromise in order to maintain the service. Instead it revealed that many believed that refreshment would be timely and welcome and that the current thirty minute programmes could be improved.

The specifics of time commitment to regional news throughout the day was a less contentious consideration for all groups than the discussion focusing on the half hour regional news programme. The primary concern was the existence of a regional programme, the running time and the specifics of geographic territory. The time commitment that ITV allocate to regional news provision through the day (across all the summaries, bulletins and the 18.00 regional news programme) was of less importance (within reason) than the future of the regional news programme at 6.00pm. For all respondents the 6.00pm is the landmark of ITV regional news provision and along with the BBC programme, virtually unique as a TV format.

"I think the local programmes are still very important and if they are making a lot of profit from some other programmes surely there is a case to keep something. To me, you don't have to make a hell of a profit from everything. There is going to be the odd thing that makes a loss. I think it is quite important to have local news. We don't all live in London. I think it is important to have the local news" 45-6
Southampton

When the moderator explained that 'shorter' could potentially be a twenty-minute version this was frequently actively welcomed as a realistic and appealing improvement on the current format. A more focused bulletin could enhance the quality of programme by eliminating superfluous filler.

This outcome reflected an overwhelming view that proximity & relevance of territory remain primary criteria for the objective judgement of service. That said frequent examples emerged in the research that also demonstrate that appealing and relevant stories can 'travel' and will stretch interest beyond immediate and perceived geographical territory.

The positive reception to the idea of a twenty-minute programme was not simply indicative of a willingness to accept compromise in order to maintain the service. Instead it confirmed that refreshment was welcome, timely and indicated that many felt that the current thirty-minute programmes could be improved.

"20 minutes. Better. It is filtering out the irrelevant stuff" 25-44 Newbury

There was frequent criticism that the half-hour could seem stretched and padded-out a light local/regional news night with fillers and trivia. Though the friendly presentation style and ambience of ITV is a strength, the downside is a tendency to waffle and resort to irrelevant banter in the absence of a good story. It is important to note however that less 'filler and waffle' is not a call for a more serious approach and that the term 'banter' is only pejorative when the subject matter is dubious (the conviviality of the ITV presentation style is often the basis of popularity and preference)

"I wouldn't want to lose the happy stories" 45-69, Leeds

The shorter main programme of twenty minutes and, in most regions, a more focused territory was considered a very popular and positive refreshment initiative in the majority of groups. In most groups what was initially first considered a cut-back was reassessed and judged a potential improvement.

The only doubts were expressed in a small number of locations where there was a popular existing programme brand (such as Calendar) and those with a history of very specific territory coverage (Yorkshire and Granada).

The strategy became even more convincing when respondents appreciated that the new territories would still be sharing good content with an adjoining ITV region. This could help explain how greater coverage and more news territories could be achieved on reduced budgets. Respondents were also reassured to know that within a shorter bulletin they would not be isolated and that if there was a big story in another area they would not be forced to miss it.

iv) Response to the revised regional territories

The research project focused on five ITV regions where there were specific and unique issues appropriate to the proposals for changing timing and territory of coverage. The ITV areas where research was undertaken were ITV West & WestCountry, Meridian, Anglia, Yorkshire, Granada. In each region two fieldwork locations were selected to reflect different extremes of territory, community type (for example urban and rural) and population demography.

Each ITV region had unique presentation material (maps showing broadcast footprints appropriate to that specific location) and for the subsequent news hour stage of the focus groups, pilot material created to illustrate a twenty-minute bulletin for that specific area.

ITV West & Westcountry – fieldwork locations in Bristol & Truro.



Previous qualitative research undertaken for ITV in 2007 highlighted the complexities of representing and servicing the west-country audience. This is a dispersed population with a variety of cultural, employment and demographic variables. Serving this audience is inevitably challenging with quick-to-surface sensitivity to any hint of neglect and varying degrees of isolationism when considering the western geography and into Cornwall.

“At the moment (the area they cover) is a little bit too big. You could put that in 15 minutes if it was a smaller region” 45-69 yrs, Bristol

In both Truro and Bristol the third option proposed in the ‘Need for Change’ argument for a shorter bulletin with a more focused territory was welcomed with very limited dissent. Any suggestion of a reduction in quality and territory of coverage was unpopular.

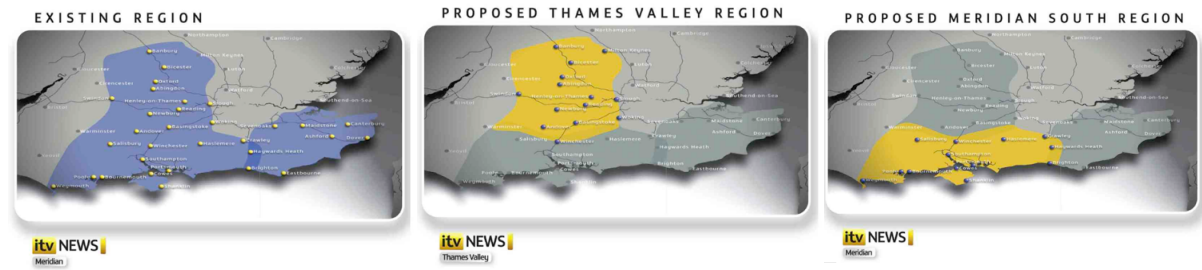
The accessible style and human warmth of Westcountry Tonight offers a genuine alternative to the BBC’s Spotlight which in comparison is considered more formal and less friendly. The stronger empathy

with the ITV approach is particularly important among less affluent communities who feel remote from the concerns of metropolitan and demographically 'upmarket' audiences.

As in all fieldwork locations, the proposed twenty-minute bulletin was considered to potentially offer a positive opportunity for refreshment and improved focus rather than signal a compromise of service. (However, as with all regions, the pilot examples were considered to be overly formal and had forfeited some of the humanity that is popular and integral to the ITV regional news formula)

Respondents in the Bristol fieldwork location also felt the new geography better suited their personal geographies and interests. The research location was in a rural area where the agricultural feature in the pilot material (the impact of the summer drought on crops) was very welcome.

ITV Meridian – Fieldwork locations in Newbury and Southampton



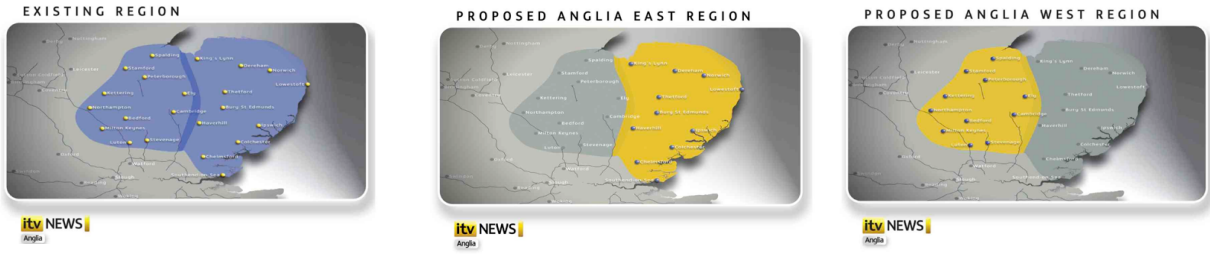
The Meridian ITV region has experienced a sequence of changes to form and footprint of service over recent years. Older respondents remember the arrival of Meridian 1993 when it replaced TVS (some memories go as far back as Southern). This region has gone from super-served with originally three different regional news programmes with the launch of Meridian to a more focused macro-territory in the last few years.

The extremes of territory can be a source of modest frustration with a geography that stretches from the Thames Valley to Thanet in Kent. Gently negative references to irrelevant 'news from Milton Keynes' 'traffic reports from the M1' and 'stories from Dover' suggested that this is an area which can seem too geographically extensive and overly diverse in focus.

Groups in both Southampton and Newbury welcomed more focused territories and felt the initiative was resolving a weakness rather than compromising a service. The story examples in the two different pilot videos provided further 'evidence' the new approach could be more appropriate to territory of interests. All groups also welcomed the reassurance that they would not be 'losing out' on big stories that might appeal across the regions.

The inclusion of a short item in the video pilots to explain the changes to territory enhanced the appreciation that the changes would provide a better and more relevant service.

ITV Anglia – fieldwork locations in Peterborough and Norwich



Again the response to the 'Need for Change' argument in the two Anglian locations was consistent and the third option 'shorter bulletin, more focused geography' turned a cut-back initiative into a positive opportunity.

"Anglia always take you out and about, showing you things going on in your local community" 45-69, Peterborough

The two locations offered a slightly different response to the proposed territory. Norwich residents were confident that the new footprint ensured they would remain the focus of coverage and the east/west axis fitted their tendency to focus on issues in surrounding rural East Anglia and the coast. However they were also willing to except a shift in geographic emphasis according to seriousness of story. For example, in the Norwich groups the longer feature covering the Dale Farm eviction that took place in the extreme South of the region was considered justified and warranted an agenda that was primarily based in Essex.

The groups in Peterborough though essentially welcoming the initiative were a little more sensitive to feelings of exclusion. Unlike the eastern Anglian region there is no natural demarcation of border here (such as the coastline) and therefore a sense of territory can seem less tangible. There seemed to be a greater need to reassure the audience that they share relevant content with neighbours and the agenda and territory coverage will stretch when appropriate to their interests (for example, the Anglian coastline is relevant as a leisure destination for the Peterborough audience).

ITV Yorkshire - Fieldwork locations in Hull and Leeds



The response in Yorkshire, more so than any other ITV area, was less than convinced by the proposed change strategy. This is perhaps due to two main reasons:

- The region is currently very well served with two editions of Yorkshire TV's Calendar
- Calendar is a very popular, enduring familiar programme brand with it's own convivial house style
- Hull is isolated and has a distinctive and independent character (and has been super-served in the past by very focused media services such as the BBC's Kingston project). Yorkshire can be more independent and parochial in its concerns than other regions. There was evident suspicion that the proposals might signal a loss of autonomy and potentially more centrally (at specifically, London) determined priorities.

"I think that Look North is very much an extension of the BBC news and I prefer Calendar because it has a more warm feeling. I get home, I just want something friendly and not over-dramatic" 45-69, Leeds

The groups in Hull were generally unsympathetic to the ITV argument and could not see why regional news should suffer because ITV as a whole was citing reduced resources. They did not see why regional news had to be self-financing. Calendar is clearly valued and considered a quality offering. Compromise and change was unwelcome. However of the three options, again the 'shorter and more local' bulletin was convincingly the most popular.

The Leeds groups also evidenced a protective conservatism that seemed primarily concerned with Calendar being compromised. Though less effusive than Hull there was also a concern that was expressed both in Leeds and in all Northern locations (including those in Granada) that was wary of central assimilation (London-driven) at the expense of regional and Northern identity when considered in the context of the proposed new hour.

ITV Granada - Fieldwork locations in Southport and Stockport



Granada was the one area in the sample that would retain the same geography but have the bulletin length shortened to twenty minutes. Thereby the one location where service would potentially be cut-back without the compensatory salve of a more focused geography.

Granada signifies both a geographic territory and an employer and TV production centre. Groups in Stockport treat it as home territory and assume a content emphasis that is based in Manchester (and Stockport) and looks outwards. Though the broadcast geography was not changing in this region the promise of a more focused approach was a welcome promise of refreshment and potentially improved quality. Ensuring the retention of the Granada name was perhaps the most sensitive issue (and as such a reassurance that authenticity of place & base was not compromised).

Respondents in Southport also welcomed the change proposals. Though here there was also an interest in an news agenda that better reflected their interest in Liverpool and the affinity with the Wirral's connections with the North Wales coastal resorts.

v) Response to the 'news-hour' proposals and the structured news hour

The research project was designed to address two interlinked objectives.

- a) To explore reactions to the ITV proposal to change news regions and minutage
- b) To offer format proposals to identify how this might refresh regional news in a relevant way

In all groups stimulus boards were created specifically for that region to introduce and explain the concept of the news hour. The presentation material focused on structure and minutage of the hour of news from ITV between 18.00 and 19.00 and illustrated handover and junction points.

THE ITV NEWS HOUR

VERSION A

6.00pm OPENING TITLES

PRESENTER A in the Network Studio "...coming up on the ITV News Hour tonight..."
 MAIN NEWS HEADLINES "...at 6:10 all the news where you are..."
 PRESENTER B in the Network Studio "...and at 6:30 I'll be talking to..."
 MAIN NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS
 PRESENTER A or B in the Network Studio "...now at 6:10, the news where you are..."

6.10pm HANDOVER TO MERIDIAN SOUTH

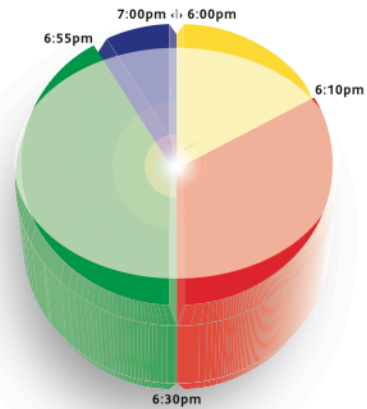
MERIDIAN SOUTH PRESENTER "...on the ITV News Hour in the Meridian region tonight..."

6.30pm MERIDIAN SOUTH PRESENTER

"...you're watching the ITV News Hour in the Meridian region; it's 6:30 so now let's get the national news headlines and the rest of the News Hour from..."

PRESENTERS A & B in the Network Studio
 NEWS HEADLINES
 DEVELOPMENT OF MAIN STORIES WITH REGIONAL DIMENSION
 WRAP UP OF OTHER STORIES
 NEWS FEATURES/BACKGROUND PIECES WITH MORE INSERTS FROM CORRESPONDENTS AROUND THE COUNTRY

6.55pm GOOD NIGHT & WEATHER SEQUENCE



itv NEWS

ITV1 • 6pm - 7pm • Monday - Friday

THE ITV NEWS HOUR

VERSION B

6.00pm OPENING TITLES

PRESENTERS A & B in the Network Studio "...coming up on the ITV News Hour tonight..."
 MAIN NEWS HEADLINES including Regional News Headlines from presenters in each regional studio
 BACK TO PRESENTERS A & B in the Network Studio
 MAIN NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS
 PRESENTER A in the Network Studio "...in a moment we cross to our newsrooms throughout Britain and at 6:40 we'll be interviewing...
 ...but first at 6:20pm, the news where you are..."

6.20pm HANDOVER TO MERIDIAN SOUTH

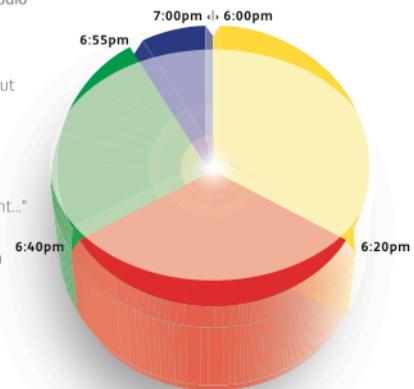
MERIDIAN SOUTH PRESENTER "...on the ITV News Hour in the Meridian region tonight..."

6.40pm MERIDIAN SOUTH PRESENTER

"...you're watching the ITV News Hour in the Meridian region; it's 6:40 so now let's get the national news headlines and the rest of the News Hour from..."

PRESENTERS A & B in the Network Studio
 RE-CAP OF NEWS HEADLINES
 DEVELOPMENT OF MAIN STORIES WITH REGIONAL DIMENSION
 NEWS FEATURES/BACKGROUND PIECES WITH MORE INSERTS FROM CORRESPONDENTS AROUND THE COUNTRY

6.55pm GOOD NIGHT & WEATHER SEQUENCE



itv NEWS

ITV1 • 6pm - 7pm • Monday - Friday

In addition a pilot video was shown in all groups to illustrate the twenty-minute regional bulletin for each of the proposed territories. The video also included approximately four minutes of surrounding network content and handovers to show the potential news hour approach and present the regional material in context. In the majority of groups this 24-minute video was shown in its entirety.

The concept of a news-hour was discussed both as a single format idea (where the implication was 'News-Hour' at its most overt as the implied name of a format) and more commonly as a thematic and zoned grouping of the ITV news content between 6.00 and 7.00pm. It should be recorded that groups were recruited according to interest in regional news and that an interest in network news was not a specific recruitment criteria.

The implied seriousness of the news hour was unpopular in most of the groups. It suggested an unbroken and tonally worthy hour of news that challenges the prevailing mood of the scheduling zone (the low attention level and busy households factor already discussed) and can seem too news-intense for many of the ITV audience. Throughout both this project and numerous others undertaken for ITV regions (and also for competitor clients) a consistent success of the ITV regional news approach is that it reaches an audience who might not otherwise engage with news and who value the friendliness and accessibility of the ITV house style. ITV attracts these 'news-avoiders' who might be lost if the ITV hour becomes intimidating and overly serious.

"To me, to make it a little closer to the national news programme would mean it would lose a little bit of its (distinctiveness)" 45-69, Truro

"It makes very good sense but would all the fluffy stories I like be gone?" 25-49, Truro

The concept of a news hour failed to appeal to the majority if presented in a very structured way or if the proposed programme structure challenged established scheduling junctions. This could be the case with both the extremes of the 'news avoiders' and the heavier news consumers. The warmth of the ITV approach often seemed better suited to the homecoming mood and the dynamics of the early evening household. Many only have an appetite for regional news and then switch to competing entertainment shows at 6.30 (for example; Hollyoaks on C4). Others postpone 'serious' news and watch a main bulletin later in the evening when concentration levels are more focused (for example the News at Ten). Given the fragility of many news habits and relationships it would seem essential not to jeopardize these relationships. At the extreme the proposed format and structure could alienate and at worst lose audience.

"It was a bit patronising ... it is not our programme anymore" 24-49, Hull

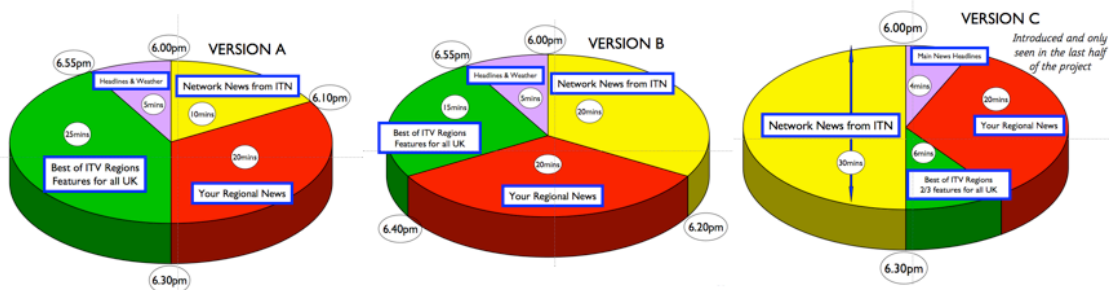
"It's old fashioned and an hour is too long to sit and watch" 45-69, Leeds

A minority liked the concept of the news hour as it suggests a more focused and professional resource and can enhance the credibility and apparent 'seriousness' of the ITV news offer. It also can explain and provide evidence of the benefits of cost-saving by centralisation of core resource and editorial control. The groups and life-stages who liked the news-hour concept were often older respondents (and empty nesters who can give an hour of news their full attention) and also those with a more serious interest in news. However those with a more serious interest in news were also more likely to be pro-BBC and likely to consider ITV news the second choice.

"Personally, I think that's dangerous. You are now putting both national news's on at 6 ... you'd have to choose which national news you wanted to watch ... I'd choose the BBC because I believe in a more formal approach for the national news and I believe you get more depth in the BBC stories"
45-69, Peterborough

The news hour does suggest a more seamless flow between national and regional content. There was also an appreciation and positive reaction to the benefits of cost saving and the creative focus of a centralised production resource. Consistency and improved production quality control are welcome. However the advantages have to be considered alongside the concerns both voiced and implied regarding the loss of regional autonomy (an ITV strength) and the suspicion that 'centralised' means a London-centric vision.

"If I was choosing ITV. I still want 10 minutes at the beginning. I would be choosing it because I don't want the long serious, drawn out news" 24-44 Norwich



Discussing the different time structures and the specifics of themed segmentation prompted the subject of the device of 'coming-up' teasers and content reminders. Overly frequent reminders can be an irritant albeit the device remains essential to secure interest given the erratic attention levels evident at the early evening timeslot. However having too many segments and changes of sequence was seen to be inviting more 'after the break' reminders and recaps, and groups were suspicious that excessive repetition could be eating up available minutage.

"It seems like they are giving you that 10 minutes and then promising you something later on just so you watch the local news. I don't see the point really" 24-44 Norwich

"If you want serious for news you watch the main news" 45-69 Newbury

The concept of the news hour and the example of the pilot material conveyed a more formal and tonally serious approach. Regional news was considered to be aping the mood and delivery of the main news. The news agenda in many of the twenty-minute pilot examples was felt to be too deliberately earnest and at times, stories were accused of being drawn out to convey an in-depth seriousness beyond audience interest in the event. The lack of humour and banter was also noted and though flippancy and 'waffle' are criticisms of the current formats a lighter touch and humanity remain integral ingredients in the format they want.

"You are going to get enough misery on the main news" 45-69 Newbury

"If my appetite is whetted by international events. I don't want to switch back to local. I would rather watch all the way through" 45-69 Newbury

The presence of familiar presenter partnerships and the visual backdrop of familiar regional landmarks were both important to reassuring audiences that this remained 'their' regional news. The regional loyalists often optimistically expressed the view that if the team seemed overly formal in the pilot *"they would be back to normal and their usual friendly self tomorrow"* Southampton 45-69

"I think what's important is the light-heartedness of the presenters" 24-44 Leeds

"It is less serious The Meridian one. It feels like the presenters are more local and part of the community whereas the BBC is more like a corporate style" 25-44 Newbury

Throughout the most problematic element of the concept to convey and understand was the time devoted to '*Features from the ITV regions/Best of ITV Regions*'. Whether explained as dedicated between regions '*collaborations on subjects that were of wider UK interest*', or, as '*features produced by one region that might interest others*' – this remained a concept both hard to explain and difficult to understand in the absence of tangible examples. Currently the suspicion is this signals an easy-to-avoid block of filler content and more work is needed to test the opportunity.

The format proposed in version C was consistently the most popular. It offered all the benefits that accompanied the focused twenty-minute bulletin and the more concentrated territories whilst staying reasonably close to the familiar structure of the half hour regional news programme. This initiative was considered to promise an improved regional programme that tightened the format and added much needed content and treatment discipline.

The section devoted to '*features from the ITV regions*' was easier to understand as a six -minute section and as a more focused slot potentially interesting. The inclusion of a short network news headline section (of approximately four minutes) at the top of the menu introduced wider concerns to the often very parochial agenda of regional news. It added credibility and seriousness without compromising the intimacy and familiarity of approach. Many felt it provided both the main headlines and effectively trailed the network news at 6.30pm. As such it could tempt a news-light audience into the wider agenda of network news.

Appendix

ITV Regional News review

Individual Scores in response to the 'Need for change' rationale

Overall sample size – 160 participants

1. What is your overall reaction to the 'Need for change' argument

'Score' how much you support the argument that ITV regional news needs to change (9 is high/best choice – 1 is the lowest dislike/don't agree)

Grand average across the sample – 6.43

Average by age	45-69 (6.18)	25-44 (6.67)
Average Anglia	(6.82)	
Average West & West Country	(5.97)	
Average Granada	(6.29)	
Average Meridian	(7.10)	
Average Yorkshire	(5.88)	

2. There are three choices explained in the 'Need for change'.

i) Maintain the programme duration but reduce quality	Average Score (2.50)
ii) Maintain programme duration, but less local focus	Average Score (2.71)
iii) Shorter programme, more local focus.	Average Score (7.69)
iii b) Shorter main programme, area unchanged (Granada only)	Average Score (4.32)

3. Now that you have seen the more localised regions can you score your level of support for this proposal (*Question not asked in Granada as not applicable*)

Average Score (7.72)

FIELDWORK SCHEDULE

TWResearch

Project: ITV News Regions – News Hour
 JN: 113146
 Fieldwork schedule v3:
 Date: 27/09/11

Date/Time	Sample	Recruiter/Venue	Moderator
<p>Monday 26th September 2011</p> <p>Group 1 5.45pm - 7.45pm</p> <p>Group 2 8.00pm – 10.00pm</p>	<p>2 x 2 hour groups</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female C2D 45-69 yrs</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female BC1 25-44 yrs</p>	<p>Location: Norwich (Anglia)</p>	
<p>Tuesday 27th September 2011</p> <p>Group 3 6.00pm - 8.00pm</p> <p>Group 4 8.15pm – 10.15pm</p>	<p>2 x 2 hour groups</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female C2D 25-44 yrs</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female BC1 45-69 yrs</p>	<p>Location: Newbury (Meridian)</p>	

<p>Tuesday 27th September 2011</p> <p>Group 5 6.00pm - 8.00pm</p> <p>Group 6 8.15pm – 10.15pm</p>	<p>2 x 2 hour groups</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female BC1 25-44 yrs</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female C2D 45-69 yrs</p>	<p>Location: Bristol (West)</p>	
<p>Thursday 29th September 2011</p> <p>Group 7 6.15pm - 8.15pm</p> <p>Group 8 8.15pm – 10.15pm</p>	<p>2 x 2 hour groups</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female C2D 25-44 yrs</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female BC1 45-69 yrs</p>	<p>Location: Peterborough (Anglia)</p>	
<p>Monday 3rd October 2011</p> <p>Group 9 5.45pm – 7.45pm</p> <p>Group 10 8.00pm – 10.00pm</p>	<p>2 x 2 hour groups</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female C2D 45-69 yrs</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female BC1 25-44 yrs</p>	<p>Location: Southampton (Meridian)</p>	

<p>Tuesday 4th October 2011</p> <p>Group 11 6.00pm - 8.00pm</p> <p>Group 12 8.15pm – 10.15pm</p>	<p>2 x 2 hour groups</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female BC1 45-69 yrs</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female C2D 25-44 yrs</p>	<p>Location: Southport (Granada)</p>	
<p>Tuesday 4th October 2011</p> <p>Group 13 6.00pm - 8.00pm</p> <p>Group 14 8.15pm – 10.15pm</p>	<p>2 x 2 hour groups</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female C2D 45-69 yrs</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female BC1 25-44 yrs</p>	<p>Location: Truro (West Country)</p>	
<p>Wednesday 5th October 2011</p> <p>Group 15 6.00pm - 8.00pm</p> <p>Group 16 8.15pm – 10.15pm</p>	<p>2 x 2 hour groups</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female C2D 25-44 yrs</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female BC1 45-69 yrs</p>	<p>Location: Stockport (Granada)</p>	
<p>Wednesday 5th October 2011</p> <p>Group 17</p>	<p>2 x 2 hour groups</p> <p>Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female</p>	<p>Location: Hull (Yorkshire) Kingston Upon Hull</p>	

6.00pm - 8.00pm Group 18 8.15pm – 10.15pm	C2D 45-69 yrs Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female BC1 25-44 yrs		
Thursday 6 th October 2011 Group 19 6.00pm - 8.00pm Group 20 8.15pm – 10.15pm	2 x 2 hour groups Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female C2D 25-44 yrs Regional News Viewers 4 Male/4 Female BC1 45-69 yrs	Location: Leeds (Yorkshire)	

Overall Recruitment criteria:

- All groups are 120 minutes and please recruit 8 respondents per group All groups to be mixed gender – 4 males + 4 females in each group
- Please recruit a good spread of ages per group
- Please recruit a good spread of social grades, ensure good mix of categories in each group (e.g. some B's to balance C1's)
- All to be available to watch regional news from 6pm to 7pm – must be in home from 17.45 onwards
- All to watch 15 mins of ITV regional news two nights a week, can watch other regional news programmes on BBC
- No outright rejectors of ITV regional news but can prefer BBC regional coverage
- To include a mix of respondents from town and rural communities (according to location and brief to each recruiter)
- Pre-Task: All to write down summary details of three 'stories' they saw on a regional TV news programme (either channel) that they found interesting.

Popular Stories from the Pre-Task

CALENDAR

Stories in red shared across both locations

Hull

Amanda Knox verdict (Kercher a Leeds student) 7
BAE Systems redundancies (Brough) 5
Cutting down 100yr old beech tree in Ayrton 4
Trial of man who attempted to murder Ian Huntley 3
Coldest summer / hottest September 2
Fire & Rescue Workers training 2
Seaside Britain in Bloom 2
Man lost in mine in Leeds 1
Humber bridge toll increase 1
Immigrant fruit picker debate in Boston 1
Purple flag for Lincoln & Hull 1
Lincolnshire Fens archaeology & geology 1
'Vapor Bar' - legal smoking at The Bluebell 1
Fire in disused mill in Bradford 1
I own Britain's Best Home – Yorkshire castle renovation 1
Secret Millionaire 1
Builder struggling to find work 1
Miscarriage of justice for nurse sentenced to 30 yrs 1
Beverley pensioners facing eviction
Beer festival in Hull 1
Local boxer picked for Olympics 1
Huddersfield soldier honoured 1

Leeds

Windfarm protests on Yorks wolds 4
Ben Needham case reopened 3
Amanda Knox verdict (Kercher a Leeds student) 3
Huddersfield soldier honoured 3
Jarrow march 2
Cutting down 100yr old beech tree in Ayrton 2
10th anniversary of Afghanistan war – local families affected by war 2
Trial of man who attempted to murder Ian Huntley 2
BAE Systems redundancies (Brough) 2
Hessle Farm fire & death 2
Yawning tortoise 2
Drive for Life campaign (film by Rotherham students) 1
Death of Graham Dilley 1
Killer curry 1
'Vapor Bar' - legal smoking at The Bluebell 1

WEST / SOUTH WEST

Stories in red shared across both locations

Bristol

Science Park opening 8
Fire engines having black boxes 5
Parking charges in Forest of Dean 5
BAE job losses 5
Bristol Zoo gorillas 2
Local cyclist raising money 1
Cannabis farm found 1
Bristol win rugby 1
Wind turbines in Stroud 1
Catering staff do recipe book for Brandon Trust 1
Walk for life – Bristol 1
What goes on at Weston Pier 1
Sport & weather 1
Mendip Freeview users to retune 1
Labour Party Conference 1
Bath FC – funny story from the ground 1

Truro

Stories from Cornwall with local focus/content - Lighter, softer, human, real...appropriate for 6pm timeslot and mood
Recent warm weather brought 20 million into tourism/local economy
Local Bride in Lostwithiel had red carpet laid from her home to the church
New baby Gorilla at Bristol Zoo
Cornish Whiskey being brewed locally at St Austell Brewery
Local Olympic swimmer swimming with Penguins in Torquay
Worlds most adventurous family interviewed on Exmoor
Stories with a wider 'West focused' lens:
Hinkley nuclear protests
Unemployment in private sector in South west is up vs Conservative conference boasts that it's down nationwide
House prices highest in south west (second home owners etc etc)

ANGLIA

Stories in red shared across both locations

Peterborough

Dale Farm travellers 9

New port at Felixstowe 7

Weird weather 6

IVF hospital for private patients at Cambridge 4

Petrol bomb through Chinese shop window 2

Court case about soldier killed in Northampton 1

ASBO swan 1

Norfolk Boys Club old bus 1

Epilepsy in children

William & Kate at the Royal Marsden 1

James Paget hospital for the elderly 1

Saving red squirrels from extinction 1

Rowan Atkinson interview about car crash 1

House fire deaths 1

Bedfordshire school bus stopping 1

Norwich

Dale Farm travellers 9

Waterbeach Army Barracks housing row 5

Curing dementia 4

Meningitis or epilepsy or curing / vaccination 4

New arts centre in Colchester 4

Spiders in the warm weather 4

Suffolk police apologise to Norwich fans 1

Our changing city (archives) 1

Disabled ramblers (walk 4 life) 1

Norwich vs. Ipswich football 1

Climategate at Norwich Uni 1

Drowning 1

Bikers Go Slow (EU anti fixing own bikes) 1

Harp strings from beef

Broadband speed in Halesworth 1

NORTH WEST

Stories in red shared across both locations

Stockport

Dead baby found in Kirkham Preston 6

Burial of soldier from Blackburn 5

Lancashire enterprise zone 4

Food bank in Knowley 2

Blackpool illuminations 2

Finding funds for Emma (child with cancer) 2

Change to immigration laws in Blackburn 1

Tory Party conference in Manchester 1

Surge of special police officers 1

Burglar killed in Bramhall 1

Stepping Hill Nurse released 1

Univ. of Manchester discovers graphine 1

Where's Fred & weather 1

Toll at bridge crossing River Mersey 1

Shipyard making wind turbines 1

Gun crime in Manchester 1

Afghanistan 10 years on 1

X Factor local talent 1

Southport

Dead baby found in Kirkham Preston 7

Blackpool illuminations 4

Tory Party conference in Manchester 3

March in Manchester (Tory conference) 2

Saving Coastguard station at Crosby 2

BAE job losses 2

Toll at bridge crossing River Mersey 2

Lancashire enterprise zone 2

Cheryl Cole in Afghanistan 1

Wirral War Memorial 1

Flying Scotsman 1

Attack in Atherton 1

Waiting for ambulance 1

Labour Party conference Liverpool 1

Isle of Man elections 1

Virgin Media close in Liverpool 1

Shaile Gas could be new North Sea Oil 1

MerseyRail chaos 1

Jason Manford interview 1

X Factor local talent 1

Knowsley Safari Park 1

Burst water pipe in Accrington 1

Affordable homes 1

MERIDIAN

Newbury

Young drivers – insurance 6
NHS staff taking pay cut 4
Hannah Campbell mortar attack – in wheelchair 3
Saving red squirrels 3
Man missing in Portsmouth 3
Red Arrows Memorial Bournemouth 2
Child abduction in Southampton 2
ITV's Walk 4 life 2
Air Traffic Control Centre 1
Crime maps 1
Murdered woman in Bournemouth 1
Chesil Beach live broadcast 1
PFI at local hospitals 1
Regeneration of cartilage tissue 1
Bronze age Dover beach 1
BAE systems redundancy 1
Newbury Show 1
Feature on Big Issue in Brighton 1
Interview with local supermodel 1
Air pollution 1
Basketball wheelchair players 1
Help for ICU patients 1
Life after politics – interview with former local MP 1
Hindhead tunnel opened 1
Food vouchers 1
Defending use of whip at Newbury 1
Windsor half marathon 1
Weather 1

Southampton

Football riots in Brighton 4
Winchester Barton Farm saved from developers 4
September weather 4
Peter's Daily Struggle (man with disability) 3
Cricket games at Brambles Island in the sea 2
Job losses at Portsmouth Naval Yard 2
Fun on wards – Starlight Foundation 2
Hampshire man killed by lorry driver on his phone 2
Stella the Lifesaver (dog saved owner) 1
Crime maps 1
Young drivers – insurance 1
Proposed new tower in Brighton 1
Animal birdman competition at Bognor 1
Strike – social services & bin men 2
Demo at maternity dept 1
Protests over Stenning tennis court 1
Powerboat built in Dudley 1
Injured servicemen climb mountain 1
Robbers shot dead 1
Schools celebrating Olympics 1

Appendix (Previous ITV regional news projects undertaken prior to 2007)

Project Name	No. of groups	Year
ITV Yorkshire Regional News	10	2007
ITV Regions	22	2007
ITV Boundaries	9	2006
ITV Non News Regions	4	2006
ITV News 2006	8	2006
ITV West & Wales	16	2005
Meridian Tonight	7	2005
ITV News 22.30	7	2004
Meridian Tonight	7	2003
Anglia	7	2003
Granada Reports	16	2003
HTV News – Carlton TV	4	2003
West Country Live (2003)	8	2003
Carlton, HTV West	6	2002
Carlton, Westcountry Sunday Edition	8	2002
West Country Pilot – Carlton	6	2001
Anglia/Paradigm	8	1999
HTV Nov/Dec 99	8	1999
Meridian/Paradigm	6	1999
London Tonight – Carlton	8	1999
HTV 98	12	1998
Carlton – Central	12	1998
Westcountry – Carlton	10	1998
Scottish Sport Paradigm	8	1996
LWT - London Programme	6	1994
Meridian Tonight 1993-1998	49	1993-98
Meridian Launch	5	1992

277 focus groups