

Rt. Hon. David Mundell MP
Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale & Tweeddale



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

April 2013

Dear Sir/Madam,

Channel 3 and Channel 5: proposed programming obligations

I am writing to you in my capacity as Member of Parliament for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale to express my views on the consultation. Since the most recent changes to ITV Border I have been contacted by and met with hundreds of constituents who have expressed a desire to return to the more localised Border TV service they knew and appreciated. I understand that that is not exactly what is on offer at this time, however I wish to convey in the strongest possible terms that it is my view that the proposed Option 1 best realises this goal of providing both relevant and geographically appropriate content to viewers in my constituency and across the South of Scotland, which I previously represented as a Member of the Scottish Parliament.

It is my belief that those supporting and vocally pushing for Option 2, are motivated by their personal political beliefs and their views, whilst perhaps vocal, do not represent majority opinion locally. With this in mind I would like to draw attention to Figure 5: Audience research on Channel 3 news in the Border region, which is displayed on page 26 of the main consultation document. This independent research states:

“Respondents universally would prefer a return to a service covering a smaller area, in the belief it would lead to more coverage of each of the localities surveyed. Although a service aimed at both central and southern Scotland received some support, many expressed concerns that, in such a scenario, coverage would focus on the major population centres further north at the expense for news about their area.”

I fully concur with this view and feel that the distinct needs of this large rural area, which has arguable stronger links with much of the English part of the Border TV region and has a more similar demographic would be better met by Option 1.

It would also have as ITV Border rightly state numerous advantages:

- It will provide a current affairs programme made in, and featuring people and politicians, including local councillors, from the Border region that directly affect and reflect their day-to-day life;
- This programme would be able to focus on issues and human stories that directly affect people in the Border region;
- It would almost certainly provide more employment in the Border region than the alternative option;
- And it would mean that *Lookaround* will have more journalists to draw on than under the alternative option boosting existing news coverage.

The forth coming referendum on Independence should not be allowed to define the future provision of local news and current affair programming in this region, as it is just one of many issues that are important to local people and it should rightly take its place as part of holistic coverage of current affairs locally.

I also believe there is a strong case to be made that the coverage of that particular debate should be distinct and focus on how any constitutional changes would affect people locally, which is arguably very different from those who live further north. This region has and has always had strong cross border links, with a vast number of people using cross border services. Economically, there is a lot of trade between business and cross border employment features strongly, alongside the self-evident links of family and friendship.

The plurality of media already available through television, radio, newspapers and the internet already means that those living in the South of Scotland already have the opportunity to engage in the national debate. What people locally are calling for is content from, and relevant to, this area which can only be delivered under Option 1.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rt Hon David Mundell MP