

ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 Consultation: Scottish Government Response

The Scottish Government is pleased to respond to Ofcom's consultation on the television rights for the International Cricket Council (ICC) World Cup.

As Ofcom notes, these are Group B listed events for the purpose of section 97 of the Broadcasting Act 1996. The current proposal is that matches would be transmitted in their entirety on Sky Sports 2, which for the duration of the tournament would be renamed Sky Sports World Cup; in addition, ITV would provide highlights on its free-to-air channels according to the arrangement set out below:

1. The highlights would be transmitted in a broadcast slot of between 60 to 90 minutes;
2. The highlights would be broadcast from 22:00 UK time on the day of the relevant match;
3. The highlights of all England matches (including the match against Scotland), would be shown on ITV1;
4. The highlights of the Semi-finals and the Final will be broadcast on ITV1;
5. The highlights of the remaining five Scotland matches at the group stage will be broadcast on ITV4.

In addition, the BBC intends to provide live commentary on BBC Radio Five Live.

The Scottish Government very much welcomes the increased exposure for Scotland's national cricket team that coverage of the ICC World Cup will afford, in Scotland and further afield. It seems to us that the principles that should guide us in the present context are:

- Respect for the terms of Ofcom's *Code on Sports and Other Listed and Designated Events*; and
- As far as possible, maximising coverage of UK home nations' matches and, for example, the potential effect of increasing active participation in cricket in Scotland, of television coverage available in Scotland of Scotland's national cricket team in action.

At the level of pragmatism, we understand that these proposals have crystallised at a relatively late stage, with the first games happening (by Greenwich Mean Time) a mere three days after this consultation closes. It may therefore be difficult to alter the existing proposals for coverage; adding to the existing proposals through additional coverage should, however, be practical.

Against that background, we have no comments on the proposals as regards satellite television and radio.

As regards the proposals in relation to digital terrestrial television, we would note the following:

As noted in Ofcom's *Code on Sports and Other Listed and Designated Events* (paragraph 1.6) the Broadcasting Act 1996, as amended by the Television Broadcasting Regulations 2000, requires that listed events on digital terrestrial television should be shown on a service which (a) is provided without any consideration being required for reception of the service and (b) is received by at least 95 per cent of the population of the United Kingdom. Annex 2 to the *Code* sets out the services meeting that requirement: BBC 1, BBC 2, the Channel 3 stations, Channel 4 and Five. As paragraph 1.9 of the *Code* makes clear, in the context of nations and regions, "The reference to Channel 3 in Annex 2, therefore, means individual or groups of regional Channel 3 services, or Channel 3 as a whole."

The current proposal would see Scotland matches at the group stage broadcast on ITV4, which is not a service that meets the *Code*'s requirements. That could easily be remedied, however, by the highlights additionally being made available to STV under the Channel 3 networking agreement. ITV might also broadcast them in the Scottish portion of its Borders franchise, in the light of the separate transmission arrangements now in place following Channel 3 relicensing.

We would also note that the current proposals, as they stand, risk having Scotland's match against England, and any matches Scotland may play in the Semi-finals and the Final, available in England (and the South of Scotland) on ITV 1 but not in the bulk of Scotland. Again that could be remedied by these highlights also being made available to STV.