



Communications Commission
Oaseirys Chellinsh

Director
Dr Carmel McLaughlin

Response to Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review
Phase Two: Preparing for the digital future

4 December 2008

1. Executive Summary

The Communications Commission welcomes this opportunity to respond to *Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review*. The review contained the proposal to merge Border and Tyne Tees news but with separate 15-minute sequences in the main weekday programme for viewers in the Border and Tyne Tees areas and separate late-evening bulletins which would directly affect the Isle of Man (Section 7 and Annex 1 of Ofcom's review).

Following publication of Ofcom's review, the Commission conducted a public consultation inviting views on proposals to change ITV's regional news coverage. The issue was reported and debated on the radio, internet and in the Island's newspapers. In total we received 120 responses from Members of Tynwald, Government Departments, Statutory Boards, Parish Commissioners, Women's Institutes, Manx Radio and other organisations and individuals from across the Island. The Commission thanks everyone who took time to respond to the consultation and for their considered responses. This submission summarises the responses to the consultation.

The Commission, Tynwald and the great majority of respondents to our consultation are of the opinion that viewers and the Island would be better served by the Island's transmitters switching to ITV Granada rather than being part of the Border/Tyne Tees proposal. The Isle of Man while not part of UK has cultural, economic and social links with the North West of England rather than Border and the North East of England. The Communications Commission welcomes assurances from ITV plc that Isle of Man news gathering resources will be retained irrespective of whether the Island is served by the Border/Tyne Tees news region or the Granada region.

Three in four respondents (77%) felt that the Isle of Man and its viewers would be better served by being part of the ITV Granada region as opposed to being served by the proposed merged Border and Tyne Tees news operations. A minority (17%) were in favour of the proposed merged news service. The remainder (6%) could see advantages of either option, had no fixed views either way or wanted to retain the existing Border news service.

2. Background

The Isle of Man is a self-governing British Crown Dependency. The Island is not part of the UK and has no representation in the British Parliament. Tynwald, founded over 1,000 years ago, is considered to be the oldest continuous Parliament in the world.

The Communications Commission is a Statutory Board of the Isle of Man Government and has responsibility for the licensing and regulation of telecommunications and broadcasting on the Isle of Man. The Commission keeps under review the reception, quality and content of programme services provided both from the Island and from elsewhere. Together with those statutory duties, the Commission has responsibility for furthering the interests of the Isle of Man in the whole broadcasting arena.

Earlier proposals by ITV plc to merge Border and Tyne Tees regional news services were debated in Tynwald. The motion which was debated and carried unanimously at the October 2007 sitting of Tynwald Court and became a Tynwald Policy Decision stated:

Tynwald is of the opinion that

- (a) Should Border ITV merge with the Tyne Tees ITV region, the Isle of Man should be serviced by ITV Granada, thus receiving a North West ITV service, similar to that provided by BBC Manchester, and*

- (b) Any regional TV service provided by ITV or BBC should be part of the North West region, not the North East and
- (c) The Government should make appropriate representations to ITV and relevant UK Authorities in an endeavour to secure such an ITV service for the Island.

3. The Consultation

The Communications Commission conducted a six week consultation seeking views on proposals to change ITV's regional news coverage of the Island¹. The consultation closed on the 21 November and the responses have informed this response to "Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review – Phase 2: Preparing for the Digital Future"².

The Isle of Man consultation set out the background to and details of Ofcom's proposal. We sought views on whether the Ofcom option (Option A), to stay with Border and the new merged ITV Border and Tyne Tees news service, or whether to switch to Granada (Option B) would better serve the Isle of Man and its viewers. The consultation document made it clear that the *status quo*, that is the retention of Border TV regional news service and no merger with Tyne Tees regional news operations, was not an option for Ofcom. We also noted that Ofcom stated in its consultation document that:

"On the face of it, it makes sense for the transmitters to stay with Border on the grounds that the Isle of Man would get more air time if it stays with Border rather than the more urban population of Granada, but Ofcom is aware that transport and other links from the IOM tend to be with the North West so we welcome views from the Island on this point."

4. Summary of Responses

The issue was reported and debated on the radio, internet and in the Island's newspapers. In total we received 120 responses from Members of Tynwald, Government Departments, Statutory Boards, Parish Commissions, Women's Institutes, Manx Radio and other organisations and individuals from across the Island (Annex).

A clear majority (77%) felt that the Isle of Man and its viewers would be better served by being part of the ITV Granada region as opposed to being served by the proposed merged Border and Tyne Tees news operations. A minority (17%) were in favour of the proposed merged news service. The remainder (6%) could see advantages of either option, had no fixed views either way or wanted to retain the existing Border news service.

5. Responses in favour of switching to ITV Granada

Members of Tynwald, the Department of Tourism and Leisure, the Isle of Man Federation of Women's Institute (IOMFWI), Women's Institutes (Ballaugh, Parkfield, Castletown, Onchan & District, Port St Mary, St John's & District), Parish Commissioners (Port St Mary and Maughold), ADF Group and other organisations and individuals from across the Island felt that we would be better served by being part of the ITV Granada region as opposed to being served by the proposed merged Border and Tyne Tees news operations. Most respondents were of the view that our links lie with the North West rather than the North East of England. Examples of the comments received were as follows:

In our institute there is more connection for our members with the North West, rather than North East.

IOMFWI

¹ <http://www.gov.im/lib/docs/government/itvconsultativedocument101020.pdf>

² http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/psb2_phase2/psb2_phase2.pdf

Residents of the Isle of Man can more closely identify with ITV Granada covering North West England rather than Tyne Tees.

Mr David Cannan, MHK

The vast majority of the Isle of Man's transport links to Great Britain are with the North West of England. There are negligible links with Carlisle and its environs, or with Tyneside and Tees-side. It is most unlikely that regional commercials placed on a combined Border/Tyne-Tees ITV service would have relevance for Isle of Man viewers. For example, superstore offers in Gateshead are not accessible. Conversely, many people from the Island shop regularly in Liverpool, Manchester or Cheshire. At present, special offers from or events in those areas do not appear on Isle of Man television screens. Switching to Granada's regional output would open up a completely new range of choices and opportunities for the Manx citizen and consumer.

Anthony Hewitt, Former Director, Communications Commission

I should imagine the majority of Manx footballing fans support Manchester United, Manchester City, Liverpool or Everton and do at present find it so frustrating to be given reports of Stranraer or Queen of the South.

Ray Livsey

A number of respondents thought it made sense to align ITV and BBC coverage areas:

Option B (Granada) would also make sense in that it parallels the coverage given by the BBC North West regional service, which does feature the Isle of Man and gives as reasonable coverage as we might hope for.

Hon S C Rodan SHK

The Isle of Man, although not part of the UK, is often linked as a neighbour of the North West of England and as such features within the footprint of the BBC's North West Region. The BBC North West Tonight programme is watched by people on the Isle of Man who can relate easily to virtually all of the output of the programme....It is only right the Isle of Man should feature in the identical North West footprint for ITV.

Juan Turner MLC

I can see no interest whatever in following the Tyne Tees programmes; we are too remote from that attractive part of the UK to require local information about their doings, even though the odd mention of our community may appear. Whilst we are not actually part of the NW, due to our links with that part of the world, we would at least recognise what the local newscasts were about, as in the case of NW Tonight which I receive at present, on BBC TV, I wish therefore to add my 'vote' to joining Granada TV rather than be pushed into the 'new' Tyne Tees TV of which I have no ties, and little interest.

Colin Thirwall

6. Responses in favour of the proposed merged Border Tyne Tees news

Respondents who were in favour of remaining with Border TV and the proposed merged ITV Tyne Tees and Border news operations included the Department of Education, Michael Commissioners, and Cornaa WI. Most expressed an appreciation for ITV Border:

Border TV have developed an established network of local reporters, camera & sound crews, that have generally served the Island well – at times probably having more airtime than proportional to population. If we continue to have our lesser coverage of local news with the combined Border/Tyne Tees area it would probably need fewer changes than starting afresh with Granada, and avoid initial teething troubles. On the basis of the lesser

of two evils, we would support continuation of local news with the Border/Tyne Tees area for the immediate future.

Michael Commissioners

As I see it, what is being offered by ITV is 50% of their local evening news programme being taken by Border, and the Isle of Man getting what it can out of that. Watching Lookaround over the last couple of weeks, we seem to get at least one mention each evening, and Paul Moulton who now looks after the Island for Border is doing a good job. Therefore, on balance, I think exposure wise, the Island would be better accepting what it proposed by ITV for 2009 and onwards.

Michael H Swain

Cornaa WI would prefer the 'status quo' where they feel there is at least some coverage of Isle of Man news, though even this can be very minimal. However, if a choice has to be made then members feel they would prefer Option A.

Cornaa WI

7. Other responses

A number of respondents (6%) to the consultation did not opt for either option. Some felt that there should be a dedicated Isle of Man service and that neither the proposed merged ITV Border and Tyne Tees news operations nor the ITV Granada option was satisfactory:

There really is no choice at all to be made between the two options – it quite clearly is Hobson's choice, "heads I win, tails you lose!"

L P Kelly

Opinion was divided on this matter which was raised at a WI meeting in Sulby. Members felt that the interests of the IoM and its views are not particularly well served by either option at the moment and would probably not be in the future.

Sulby WI

It is our view that if the overriding need is to provide a service that gives residents of the Isle of Man the maximum coverage of Island events, this is more likely to be provided by the Border and new ITV Tyne Tees & Border service. However, if the Island's aim is to maximise its exposure and promote itself within the UK, then the 2.93 million homes served by the Granada region is most likely to deliver this objective.

Manx Radio

8. Conclusion

The Communications Commission welcomed ITV and Ofcom's willingness to meet and take into account views from the Isle of Man. The results are clear. The Commission and the great majority of respondents to our consultation are of the opinion that the Island and its viewers would be better served by being part of the ITV Granada region. The Communications Commission also welcomed assurances from ITV plc that Isle of Man news gathering resources will be retained irrespective of whether the Island is served by the Border/Tyne Tees news region or the Granada region.

ANNEX

RESPONDENTS		
Steve Rodan SHK	Mr R Livsey	Martin Horbury
David Cannan MHK	Mrs D Byron	Miss Sam Clare
Alex Downie MLC	Mr C Vickers	Roger Moughtin
Juan Turner MLC	Mr R P Smith	Mr Kevin Broadbent
Department of Education	Kate Atkinson-Jones	Mr Robert Cannell
Department of Tourism & Leisure	Sarah Corlett	Angela Harrop, Tromode
IOM Constabulary	Mr C Thirlwall	Mrs Almond
IOM Fire & Rescue Service	Mr McKenna	Mr Almond
IOM Prison	J M Watson	Mrs Harrop, Port Erin
IOM Probation Service	Mrs Sybil Sharpe	David Parsons
Port St Mary Commissioners	Mr Andrew Sharpe	Mr Deighan
Maughold Parish Commissioners	Derek Taubman	Mrs Bregazzi
IOM Federation of Women's Institutes	Margaret Boswell	Mr J Bregazzi
Port St Mary WI	Peter Shimmin	Mr Loader
Ballaugh WI	Mrs Barbara Miller	Mrs Loader
St Johns WI	Mr Peter Miller	Terence McDonald
Castletown WI	Faye Shimmin	Polly Kerruish
Onchan & District WI	Alex Foley	Mr Young
Cornaa WI	Tracie Hepworth	Mrs Grace Clegg
Sulby WI	Dr Mark B Hepworth	Mr D Ogden
Michael Parish Commissioners	Jennifer Woodside	Mr Cotton
Manx Radio	P Quine	William Black
Castletown Commissioners	Ted Gould	Patricia Muller
Patrick Commissioners	Mr M Heath	Mrs Pickavance
Civil Defence	Mrs Marston	Mr Pickavance
Mr Eric Kermode	Mr Marston	Mr R M Stephenson
Mr A Hewitt	David Pendlebury	Mr Kelly
Mr D Dorricott	M Corlett	Andrea Parsons
Mr W Hogg	Mrs A Barker	Mr G Simmonds
Mr S Peters	Miss Barker	Mr Ronald Smith
Sqd Ldr R Kermode	Mr Holt	Ms Susan Muir
Michael Swain	Adrian Cain	Brian Goodspeed
Mr W Jones	Mr Mark Atherton	E Gould
Mr George Barker	Mr P Lewis	W M Corlett
Mr L P Kelly		

A further 17 respondents requested that their details remain confidential.