

# Review of broadcast rules around major sporting events

- Changes would help ensure big moments such as the Olympics, FIFA World Cup and Wimbledon remain accessible on platforms such as BBC iPlayer, ITV Hub and Channel 4's on-demand service
- Comes as rising numbers of viewers tune in via digital platforms

Sports fans' access to watch the biggest global events on digital platforms could be guaranteed as the government reviews the rules which provide broadcasters access to major sporting contests.

The Digital Rights Review, launched today, will look at whether the government's free-to-air 'listed events' rules should be reformed so that public service broadcasters (PSBs) – including the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 – are guaranteed the opportunity to show certain major events such as the Olympics and World Cup on their digital platforms rather than just focusing on traditional TV broadcasting as is the case today.

The listed events regime helps ensure the British public are able to tune into the biggest sporting moments at no additional cost by giving PSBs the opportunity to bid for the broadcasting rights. This has meant that more than 40 million people watched Euro 2020 on the BBC and 36 million people watched the Tokyo Olympics last year.

As more people tune in via catch-up and streaming services to watch sport, the review will assess whether including digital rights can ensure as many people as possible can continue to access events including Wimbledon, the Paralympic Games and the Grand National.

Currently if, for example, the Olympic 100m final was broadcast live in the middle of the night on the BBC, but all streaming and catch-up rights were sold to a different broadcaster and kept behind a paywall, a wide audience may not be able to watch this important event.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Julia Lopez said:

As we saw during the Women's Euros and with the FIFA World Cup just around the corner, we know that enjoying blockbuster sporting events together means so much to many people. Everyone should be able to watch these incredible moments of national unity, no matter how they choose to tune in.

As viewing habits shift online, it is right that we review our rules and consider whether updates are needed to ensure our brilliant public service broadcasters can continue to bring major events to the public at no extra cost.

The [Terms of Reference](#), which determine precisely what the review will cover, have been published today and marks the public launch of the review.

The Government believes that certain sporting events of national interest should be shown on free-to-air television so that they can be enjoyed by as wide an audience as possible.

However, it is also important that it is recognised that the current framework was decided in a different media landscape almost twenty years ago, when just four per cent of UK households had access to the internet.

As such, the review will take into consideration broader online distribution of sporting rights, including video sharing platforms and social media, which has increased exponentially since the current legal framework was established in 1996.

In doing so, the review will balance the desire from audiences to watch national sporting events at no additional cost with the ability for sporting organisations to generate revenues from sports rights to re-invest in their sports at all levels.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- This issue has been addressed by a number of key industry and parliamentary stakeholders, including in Ofcom's [Future of Public Service Media report](#) and in a [report from the DCMS Committee on Major Cultural and Sporting Events](#).
- The current list of listed events can be found [here](#). The inclusion of an event on the list does not guarantee the broadcast of that event on free-to-air television, nor does it guarantee the broadcast of that event in its entirety. No rights holder can be compelled to sell its rights, and no broadcaster can be compelled to acquire rights.
- The Government announced its intention to review whether digital rights should be brought in scope of the listed events regime in its [Broadcasting White Paper](#), along with its intention to make qualification for the benefits of the regime specific to public service broadcasters.
- The Government has no current plans to undertake a full review of the events on the list itself. It believes the current list strikes an appropriate balance between retaining free-to-air sports events for the public while allowing rights holders to negotiate agreements in the best interests of their sport.
- The Government is fully committed to the listed events regime and if there are any changes they would only be with regard to reflecting where audiences choose to watch sport.
- DCMS has already undertaken engagement with stakeholders from a range of groups likely to be interested in the review. The publication of the Terms of Reference today provides an opportunity for any further stakeholders with an interest to contribute to the review.
- Stakeholders with an interest in contributing to the review are asked to get in touch by emailing [listedevents-digitalrightsreview@dcms.gov.uk](mailto:listedevents-digitalrightsreview@dcms.gov.uk).

DCMS will provide a list of questions to support contributions. Those wishing to contribute should ensure their final response is received by 15/12/2022 so their thoughts can inform the review.