CMS 186769/asg

Fiona Hyslop MSP
Minister for Culture and External Affairs
Scottish Government
St Andrew’s House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

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Dear Fiona,

Thank you for your letter of 14 September.

It was useful to meet and catch up on your views on broadcasting from a Scottish perspective.

I appreciate that there is a degree of uncertainty for the current channel 3 and channel 5 licence holders as the licences draw towards their expiry date. I recognise that important business planning decisions need to be taken, and so I sought an early report from Ofcom on the licensing options. I am currently considering this report and I will announce my decision as soon as I am able, but I am sure you will appreciate my wish to take the opportunity of the Communications Review to give this matter proper consideration. You may also wish to be aware that Ofcom considered the case for a single Scottish licence as a possibility in its last review of public service broadcasting in 2009. This is already feasible under existing legislation. In practice, however, any such licence could not take effect until Ofcom next renews or auctions the Channel 3 licences and in the case of Ofcom offering renewals, would require the consent of ITV as an the existing licence holder (Borders licence).

I was interested to read the Scottish Government’s broadcasting proposals and to read the Third Annual Progress Report of the Scottish Broadcasting Commission. As you know, the UK Government has committed to considering the Scottish Government’s requests for amending the Scotland Bill, while being clear that any changes must be based on detailed, well evidenced proposals that are capable of generating cross-party consensus, and which benefit Scotland without detriment to the UK as a whole.
Subject to the provisions on the BBC Trust and MG Alba in the Scotland Bill, I must make clear that I remain satisfied with the current arrangements in relation to the reserved status of broadcasting. I require further clarity on the proposals in order to consider them against the tests set out above. Please find some further questions on your proposals in the annex to this letter.

I am pleased that we will be working closely together on the Cultural Olympiad, and more widely on the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and I know that there are some exciting projects planned. A number of London 2012 Festival projects that will take place in Scotland were announced on 4 November by the London Organising Committee (LOCOG), and I know that Creative Scotland has been a key partner in terms of vision, leadership, facilitation and support. I completely agree that this work should act as a springboard into the 2014 Commonwealth Games, building on the immediate legacy of the Cultural Olympiad, and that the culture summit in Edinburgh next year will play a big part in that.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Yours,

Jeremy

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport