



Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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John Jeffrey
Chairman, Six Nations Council
1st Floor, Simonscourt House
Simonscourt Road
Ballsbridge
Dublin 4

4 March 2020

Dear Mr Jeffrey,

This Committee is appointed under House of Commons' standing orders to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It also examines the work of associated bodies as well as key developments within the sector. As such, it was a matter of great concern for the Committee to see reports in the media that coverage of Six Nations rugby may, following the outcome of a bidding process, move behind a paywall.

The Broadcasting Act 1996 (as amended) aims to make sure that sporting events of national interest are made available to all television viewers. Any shift to transmission via a subscription service would clearly go against the spirit of the listed events approach.

The Committee requests that you explain clearly the process from here, including responses to the following specific questions:

1. How will the bidding process work, and according to what timescale?
2. Currently, television rights are shared between the BBC and ITV, but press reports suggest that a joint bid may not be allowed when the deal ends in 2021. Are these reports accurate?
3. It is reported that Sky are favourites to secure the rights in 2020, via a £300m deal. Is this accurate?
4. Have you held any discussions with the DCMS about moving Six Nations from Category B to Category A of listed sporting events, thereby ensuring that live coverage is made available to free-to-air channels?
5. It is reported that private equity firm CVC are expected to acquire a 15% stake in the tournament with a view to driving up its commercial income. Can you confirm this?
6. What are the current broadcasting arrangements in each of the participating nations - were the tournament to go behind a paywall, what would be the impact in each of the participating nations?"

The Committee requests a response to this letter by Thursday 12 March.

Yours sincerely,

JULIAN KNIGHT MP

CHAIR, DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT COMMITTEE

Cc Bill Sweeney, Mark Dodson, Martyn Phillips

[CEOs, Rugby Football Unions of England, Scotland and Wales]