



Department for  
Digital, Culture,  
Media & Sport

**Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP**  
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Julian Knight MP  
Chair  
DCMS Select Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
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20 March 2020

Dear Julian,

Thank you for your letter dated 11 March 2020 in which you raised concerns about the future of Six Nations broadcasting.

The government recognises the value of sport to the lives and wellbeing of UK citizens. Events like the Six Nations rugby championships are of special significance, with the ability to bring the nation together through shared moments. The Six Nations championships is a highlight of the UK's sporting calendar and an event that always attracts significant interest.

It is for this reason that the event has been designated on the listed events regime since 1998. The listed events regime is designed to ensure that sporting events of national significance are available to as wide an audience as possible by prohibiting exclusive broadcasting of the event without prior consent from Ofcom. Although the Six Nations features on Group B of the list, which protects delayed coverage and/or highlights packages, this does not preclude it from being broadcast live on free-to-air television.

I note your request for the Championships to be promoted to Group A of the listed events regime, following recent media speculation that the event may be placed behind a paywall for the first time since 2002. However, it is not yet clear what the outcome of the negotiations will be for the 2022-24 broadcasting rights. I am also aware that the Six Nations have now acknowledged that they will continue to allow joint bids, as they have done in previous broadcasting rights negotiations.

It is also worth highlighting that broadcasting rights provide essential income for sports national governing bodies, which enables them to invest in better facilities for spectators, improve elite performance, hire the best coaches, and keep-up with mounting competition from rival sports and tournaments. It is important, therefore, that we ensure



the listed events regime continues to strike the right balance between retaining events for free-to-air broadcast and serving the best interests of the rights holders. I believe that, in its current form, the list continues to do this and as such I have no plans to review the listing of the Six Nations Championships at this time.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me on this important matter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Oliver Dowden', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP**  
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport