



Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel 020 7219 6188 website www.parliament.uk/cms

Tim Davie
Director-General of the BBC

By email

12 March 2021

Dear Tim Davie,

Mixed martial arts on the BBC

Last month it was announced that the BBC, during 2021, would have rights to live broadcast all mixed martial arts (often referred to as cage fighting) staged by Bellator on iPlayer.

On 9 March Peter McCabe, chief executive of the Headway charity, told the DCMS Committee that he would immediately ban both boxing and cage fighting as the primary objective of each sport is to injure or knock out the opposing fighter. He said that while other sports might risk brain injury as a consequence of participation, it was almost a primary objective in both boxing and mixed martial arts.

Given the current focus there has been in the media on concussion in sport, including several thoughtful pieces from the BBC (for example, the interview with the daughter of Scotland footballer Gordon McQueen) it seems strange that the BBC should be raising the prominence of mixed martial arts in this way. Indeed, by helping fund and broadcast live events, it could be said that the BBC was now a leading cheerleader for the sport in the UK.

I invite you to write to the Committee, before 31 March, our deadline for submitting evidence to this inquiry, outlining what due diligence the BBC has carried out on the safety of the sport with regard to concussion protocols, fighter safety and the likely influence this may have on young children who may seek to replicate the things they see on iPlayer.

Your sincerely

Julian Knight MP
Chair, DCMS Committee