

**Broadcasters' Liaison Group (BLG) Meeting – 10 January 2013**  
**Note of conclusions and action points**

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Present: Ric Bailey (BBC), Nadia Banno (BBC), Michael Cairns (BBC Northern Ireland), Dominic Harrison (Channel 4), Tabby Karamat (BBC), Gordon Macmillan (STV), Alasdair Macleod (BBC Scotland), Darwin Templeton (UTV), Ian Pratt (BBC Wales), Alex Robertson (Electoral Commission), Stephanie McMeeken (Electoral Commission), Martin Stott (Five), Jo Verrill (Classic FM – Global), Hywel Wiliam (S4C), Chris Wissun (ITV),

Apologies: Rob Shepherd (BBC), Kathleen Carragher (BBC Northern Ireland), Joan Darroch (STV), Rhys Evans (BBC Wales), Nick Powell (ITV Wales), Darren Henley (Classic FM), Jimmy Buckland (Talksport), Peter Lowe (BSKYB), Paul Sylvester (Absolute Radio)

Venue: 28 Portland Place, London, W1

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**1 NOTES OF LAST MEETING**

These were circulated at the meeting and were approved for publication. They do not purport to be a full record but merely a note of the conclusions and action points.

**2 MATTERS ARISING**

It was noted that questions have arisen in relation to putting links to social media sites on PPBs. It was agreed it was acceptable to link to party's websites though logos of social media sites cannot be used. It was also noted that questions might arise in future regarding HD delivery.

**3 RETROSPECTIVE FOR 2012**

**A GLA Elections 2012**

- The complaints made by Siobhan Benita, the independent candidate, to the broadcasters during the GLA Elections were discussed. Her complaints related to the Mayoral debates, general editorial coverage and allocation of PEBs. In respect of the legislative position relating to whether independents are entitled to PEBs the Electoral Commission confirmed it would be addressing this point in its response to the Ofcom consultation paper and would also raise it with the DCMS.

**B English, Scottish and Welsh Local Elections and PPBs**

- No particular issues arose save for some last minute changes relating to duration of PEBs in the Local Elections which were difficult to manage.

#### **4 REPRESENTATIONS FROM POLITICAL PARTIES ON PEB CRITERIA FOR THE 2013 ELECTIONS**

The BLG had invited written representations from political parties in the UK on the PEB allocation criteria for the elections due to take place in 2013 in addition to any other matters relevant to the BLG for example, PPBs and Referendum Broadcasts.

In the letters to the political parties, the Chair of the BLG:

- invited each party to submit any considered views they may have had about the criteria for allocation of PEBs in the previous elections so that they could be circulated and discussed at the next BLG meeting;
- enclosed the PEB arrangements for the previous occasions on which the same elections were contested;
- emphasised that each broadcaster takes its own decision about the PEB criteria and allocation, following discussion at the BLG, and that each broadcaster writes to the parties separately about their own plans; and
- welcomed any views on other issues relevant to the next BLG including referendum broadcasts.

Written representations were received from the following parties:

- (i) English Democrats; and
- (ii) UKIP.

The BLG noted and discussed each of the parties' submissions. The main issues that were raised by the parties were as follows:

- (a) Allocation Criteria of PEBs – One of the parties questioned what a sixth of the seats in England was projected to be and that it might be easier if parties had to hit a fixed numerical target. A point was also made that in relation to Mayoral elections a Mayoral candidacy is more significant than a county or district councillor candidacy because of the power, importance and resources which have to be deployed to win it. One of the parties also queried the meaning of the word 'substantial' and what was taken into account when determining substantial levels of past/current electoral support in

qualifying for additional PEBs. The BLG members discussed the factors taken into account and the political context.

## **5 LOOKING FORWARD**

Elections in 2013 are the English Local Elections. The BBC's proposed draft criteria for PEBs, based on the version for the last English Local Elections, were circulated at the meeting.

European Elections and the General Election will be taking place in 2014/15. It was discussed that for the General Election parties may be invited in to meet the BLG in addition to providing written submissions in advance.

The Scottish Referendum will be taking place in 2014. It was discussed that the legislation was being introduced into the Scottish Parliament in March and they would be adopting the system set out in the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA).

PPBs – the BBC has a seasonal approach: Autumn (Sep/Oct), Winter (Nov/Jan) and Spring (Feb/Mar).

## **6 OFCOM REVIEW**

The BLG discussed some of the key issues including:

- Major parties
- Independent candidates
- One sixth rule
- Seasonal changes
- Duration
- Local TV,

and agreed that each of the individual broadcasters would respond separately though would consult with each other. In respect of the issues around Local TV, there would be one BLG response, to be circulated in draft by one of the members and once agreed submitted to Ofcom.

**7 BLG Website – proposed amendments**

The BLG discussed various minor amendments required to be made to the BLG website such as wording around when PPBs are broadcast to be changed and delivery of broadcasts should be 10am not noon.

**8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The next meeting will likely be in January 2014 with a further meeting for the General Election likely to be in November 2014.