

Broadcasters' Liaison Group (BLG) Telephone Meeting – 22 March 2016
Note of conclusions and action points

Present: Ric Bailey (BBC), Valerie Nazareth (BBC), Rob Shepherd (BBC), Martin Forward (BBC Wales), Rosalind McInnes (BBC Scotland), Jacqueline McIntyre (BBC Northern Ireland), Chris Wissun (ITV), Gordon Macmillan (STV), Joan Darroch (STV), Emily Barber (Channel 4), Angharad Evans (S4C) Martin Stott (Channel 5), Bill Ridley (Talksport), Jo Verrill (Classic FM), Tom Hourigan (Absolute Radio).

The Group was joined by Kay Jenkins from the Electoral Commission

This meeting has been called primarily to discuss issues about the EU Referendum.

The BBC, ITV, STV, UTV, C4, C5, S4C and Commercial Radio all confirmed they would be broadcasting Referendum Campaign Broadcasts (RCBs).

The Electoral Commission

The group was briefed on the Electoral Commission's designation process and timetable.

Members of the group discussed issues arising:

Members agreed that given the need to act swiftly once designation is in place it would be helpful to agree a plan to "hit the ground running" from the 15th April. Representatives of the BLG will aim to meet the designated groups in the week commencing 18th April.

Number of RCBs

Although there is no need for all broadcasters to do the same, members felt that four broadcasts per side is appropriate.

Scheduling of RCBs

Members agreed that broadcasts on consecutive days (e.g. Monday/ Tuesday or Tuesday/Wednesday) seems most appropriate.

As in previous Referendums the order of RCBs should be decided by coin toss, followed by an agreed sequence of choices.

Dates:

Following designation the groups will need time to make their broadcasts.

Members noted there are two bank holidays in May and the Euro 2016 football tournament which will effect some scheduling in the final two weeks of the campaign.

Members agreed to check with their schedulers asap and a proposed timetable would be drawn up with a view to reaching agreement with the designated campaign groups.

Referendum Guidelines

Members agreed the usual delivery date of 3 working days prior to TX was needed.

Members discussed radio broadcasts.

All members will check the BLG website to ensure that the contact details and format details are up to date. Any changes need to be notified to Tabby Karamat as soon as possible.

Members will provide further details, as appropriate for the website or will provide a link from the BLG website to their own criteria. Information to be provided to Tabby Karamat.

Parliamentary Footage

Clarification is needed as to whether parliamentary footage from Westminster can be used in RCBs. Ric Bailey will endeavour to ascertain this.

Section 127 Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act

Members were informed that the BBC and ITV will be broadcasting PEBs for the May elections from April 5th to May 3rd. This means there will be an overlap with the referendum period. S127 PPERA means that during this period there is a statutory prohibition on a broadcast whose purpose or main purpose is to further a campaign promoting or procuring, or otherwise to promote or procure a particular outcome in the referendum.

AOB

Further issues will be dealt with by email unless circumstances mean that a meeting becomes necessary.