

Broadcasters' Liaison Group (BLG) meeting – 23 November 2021

Note of conclusions and action points

Present: Tabby Karamat (BBC) Ric Bailey (BBC) Alice Hickey (BBC) Joan Darroch (STV), Tim Burke (BBC), Alasdair MacLeod (BBC Scotland), Chris Hagan (UTV), Jacqueline McIntyre (BBC NI), Ailsa Chalk (ITV), Non Tudur Williams (BBC), Niki Martin, Meriem Anou (Channel 4), Heather Curley (STV), Linda Grimes (STV), Sion Pugh (S4C), Mark Sunderland (ITV), Martin Forward (BBC Wales), Natalie Threlfall (BBC) and Claire Telford (Wireless Group)

Niki Nixon (the Electoral Commission- observer member).

For item 5 only, the Group was joined by Natalie Rose from Ofcom.

The meeting notes of the last BLG annual meeting of 17 November 2020 and the extraordinary meeting of 12 April 2021 following the death of His Royal Highness Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh were circulated ahead of the meeting and were approved. These meeting notes do not purport to be a full record merely a note of the conclusions in action points.

The BLG reflected on the meeting of the 12 April and noted that each broadcaster would take its own view on what was appropriate if parties suspend campaigning following a national event.

There was a discussion among the members on the issue of parties falling short of qualification thresholds.

Candidates appearing within their electoral areas in party broadcasts was a recurring issue. This was a particular issue when PEBs were delivered late with little time for editing. The BLG noted that it was disappointing that it appeared that parties had not read the guidelines. Late delivery was a consistent problem, though it was noted that things had improved on requiring delivery three days in advance of broadcast.

Broadcasters noted that the parties had been flexible in rearranging slots following the death of the Duke of Edinburgh.

In Wales

Members noted issues in respect of radio PEBs in London.

The Electoral Commission gave a retrospective on this year's elections, which had been well run despite the challenges of the pandemic. The restrictions had caused uncertainty for campaigners but they had got the message out.

It was also noted that there would be a lot to communicate ~~W~~ICID 13 BDC 7 (ue)-ral

was not the case, and the broadcasters discussed whether this could be made clear to the parties. This would be taken forward to the next BLG.

The BLG discussed the law around fair dealing and the use of parliamentary footage by parties. It was noted that there was currently some ambiguity around whether parties could use this material and it would need to be clarified whether the omission of referendum broadcasts was deliberate.

Next Spring there would be the following elections:

- Northern Ireland Assembly
- English Locals
- Scottish Locals
- Welsh Locals

The BLG discussed the upcoming elections, including two elections under the Single Transferrable Vote system. The broadcasters discussed the timing of each broadcaster finalising their proposed allocation criteria for the PEB and notifying the parties of the same. As always it is a matter for each broadcaster on how they want to decide such an issue and the broadcasts allocated to each qualifying party.

The BLG discussed whether the guidelines should be clarified in respect of the restriction on explicit references to a candidate's constituency where that individual featured in the party broadcast. It was felt the guidance on parties' use of stock footage were sufficiently clear.