



Department
for Culture,
Media & Sport

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay
Minister for Arts & Heritage
1st Floor
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

E: enquiries@dcms.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/dcms

31 January 2024

To: All Peers

INT2024/00745/DC

My Lords,

MEDIA BILL: LORDS INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to say that the Media Bill had its First Reading in the House of Lords today, after completing its Commons stages on 30 January.

The important measures in this Bill will support our broadcasters and radio stations to continue to thrive by delivering on the key commitments set out in the broadcasting White Paper, [Up Next – the Government’s vision for the broadcasting sector](#).

In summary, the Bill will mean that audiences can more easily access and enjoy quality British content, and allow us to project British values globally. It will:

- modernise the ‘mission statement’ for public service television so that our public service broadcasters (BBC, ITV, STV, Channel 4, S4C, and Channel 5) are encouraged to focus on what makes them distinctive while having the flexibility to serve audiences across the UK with high-quality programmes on a wider range of services;
- modernise the listed events regime to protect British viewers’ access to the major sporting events which define our nation;
- ensure that public service content is always carried by – and easy for UK audiences to find on – connected devices and online platforms, for example Smart TVs, set-top boxes and streaming sticks;
- support Channel 4’s sustainability, including by strengthening the broadcaster’s governance arrangements and allowing it to make more of its own programmes;
- allow Sianel Pedwar Cymru (S4C) to broaden its reach and offer its content on new platforms in the UK and beyond, updating its public service remit to include digital and online services, and formally implementing in statute other recommendations made by Euryng Ogwen Williams’s 2018 independent review;
- better protect children by applying similar standards for television to the streaming giants. The Bill will ensure that standards are upheld on video-on-demand services through a proportionate new Video-on-Demand Code, to be drafted and enforced by Ofcom;



- provide greater access to subtitles, audio description and signed interpretation for the millions of people living with hearing and visual impairments in the UK when they watch or listen to content on-demand, in line with requirements on live television;
- reduce regulatory burdens and costs on commercial radio stations, better to support investment by broadcasters in content and the long-term sustainability of the sector, while strengthening protections for the provision of local news and information;
- ensure that UK radio is easily accessed through smart speakers by ensuring listeners are able to continue to find the content they expect; and
- remove a threat to the freedom of the press by fulfilling the Government's manifesto commitment to repeal Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013.

Changes made in the House of Commons

The Government has listened to points raised by colleagues in the House of Commons during the debates there carefully and, as a result, we have made a number of minor and technical changes to the Bill. These amendments will increase the workability of the Bill and ensure the best outcomes for UK audiences and listeners, as well as our important television, radio and news sectors.

I look forward to working with Noble Lords from across the House as this important piece of legislation progresses. To that effect, I will be hosting a drop-in session after Second Reading, to provide a chance to ask more about the objectives and details of the Bill. If you would like to attend that drop-in session, please contact my private office on dcmslordsminister@dcms.gov.uk and they will let you know where and when that is happening.

I will place a copy of this letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

With best wishes,

Parkinson of Whitley Bay

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay
Minister for Arts & Heritage