

Question	Your response
<p>We are seeking views, where possible supported by evidence, from stakeholders on the issues we have discussed in this document, in particular whether the revised time allocated to news programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) would still constitute an appropriate proportion of time; b) would still split in an appropriate manner between “peak viewing times” and other times; and c) would still ensure that news programmes are broadcast for viewing at intervals throughout the period for which the channel is provided. 	<p>JOMEC</p> <p>The Cardiff University School of Journalism, Media and Culture (JOMEC) was founded in 1970 as the Centre for Journalism Studies. It is the only UK journalism school located in a Russell Group University. JOMEC has always prioritised close relationships with the media industries in its teaching, research and consultancy work. Its MA courses prepare more than 100 students a year for jobs in journalism in the UK and internationally; recent research commissions include content analysis for the BBC and Ofcom; recent consultancies include work for ITN, Channel 4 and the BBC. A number of our academic staff have joined JOMEC after senior editorial and board level roles at ITN and the BBC.</p> <p>Channel 5 News</p> <p>The 5 News service has been one of the success stories of Channel 5 – from its launch in 1997 it has been recognised as innovative and imaginative as well as a great incubator of broadcasting talent, producing high quality news with comparatively modest resources. News provision was an important factor in awarding Channel 5 Broadcasting its licence. The initial commitment to 100 (currently 120) hours of news in peak has always been one of Channel 5’s most important public service obligations. The decision to reduce that licence obligation to 20 hours in peak is a significant one for Channel 5, Ofcom and the PSB system. Our view is that since Ofcom is proposing to allow the change (and we give our response to Ofcom’s specific questions below) there needs also to be a focus on its potential effects both in terms of the delivery of the new one-hour news programme at 5.00 which will be created and in the wider implications for PSB news provision.</p>

Ofcom's questions

a) would the revised time allocated to news programmes still constitute an appropriate proportion of time?

We are concerned with how the news programme might change if it moved to an hour-long format between 5pm to 6pm rather than half hour slots. We are also concerned about the statement that "Short evening bulletins will remain".

If the hour-long format was primarily live, with guests providing opinions to topical issues this would represent a departure from an independently produced news bulletin that covers an array of issues with journalists on location around the UK producing high quality reporting and authoritative live two-way coverage about issues. Relying on short evening bulletins with an anchor summarising the news rather than independent reporting around the UK would, in our view, diminish the quality of Channel 5's licence commitments to news programming.

Our Ofcom 2019 comparative study of television news demonstrated that Channel 5 provided a distinctive news agenda. In summary, we found:

Compared to BBC News at Ten, ITV News at Ten, Sky News at Ten and Channel 4 at 7pm, Channel 5 News spent the most time reporting health, education and crime. In total, this made up 27.5% of Channel 5's news airtime, whereas for the BBC News at Ten it was 7.3%.

Channel 5's emphasis on social policy beyond the conventional Westminster prism was distinctive from other broadcasters. When we interviewed the Editor of Channel 5 News at 5pm, Cait FitzSimons. She told us she imagined her audiences in the following way:

"if you say to them here's a political story, they won't be interested, but if you say to them here's a story about how your local flood defences aren't being funded, or your local hospital is struggling, or even corruption, or things like that, then they'll sit up and take notice. So, it's about how you present certain kinds of stories, so you don't shy away from

Brexit and politics, but it's where you tell them...And then, in other issues, I always talk about things that feel local to them on their doorstep. So it's about their health services, their schools, crime, those kind of issues, but done in a way that is very much about the actual experience of it rather than led by the policy of it, and I think that's the twist that we do."

According to the programme Editor, Channel 5's Brexit coverage was also considered to be self-consciously distinctive from other broadcasters. As she put it: "My viewers don't wake up to the Today Programme and they don't go to bed with Newsnight. My programmes are probably the only news programmes they watch in a day, so we don't assume knowledge. A lot of Brexit reporting is very much like, oh so there's this latest comment... and who really cares if Barnier has tweeted something, or how big a deal is it, how much has it changed people? We look at it from that perspective rather than, oh my god this amazing... have you seen this spat? It's about that kind of focus rather than it being an insider's storytelling; it's like, why is this important today?"

Overall, if the daily 5pm bulletins were replaced by either short bulletin updates or a live chat show about topical issues it would – in our view – diminish the quality of Channel 5's contribution to news programming. The evidence shows it provides a distinctive public service role in the UK's television news ecology.

b) would the revised time allocated to news programmes still split in an appropriate manner between 'peak viewing times' and other times?

A move to 5.00pm would appear to be a prima facie case of moving PSB news outside of "peak viewing times". While we are persuaded of the merit of seeking to build on the existing half hour bulletin at this time, we remain concerned about the quality of provision within peak. Should the programming in peak be reduced to short updates, we would be concerned that the news audience to which 5 News appeals was

being under-served in peak viewing time. This would be exacerbated should the provision in the 5.00pm programme not feature robust news reporting, as well as news discussion. While we accept there may be good arguments for not merely repeating content at 6.30, we would not be content to see either an overall reduction in the number of hours of PSB content produced for Channel 5.

c) Would the revised time allocated to news programmes still ensure that news programmes are broadcast for viewing at intervals throughout the period for which the channel is provided?

The removal of the 6.30pm programme increases the opportunity gap for viewers to engage with high-quality PSB news on Channel 5. Provided that the bulletins on the channel during peak-time viewing were of sufficient quality, we would view the plurality of offer on the PSB channels between 5.00-8.00pm to be sufficient, under the current settlement.

We would recommend Ofcom not only considers the scheduling of news, but reviews the quality of output produced before it makes the decision. And after a period to time to review the content of Channel 5 news to ensure it continues to produce high quality journalism, rather than fill time with live opinion-based programming.

The New 5.00 Programme

Channel 5's proposal is for 'a higher quality news programme' with 'greater impact for viewers'. Its licence commitment is for its news to be 'of high quality and dealing with national and international matters'. We hope Ofcom will wish to analyse how Channel 5 proposes to achieve this. A one hour news programme is a very different proposition from a 30 minute one. Channel 5's current service is resourced to produce a half hour bulletin at 5.00 and a half hour 'narrative repeat' (largely the same material) at 6.30. It will therefore be important that the service has the coverage and production re-

sources to ensure that it meets its licence requirements without, for example, excessive reliance on talk or phone-in formats. While studio interviews and discussions are and will continue to be an important part of the service there will need to be an appropriate balance between them and news reporting and analysis.

News in Peak in the PSB System

The obligation to carry high quality national and international news in peak has always been one of the most important requirements in the PSB system. The proposed reduction of peak hours on Channel 5 is the first time Ofcom has significantly relaxed those licence obligations. We agree with the case for change because of the unique circumstances of this case – that it will still leave viewers with a choice of high quality national and international news bulletins on BBC1, Channel 3 and Channel 4 from 18.00 to 20.00, and the proposed new programme on Channel 5 would extend that period into the late afternoon where we would hope there will be an additional news audience. We would be very concerned if this decision was to be taken as a precedent for further discussions between Ofcom and other licencees on relaxing or reducing their news obligations. Ofcom's own research shows that broadcast news continues to attract significant audiences and enjoys very high levels of trust. The UK is fortunate in still having three strong broadcast news organisations - BBC, ITN and Sky. But none of this can be taken for granted. With significant changes in the PSB system already in prospect, we believe it is important for Ofcom to restate its commitment to this central public service obligation