



**ITV plc ENGLISH REGIONS AND BORDERS
ANNUAL STATEMENT 2009**

5th December 2008

Introduction & Strategy

The 2009 Statement for the ITV plc English Regions & Border is written against the background of the proposals we presented in 2007 and then revised in 2008 for the re-structuring of our regional news services.

Those proposals, which have been endorsed by Ofcom and presented by the regulator for further consultation, extensively re-draw the regional news map. In doing so we will create a well-resourced and sustainable service that will continue to reflect the regions, maintain strong connections with the audience and remain – certainly for the next few years – a core part of ITV's public service broadcasting remit.

While at the time of preparing this statement we await the outcome of the consultation, we believe the proposals are to be highly recommended. Therefore the strategy and programme offer we set out here are based on that position.

Having identified the need to reduce our regional news costs in line with the declining value of our current PSB licences, ITV was faced with a number of alternative approaches. The one chosen was both the boldest and we believe the most effective. We decided to make a case to the regulator for a redefined regional news map that would enable us to offer fewer services but ensure that each was well-resourced and able to offer high quality news to all viewers. These programmes will celebrate life in the regions across the country and offer a distinct alternative to the service offered by the BBC. In 2009 we want to ensure that in an area of programming where viewers want choice and a variety of perspectives we would be able to offer them.

In the plan set out in the Ofcom Phase II PSBR document in the autumn of 2008 we proposed in the English regions and Border to move from 16 separate news services to 8. Those that were multiple service regions will now be supported by opts carrying sub-regional material.

At the root of the plan lies a commitment to quality programmes, to strategically placed resources, skilled journalists and a continuing capability to be 'live' when the stories and the moment demand it. We will enhance the news programmes with the addition of an amount of current affairs. This is in line with the Ofcom proposals to reduce the amount of regional non-news programming required in the schedule.

Significant Changes

The approval of the proposals outlined by Ofcom would result in a series of significant changes to the current services. The impact of the plan in England and the Borders will be to reduce the current range of single news services from 16 to eight. The new single regions will in five cases be supported by opts carrying sub-regional material.

The regional news changes are:

Border and Tyne Tees combine to form a single news service with 15' opts within the early evening magazine to service each of the distinct areas. The Border opt would include Cumbria, southern Scotland and the Isle of Man.

West and Westcountry will amalgamate in a similar way, also with 15' opts serving the separate licence areas.

Meridian will become a single service licence with 15' opts, one for the combined Meridian South and Thames Valley and one for Meridian South East.

Yorkshire becomes a single service with 6' opts in the magazine programmes covering the north and south of the region.

Central reverts to being a single regional service with 6' opts serving the current Central East and West sub-regions.

Anglia also returns to a single service with 6' opts covering the eastern and western elements of the region.

While the lunchtime and weekend bulletins will be combined in each licence area the late weekday bulletins will be largely focused on each of the sub-regions.

For the sake of clarity there are no changes proposed to the services offered in Granada and London.

The amount of air time allocated to regional news in each licence area is also proposed to change and this is dealt with below under Tier 2 Arrangements.

The structure and minutage of ITV plc's regional news services will remain in their current 2008 configuration until the Phase II consultation is completed. If the proposals are approved then we would expect the re-structure to rollout shortly after acceptance has been indicated.

In non-news programming Ofcom has proposed a reduction from the 2008 weekly average of 1.5 hours a week in each region to 15' a week. In accordance with the proposals that non-news material – substantially current affairs – will be contained within slots allocated to the early evening news magazines. (In addition to this in 2009 ITV will continue with a series of regional political programmes. This is dealt with more fully below and will be in addition to the 15' proposed licence requirement).

Tier 2 Arrangements

Under the proposals set out by Ofcom each of the English regions and Border will deliver an average of 3 hours and 45 minutes of news each week across

the year. We have proposed to Ofcom that the average be calculated from the point at which – assuming approval – the new arrangements come into being. This will result in an annual delivery of 195 hours of regional news across peak and near-peak, daytime and weekends.

Each region will deliver a total of 13 hours of non-news material largely composed of current affairs and factual elements. These will be contained within the slots allocated for the regional news magazines.

There will be no repeat programming and we will meet such ‘made in the region’ qualifications as devised by and discussed with Ofcom.

Programme Offer

News

The ambition for the new services we will offer in 2009 is realistic but bold. We will deliver a well-resourced, confident and popular news service to viewers throughout England and the Borders, ensuring widespread coverage through the positioning of our resources and maintaining that essential link, that sense of real connection that our audiences have always enjoyed with their regional news services.

We will be based in 8 main news centres with 23 bureaux both large and small serving as the base for reporters and crews working away from the main centres. One of the bureaux will be at the Scottish Parliament building in Edinburgh serving Border. Four other Border reporters will be based in Selkirk, Dumfries, Whitehaven and Kendal ensuring that the new service has a presence right across a very widespread territory.

Our total complement of 650 staff will include more than 60 correspondents. Among them will be our specialist sports staff and our regional political correspondents working with the managing editor and news editor based at Millbank in London.

In addition to the correspondents there will be more than 60 reporters across England and the Borders all of whom will be trained in the use of the latest digital camera technology. The editorial team of correspondents and reporters will be supported by 85 camera crews – both staff and freelance – giving ITV’s regional news operation a highly trained newsgathering corps. This is a significant resource that will be well-equipped and flexible. It will be well-positioned strategically to cover the complex geography of the regions and their rich news agendas.

We will also maintain a considerable ‘live’ mobile capability. Across the regions there will be 15 satellite dish vehicles, able to transmit from virtually anywhere and adding to our reach into the farthest points of our regions. As an editorial and production operation it will be both nimble and assured providing the solid foundation of the continuing quality of our offer.

Broadband news is also now a major feature of our total news service. ITV News Group now directly manages the supply of regional and local news to the ITV Local broadband site. We have recently appointed On Line Editors in each newsroom working directly to the Heads of News to speed the passage of material – text and video – onto the Local sites.

Current Affairs & Other

In Phase II of the Public Service Broadcasting Review Ofcom has proposed a new requirement for non-news programming broadcast in the English regions and Border averaged at 15' a week. This material will be included within the slots allocated to the 6pm news magazines.

This content will be largely current affairs. It will aim to bring a deeper background to the main issues reflected in the news programmes and to expand understanding of the factors affecting and driving the keys stories of the day. The production of this material will be supported by the appointment of Features & Current Affairs Editors within the news operations.

For 2009 ITV has also decided to maintain the production of its regional political programmes. There will be 11 programmes transmitted at monthly intervals across the year (but not in August due to the parliamentary summer recess). These programmes will include a wide range of parliamentarians from each region reflecting on the major political topics of the day as they affect their constituents. The majority of the programmes will be recorded at our Millbank studios in Westminster to ease the participation of MPs. The transmission of these programmes will be in addition to the minimum non-news requirements indicated in the Ofcom proposals.

Additional Information

Work will continue in 2009 extending our links into the ethnic communities we serve and in ensuring we link with other 'communities of interest' in the regions served by our news programmes.

The ITV News Group has made the senior appointment of a Diversity Manager to co-ordinate all of activities directed towards better connections with and understanding of the various minority groups. The holder of the post is registered blind and has built a considerable reputation over the years as broadcaster and representative on a number of national bodies.

Diversity will remain a key priority within the News Group strategy and we will monitor progress on all of the objectives outlined in our regional diversity plans.

We also plan to continue the ING Internships inaugurated in 2008. This scheme offers six week placements to people who may previously have thought broadcasting beyond their reach. Over the weeks they will shadow key production areas including reporting, cameras, graphics and bulletin presentation.

The successful roadshow initiative is planned to continue in 2009 to give viewers the opportunity to engage directly with the news teams at special events across the country. Regular features will include the chance to present off-air news bulletins and weather reports. We will also maintain routes for public input through a variety of means that will include regional advisory groups, focus groups, hotlines and consultative panels. The ITV Viewers' Enquiries desk is being expanded and will continue to be based in Birmingham at the Central News headquarters.