

## **Guidelines for the Production of Party Broadcasts**

### **Introduction**

Whilst political parties are responsible for the content of their own broadcasts, they are required to observe the following guidelines, which are designed to cover compliance issues and production requirements agreed by all the broadcasters in the BLG, and will be applied equally to all parties.

The guidelines are designed to reconcile the freedom of parties to convey their political messages with the regulatory requirements of broadcasting, and the editorial standards of the broadcasters.

### **Compliance**

All broadcasts must observe the law - for example (but not limited to) libel, privacy, contempt, copyright, incitement to violence or to racial or religious hatred.

All broadcasts must comply with the Ofcom Broadcasting Code, in particular in relation to harm and offence (Section 2) and to fairness and privacy (Sections 7 & 8). Parties should also refer to the BBC Editorial Guidelines that relate to harm and offence (Chapter 5) and fairness and privacy (Chapters 6 & 7).

Subject to the matters set out above, factual accuracy is the responsibility of the parties making the broadcasts.

Due impartiality on the part of the broadcaster is achieved by the allocation of broadcasts or a series of broadcasts to different parties. There is of course no obligation to achieve due impartiality within each broadcast.

Broadcasters may inform parties if they reasonably believe any content in the broadcast does not comply with the law, the Ofcom Broadcasting Code (or in respect of the BBC, its Editorial Guidelines) or these Guidelines, and can require amendments as a condition of broadcast. The party responsible for the broadcast will indemnify the broadcaster in respect of any legal action or liability resulting from the content of the broadcast.

### **Participants**

No identifiable individual should be featured prominently in a broadcast in a way that suggests support for the party making the broadcast without that person's informed consent, which

should generally be recorded in writing. Copies of signed release forms should be made available to the broadcaster on request.

Parties must ensure that individuals who feature in the broadcast are fully informed and agree to participate. In addition, written consent from a parent or guardian should be obtained for the appearance of any child (i.e. someone under the age of 16), and where an individual is unable to give permission, written consent should be obtained from the person (over 18) with primary responsibility for their care.

Parties should take particular care regarding shots of protests featuring people who are not or may not be supporters of the party in question.

### **Third Party Footage & Images**

It is the responsibility of the political party to ensure that all permissions and third party rights (such as for music and archive footage) required for broadcast and online publication have been secured prior to transmission. Broadcasters may seek written confirmation of these rights clearances before transmission, or following the delivery of the broadcast.

The use of commercial “stock footage” is permitted, but identifiable individuals should not be featured in a way that suggests support for the party making the broadcast unless specific consent has been obtained from those individuals for the use of their image in the party broadcast.

Subject to conditions for licenced use of parliamentary footage (found in the licence and also download conditions of the respective institutions), extracts of recordings from proceedings in the Westminster Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, Senedd - the Welsh Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the London Assembly may be used, featuring a speech or extract by a member of the party making the broadcast, where that member's consent has been obtained.

Extracts featuring members not of the party making the broadcast require the consent of the member and the other party concerned. Wide shots of the chambers of the Scottish Parliament, Senedd - the Welsh Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly are allowed, but wide shots of Westminster chambers during sittings are not.

Extracts from party conference speeches of the party allocated the broadcast may be used, and can be licensed in the normal way from broadcasters. News footage featuring the party's own leader and politicians can also be licensed from broadcasters. But clips that identify the programme source (for example via on screen logos, theme music or the inclusion of presenters or reporters) should be avoided.

Visual and audio material (e.g. archive and news clips) of political figures from other UK political parties should not be included without the consent of the individual concerned. Undistorted stills that have been lawfully published previously can normally be used without the individual's or their party's consent. Stills that have been distorted (for example through text, graphics or visual effects being placed over the political figure) should not be used. Archive footage or undistorted stills of international public figures can normally be used without such individuals' consent, where such use does not imply the support of that figure for the party making the broadcast.

If any part of a broadcast has been produced by AI or is synthetic/deepfake content, the party submitting the broadcast must inform the broadcaster when submitting it. AI-produced and synthetic content must not be used in a way that materially misleads viewers, or that results in the unfair treatment or an unwarranted infringement of privacy of a person. If a broadcast features AI-produced or synthetic content, it is likely to require identification to make its use apparent. Subject to the forgoing, use of caricatures or cartoons of politicians should be acceptable in principle.

### **Other Content Issues**

Images or recordings including broadcasters – such as interviewers or reporters - should be avoided where the impartiality of the broadcaster might be called into question by their inclusion in the broadcast.

The use of reconstructions or actors in a broadcast must be made clear to the audience if there is any possibility that the audience could be confused or misled by their appearance.

Broadcasts that closely mimic or parody the format of established programmes on any channel, particularly news programmes, should be clearly labelled to avoid any confusion or running the risk of misleading the audience.

Where a candidate is included in a party election broadcast there should not be any explicit visual or verbal reference stating the constituency, ward or (in relevant elections) region they are standing in, with the exception that a London Mayoral candidate can be identified as such.

In a party election broadcast, no candidate should make a constituency, ward or region point or reference, with the exception that London Mayoral candidates can make points relating to London. This is to avoid giving a candidate an unfair advantage, or raising their profile, in their constituency, ward or region.

Political parties planning to use telephone or text numbers in their broadcasts must consult with individual broadcasters at least one week before transmission, in order to ensure there is appropriate compliance with the strict rules which apply in this area, including the form of

words to be used in text and voice. Party Broadcasts will not be transmitted unless a form of words agreed with the broadcaster is used. No revenue-generating telephone numbers are to be used in a broadcast.

Appeals for members of the audience to contact the party are acceptable. Telephone and SMS details, URLs, QR codes and email addresses are allowed (subject to consultation beforehand with individual broadcasters about telephone or text numbers) but should be on screen no longer than 30 seconds. Direct appeals for funds or links to such appeals are not allowed.

### **Duration of broadcasts and scheduling**

Television political broadcasts can be one of the following lengths – 2'40", 3'40", or 4'40". Broadcasters should be informed of the selected duration at least 14 days prior to the transmission date.

For radio, Ofcom rules say parties may choose any length up to 2'30" - the BBC's preferred duration is 1'30".

For commercial radio, broadcasts can be any duration up to 2'30", but the preferred length is 1'00".

Scheduling of broadcasts is a matter for broadcasters. Broadcasters retain editorial control over scheduling, and have the right to cancel and reschedule broadcasts in the event of a breaking news story, a major event or another reason which means that it is appropriate to do so in the circumstances.

### **Delivery**

Broadcasts should be delivered via digital file using common technical standards agreed by the BBC, Channel 4, Channel 5, STV, ITV and S4C.

Broadcasts' sound can be in mono or stereo. If there is music then stereo with any voice over and piece to camera/interview as dual mono. If there is no music, then dual mono is preferable i.e. the same on both channels.

If a party does not want sound on its broadcast, it must deliver the broadcast to the technical specification of each broadcaster carrying it (please see below for details).

The broadcast master material should be delivered to each broadcaster carrying the broadcast. Details of delivery requirements and addresses should be checked directly with each of the broadcasters individually.

The digital files and details of any music used must be delivered by 10 am at least **3 working days** before the date of transmission. Broadcasters reserve the right to cancel and/or reschedule the broadcast of any material that is not delivered on time, not delivered to the broadcaster's technical specification or where compliance issues are identified by the broadcaster on delivery, requiring amendments prior to broadcast. Broadcasters reserve the right to charge for any costs incurred due to late delivery.

See the websites of the individual broadcasters for full technical specifications:

- [\*\*BBC Television\*\*](#)For technical specifications, please see 'Technical Standards for Delivery of Television Programmes to BBC' (please note in particular 'File Delivery Requirements').
- [\*\*ITV\*\*](#)
- [\*\*STV\*\*](#)
- [\*\*S4C\*\*](#)(2021) S4C Guidelines to Political Parties or Designated Organisations for the Production of Party Political, Party Election or Referendum Campaign Broadcasts (PPB, PEB, RCBs)
- [\*\*S4C\*\*](#)(2021) Delivery of Party Political, Party Election and Referendum Campaign Broadcasts to S4C (PPB, PEB, RCBs)
- [\*\*Channel 4\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Channel 5\*\*](#)
- [\*\*BBC Radio\*\*](#)Audio Quality Information & Standards for BBC Radio