

Government adds Paralympic Games to listed events regime

The Government has confirmed that the summer and winter Paralympic Games have been added to the 'crown jewels' list of protected sports events. This ensures the Games will remain available for free-to-air television broadcasters in the future, reaching the widest possible audience, and not go behind a pay-wall.

The Games, which were founded at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in 1948, have become the biggest global event in disability sport, and now enjoy record levels of media coverage and interest.

During the Athens 2004 Games, 10.6 million people watched at least 15 consecutive minutes of coverage. By Rio 2016, this had reached 31.6 million people – an increase of almost 200%. At London 2012, Channel 4 dedicated 500 hours of broadcast time across its platforms, with this increasing to 700 hours for Rio 2016.

The addition of the Paralympic Games marks a major step forward in improving the inclusivity of listed events. By delivering parity with the Olympic Games, it underlines the Government's commitment to improving the visibility of disability sports.

Ahead of the announcement Sports Minister Nigel Adams visited the English Institute of Sport High Performance Centre in Sheffield, where he met members of Team GB's Para Table Tennis and Wheelchair Basketball teams as preparations increase ahead of Tokyo 2020.

Nigel Adams said:

The Paralympic Games is one of the highlights of the sporting calendar, as the country comes together to support our world-class Paralympic athletes. So it is only right that the event is available on free-to-air television for all to enjoy.

Adding the Games to the crown-jewels list of major sporting events guarantees it the platform it deserves every four years that will help inspire the sporting stars of the future.

I am proud that the UK is the birthplace of the Paralympic movement which has done so much in shifting attitudes and raising awareness on disability.

Paralympic Champion Baroness Grey-Thompson said:

I am delighted that the Paralympic Games has been added to the list

of 'Crown Jewels'. When you look at the other events it will now sit alongside, it means so much to athletes, current and retired, to know the level that the Paralympic Games has reached in the public consciousness and how much it means to everyone.

Mike Sharrock, Chief Executive of the British Paralympic Association said:

The Paralympic Games is the most inspirational sporting event in the world and London 2012 clearly demonstrated the British public's passion for watching our incredible athletes represent ParalympicsGB.

We have been advocating for some time that the Paralympics Games should be treated in the same way as the Olympic Games and always be available on free to air television for the nation to enjoy. As we build towards Tokyo 2020 we are delighted this has now been added to the list of sporting 'crown jewels' as it marks a significant moment for a nation that is proud to be the home of Paralympic sport.

Ross Wilson, Para Table Tennis World champion, said:

It is fantastic news that the Paralympics now has the same status as the Olympics and other major sporting events.

My first experience of the Paralympics was London 2012 and the support we had from the British public was incredible. Since then the interest in Paralympic sport has continued to grow and thanks to Lottery funding I can train full time and be the best athlete that I can be.

Ensuring that the Paralympics is available for everyone to watch live on TV is important, not only to me as an athlete, but also to increase participation in Para sport and inspire young athletes with a disability in the future.

Dame Katherine Grainger, Chair of UK Sport said:

Our Paralympians have created some of the most iconic sporting moments of the past decade through their global success and incredible stories.

To have government assurance that we will be able to continue to watch these inspirational sporting achievements unfold on terrestrial TV for many years to come is wonderful news and places the Paralympic Games in its rightful place amongst the greatest sporting events in world sport.

Alex Mahon, CEO of Channel 4 said:

We are delighted that the Government has decided to add the Paralympic Games to the list of 'crown jewel' sporting events that should be available on free to air television.

Channel 4 is proud to have been the UK broadcaster of the Paralympic Games since London 2012 and we strongly believe that they are of significant national interest to British audiences.

This decision means that the Paralympics has parity with the Olympic Games in terms of its national status and will ensure that audiences from across the UK will be able to continue to enjoy the incredible sporting achievements of Paralympic athletes.

Justin Tomlinson, Minister for Disabled People, said:

Anyone who watched Ellie Simmonds exciting the crowds on her way to gold in London couldn't fail to see how inspirational the Paralympic movement has been and will continue to be. That's why it is so important that Paralympic sports are broadcast in homes across the nation, to convey the message that no-one should be held back because of their background.

Whether that's playing a sport they see championed on TV or pursuing their chosen career, our priority is to build a more inclusive society for disabled people. Which is why we are working on a national strategy for disabled people, building on the vital work that is underway.

Today's announcement marks the first change to the listed events regime in more than twenty years. It follows a consultation process with the BBC, S4C, Ofcom and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and with Channel 4 as the current rights holder for the Paralympic Games, that includes Tokyo 2020 later this year.

It will see the Paralympic Games made a 'Group A event'. This ensures the event is given the same status as the Olympic Games, men's football World Cup, FA Cup Final, Grand National and Wimbledon finals.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has also consulted on adding the women's equivalents of men's events already on the list. The consultation has now closed and a final decision on any changes relating to this will be made in due course.

On the sporting outlook for Great Britain and Northern Ireland at the start of a new decade, Nigel Adams added:

We know that memorable sporting performances have the power to bring the nation together and inspire greater participation. But as we all witnessed with London 2012, we also put on brilliant, unforgettable sporting events. The men's Cricket World Cup and women's Netball World Cup were just two of the incredible championships the UK hosted in 2019 alone.

As we embark on a new decade, this will continue with a busy roster of major sports events we have committed to delivering over the next few years, including UEFA Euro 2020, the UEFA Women's Euros and Rugby League World Cup in 2021, and the Birmingham Commonwealth Games in 2022. These events will deliver jobs, inbound tourism, hotel bookings and much more – providing economic benefits to people across the country, and pumping hundreds of millions into our economy.

As we made clear in our election manifesto, we are determined to continue bringing the biggest and best sporting events to the UK over the next decade. These can only help to inspire participation and enhance the UK's global reputation.

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

The first iteration of the code was a voluntary agreement between the BBC and ITV that neither would seek exclusive rights on certain events. The list was increasingly widened to include many sporting events and was included in the Broadcasting Act 1996, which gave the Secretary of State discretionary powers to add and remove events from the list after consultation with certain parties. The legislation also gave Ofcom the power to impose fines for failure to comply with the prohibition on exclusively broadcasting events on the list without their prior consent.

The Broadcasting Act 1996 gives the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport discretion to designate sporting and other events of national interest as listed events. Once listed, broadcasting rights to such events must be available to the main free-to-air terrestrial broadcasters ("qualifying broadcasters").

Qualifying broadcasters are those which reach 95% coverage of UK viewers and at no additional cost to the viewer than the television licence fee. Broadcasters currently meeting these criteria are BBC One, BBC Two, BBC Four, CBBC, CBeebies, BBC News, BBC Parliament, ITV, ITV2, ITV3, ITV4, Channel 4, More 4, Film 4 and Channel 5.

[On 18 July 2019 former Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Jeremy Wright wrote to the BBC, S4C, Ofcom and the International Paralympic Committee to consult those bodies on adding the Paralympic games to the listed events regime.](#) The Secretary of State also wrote to Channel 4, which currently holds the broadcasting rights for the next Paralympic Games

in Tokyo 2020.

Following the consultation process, the Government has concluded that the summer and winter Paralympic Games meet the criteria for addition to the listed events regime, on the basis that the Paralympic Games are an event of 'special national significance' and provide a 'shared moment on the national calendar'.

The revised list of free-to-air listed events is as follows:

Group A (Full Live Coverage Protected)

- The Olympic Games
- The Paralympic Games
- The FIFA World Cup Finals Tournament
- The European Football Championship Finals Tournament
- The FA Cup Final
- The Scottish FA Cup Final (in Scotland)
- The Grand National
- The Wimbledon Tennis Finals
- The Rugby World Cup Final
- The Derby
- The Rugby League Challenge Cup Final

Group B (Secondary Coverage Protected)

- Cricket Test Matches played in England
- Non-Finals play in the Wimbledon Tournament
- All Other Matches in the Rugby World Cup Finals Tournament

- Six Nations Rugby Tournament Matches Involving Home Countries
- The Commonwealth Games
- The World Athletics Championship
- The Cricket World Cup – the Final, Semi-finals and Matches Involving Home Nations' Teams
- The Ryder Cup
- The Open Golf Championship