# [GB] Ofcom Decision on Local Television Services

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A series of decisions released by Ofcom (Office for Communications) on 23 July 2013 has changed the way local programming, particularly news, will be provided by 'Channel 3' independent/commercial broadcast licensees across the United Kingdom.

The decisions follow the announcement by the Secretary of State for Culture Sport and Media, Maria Miller, not to block the applications for renewal of the local television licences of the current holders; effectively giving ten-year extensions.

In response to a consultation with the licensees concerning a number of issues related to the provision of local television, Ofcom concurred on a number of points and rejected others.

Firstly, in England the provision of ITV would be on a more local basis achieved by increasing the number of regions from eight to 14. The cost of doing so would be offset by reducing the required minutes of local news content from 30 minutes per night to 20 minutes. The largest two regions - London and North-West England - are not included in this reduction.

In Scotland Ofcom will require a greater provision of local television service in the Border region. This will be achieved by an additional 90 minutes of regional programming supplementary to the 30 minutes of news, and also the obligation for separate broadcasts in two Border regions so that English viewers can watch their own local services.

In Wales the 30 minutes of nightly news will remain but a reduction will be allowed in daytime broadcasts in line with the English regions.

In Northern Ireland UTV's request for a reduction in minutes of regional non-news programming was rejected and the licensee will be required to maintain the current level of service.

Simultaneously Ofcom announced that no changes will be made to the obligations under licensing of 'Channel 5'.

***Ofcom - Channel 3 and Channel 5: Statement of Programming Obligations - Amendments to obligations for Channel 3 and Channel 5***

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***ahead of a new licensing period, 23 July 2013***

http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/c3-c5-obligations/statement/

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