

RUGBY LEAGUE COMMERCIAL

Response from Rhodri Jones – Managing Director, RL Commercial

Question 1: What do you think about the potential public value of our proposals for extending the number of originated hours for 5 Sports Extra, including the extent to which our proposal contributes to the BBC's mission to serve all audience through the provision of high quality and distinctive output and services which informs, educates and entertains?.

Given the aim of 5 Live Sports Extra to increase the BBC's appeal to "lower socio-economic groups outside London and the South East", we believe an increase in the number of hours broadcast could be beneficial if it led to the broadcast of more hours of Rugby League on the station. This could be in the form of taking some of the excellent BBC local radio coverage, as already happens, or through broadcasting the Rugby League Podcast, now presented by Tanya Arnold following the departure of Dave Woods – and it would also seem an opportunity to broadcast more Women's and Wheelchair Rugby League.

Our major concern would be that this is not at the expense of coverage on Radio 5 Live, which remains and seems likely to remain more of a national conversation – whereas listeners will tend to make a deliberate decision to tune into Sports Extra for specific coverage.

We would also stress the importance of our relationship with TalkSport, who have covered Super League fixtures for a number of years, and are this season covering the Women's Super League for the first time.

Question 2: What do you think about the benefit to audiences who will listen to the station, as well as wider potential social and cultural impacts?

We believe that Rugby League followers in the north of England will benefit from enhanced Rugby League coverage – and that additional coverage of Women's and Wheelchair Rugby League would have additional benefits to players in those competitions, in terms of raising their profile and prestige.

Question 3: What impact (positive or negative) do you think our proposal for a full-time 5 Sports Extra might have on fair and effective competition on commercial radio stations providing sports content on radio?

As mentioned above, Rugby League has an established and developing relationship with TalkSport, so any changes to the level of live coverage through 5 Live Sports Extra would have to take that into account.

Question 4: Are there any steps you think we could take to minimise any potential negative effects on fair and effective competition or to promote potential positive impacts?

If more fixtures are to be broadcast live from BBC local radio coverage, that should be recognised in existing and future rights agreements. The BBC's charter to provide high quality and distinctive output should also be seen as a requirement to broadcast a range of sports (rather than an overwhelming focus on football), and to focus on areas of the country outside London and the South East – and perhaps the latter also reflecting the fact that Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland already have well-resourced national stations.