

Letter to Ch4: Why we turned down our invitation.

By Michael Gibbons

Please find below a copy of the letter sent to Channel 4 regarding from our National Convener Michael Gibbons

Dear Ms Mahon,

I am writing to explain why I and SNP students will be declining our invite to join the live studio audience in Birmingham for 'Brexit: what the nation really thinks' which is to broadcast this Monday November 5.

This is the sort of opportunity we would have normally jumped at but your decision to withdraw an invitation to the SNP to appear on the panel is deeply disappointing.

As you know in June 2016 Scotland voted to remain in the EU 62 per cent to 38 per cent. All of Scotland's 32 local council areas voted to Remain in the EU. Scotland is the only nation in the UK to achieve a clean sweep of all local authorities. Indeed Scotland delivered the strongest Remain vote of any nation in the UK.

Between these facts - and your comments on the launch of '4 All the UK', when you said Channel 4 "will go even further to make sure that people right across the UK are represented on screen" - it seems a curious and wrongheaded decision to omit the SNP who are by far the most popular political party in Scotland, having been in government at Holyrood for 11 years, the third largest party at Westminster and second largest party in the UK in terms of membership.

When you invited Nicola Sturgeon to take part, some weeks ago, the party responded that she would only be appearing if the other major party leaders were on but that we be delighted to have someone senior from the SNP to match the likes of Boris Johnson, Nigel Farage (the two names quoted to us) and someone equal to UK gov cabinet ministers and Labour front benchers.

So it was deeply disappointing when on Saturday 3rd November, some 48 hours before the programme airs, my colleague who is Head of Broadcast media for the party had it confirmed that the SNP were being uninvited from the panel.

The editorial decision to exclude Scotland's voice from this debate makes a mockery of the programme's title in which 'nation' I presume means UK - ie England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland? More significantly it seriously undermines your credentials as a broadcaster in Scotland that is meant to be 'best suited to serve all of the UK'.

For these reasons myself and the SNP students will not be accepting the invite to appear in the audience which would be little more than a box ticking exercise for the programme.

Kind Regards,
Michael Gibbons