

**Statement by Lord Wakeham on France '98: The World Cup**

Newspapers and magazines have a number of different roles in covering high profile and extremely competitive international sporting events. These are most obviously:

- To report them accurately for their readers; and
- To reflect the nation's support for British sportsmen and women representing their country either at home or abroad.

However, they also have a responsibility – in my view of paramount importance – not to encourage British supporters attending sporting events to behave in an irresponsible or disorderly manner. In doing so, they can protect the interests of all law abiding supporters.

Of course newspapers have every right to report on events in a robust and partisan fashion; indeed, the Code of Practice protects that right. But that right must be balanced by responsibility.

Editors should therefore seek to ensure – both in the run up to France '98 and during it – that their reporting and their comment does nothing to incite violence, disorder or other unlawful behaviour, or to foster any form of xenophobia that could contribute directly to such incitement. This should obviously include not just comment about other competitors, but also practical advice about how fans themselves should participate in the events or seek to attend them.

In this task – ensuring that the World Cup is enjoyed by everyone, and without violent incident in which British fans are implicated or to which they are exposed – the press has a unique and positive role to play. In doing so it can again demonstrate the strength of effective self regulation.

**ENDS**

13 May 1998