

# Professor Robert Beveridge

## Scottish Broadcasting

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the 20<sup>th</sup> December edition of *'The National'* Peter Strachan argued that *'Public Service Broadcasting isn't working for Scotland'*.

I agree. We need to ask therefore

How do we bring about broadcasting which is of the scale and quality to reflect and represent a nation, not just a region?

How best can the interests of viewers and listeners in Scotland be secured?

What policy recommendations might be made to improve the current position?

Scotland has given a great deal to broadcasting, including the establishment of the BBC and the adoption of 'Inform, Educate and Entertain' as guiding principles (John Reith) to the technology of television (John Logie Baird) and also to the theory and practice of documentary (John Grierson).

Despite this, broadcasting in and for Scotland, has not fully met the needs and legitimate aspirations of the nation.

The Scotland Act 1999 ensured that powers over broadcasting remained reserved to Westminster.

However, this committee has a locus in respect of cultural and economic policy which overlap with broadcasting policy.

The deliberations of this committee are welcome and hopefully will have some impact on the forthcoming decisions by the Westminster Government and also OFCOM in relation to the future of the BBC and STV.

The Westminster Green Paper on the future of the BBC under its new Royal Charter and the current consultation by OFCOM on STV's proposals to change and reduce programming commitments in the STV North Licence area give us an opportunity to consider what can and should be done.

The following need to be addressed:-

### 2. BBC ALBA.

#### 2.1

Statutory or Charter provision must be made for a Gaelic language television service in the same way as Welsh language television enjoys in respect of S4C.

Broadcasting in the two languages should be afforded equal respect and placed on an identical footing with equal funding.

At present S4C receives much more and this is unfair.

If the objective is to sustain the language, the numbers of speakers is only one criterion to be taken into account.

There is also a case for funding for S4C coming via a body analogous to MG Alba rather than being entirely under the auspices of the BBC and funded entirely by the licence fee payer.

S4C and BBC Alba need to be well funded and not via top-slicing the Television Licence fee.

In any case, top-slicing the licence fee per se is a slippery slope which has already damaged the BBC in the context of diminished budgets overall etc.

It also needs to be remembered that we are not subsidising these channels. We are making economic and cultural investments. These pay off. The terminology we use should reflect that.

## **2.2**

There needs to be transparent funding for the Gaelic television service.

If an independent body is established to assess and determine the level of the BBC licence fee/funding, then this body, suitably representative of the nations and Welsh and Gaelic speakers, should perform this function for Gaelic and Welsh.

## **2.3**

The role of MG ALBA and Scottish Ministers in funding MG ALBA in relation to BBC ALBA should be clarified in statute or in a public document to accompany the Charter.

# **3. THE BBC**

## **3.1 GOVERNANCE AND INDEPENDENCE**

In November 2025, I wrote to the DCMS Secretary of State, making the following points but no reply has yet been forthcoming.

I asked:-

Would it be possible for the Members of the Board who represent the nations to be selected by and under the auspices of the relevant Speakers/Presiding Officers of the Parliaments or assemblies of each of the constituent nations of the United Kingdom?

The Appointments Panel would comprise the Chair of the BBC, The appropriate Speaker or /Presiding Officer, The DCMS Permanent Secretary and an independent member to uphold due process.

I believe that this would demonstrate that HMG takes full account of:-

The Independence of the BBC.

The UK-wide distribution of licence fee payers.

The benefits to be gained from devolution and working together in positive ways.

The need to secure some political involvement in the choice of the Board while securing legitimacy for this process.

The nations' non-executive directors need to be regarded as akin to judges rather than as political appointees per se. The appointments need to be depoliticised. This proposal could go some way towards achieving this objective.

Trying to turn the BBC into a mutual runs the risk of having the Corporation captured by minority interests which may not respect the State's legitimate interests.

The mutual proposal is not an idea which would command widespread support.

Of course, it is also clear that the criteria for appointment need to strike the right balance between the public interest, accountability and the need for members to have, as a whole, the skill sets necessary to cover the full range of the BBC's operations but especially news and current affairs.

To preserve the independence of the BBC and in line with recent comments by the DCMS Secretary of State, the Boards and (sub) committees of the BBC Board must have members who are, like judges, fully independent and seen to be so and thus depoliticised.

The current Board needs, for a variety of reasons, to be reconfigured and refreshed. Therefore:-

## **RECOMMENDATION 1.**

The criteria for appointment to the BBC Board as well as the process both require amendment.

## **3.2 THE ROYAL CHARTER.**

Universities are under Royal Charters which are not time limited The BBC should enjoy the same privilege ie a permanent Charter in line with that advocated by current BBC Chair, Samir Shah.

Both the BBC and HMG have sought, in recent decades, to uncouple Charter review from the electoral timetables in the hope of removing the BBC's future from electoral campaigns.

This has become more difficult with the repeal of the Fixed Term Parliaments Act. The creation of a permanent Charter could remove this problem.

There still needs to be a mechanism, alongside the Charter, and involving the Parliaments/Assemblies to assess the funding and performance of the BBC but without compromising the independence of the Corporation.

One way forward would be to establish a UK-wide independent body to assess and determine the Television Licence Fee.

As will be seen below, I favour the continuation of the Licence Fee as the primary means of funding what is a cultural health service and this should be set by such a body.

### **3.3 ACCOUNTABILITY.**

The BBC sends its annual report to Westminster and appears before the Select Committee as well as the National Audit Office.

The BBC should also, on the same basis, ie compulsory not voluntary, appear before the relevant committees of The Scottish Parliament, The Senedd and The Northern Ireland Assembly.

The BBC had, for many decades, in each of the nations, audience-based broadcasting review panels (under the BBC Trust designated as Audience Councils) but these have been abolished.

This was a pity as they provided a way in which the BBC was required to engage with, and to some extent take account of, informed public opinion with regard to policies and practices.

Arguably, had they still been in place, a few mistakes might have been avoided such as not giving a prize of one hundred thousand pounds to the winner of a game/reality show *Destination X*.

The case might have been made that the Corporation would have done better to keep to a reputation for frugality along the lines of the *Generation Game* and *Blankety Blank*.

Such good stewardship of public money helps to win favour with, and support from, the audience and licence fee payers.

It is important that the BBC and OFCOM listen to the public as citizens not just simply as consumers.

Audience research by both organisations should attach more importance to public value per se.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2.**

The Audience Councils should be reinstated with enhanced powers to hold management to account. In addition, the Chair(s) of the Audience Council(s) should not be the Board Member(s) for the relevant nation, thus preserving the independence of the Council(s).

## **RECOMMENDATION 3.**

The Charter should be rewritten to include a requirement for the Chair of the BBC, the Director General and the Non-Executive National Members to appear, on an annual basis, before the relevant committee(s) of the Scottish Parliament, the Senedd Cymru and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Director, BBC Scotland and his or her counterparts would also appear and there would be for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland an annual report submitted to each Parliament or Assembly in respect of broadcasting in each nation.

There is no English Parliament as such but if, in addition to the UK report to the UK Parliament, Westminster sought parity of treatment and a report to an England-only committee, that would be a matter for them.

However, these appearances should not operate in such a way as to compromise the independence of the BBC but would constitute a public forum for accountability to the public's elected representatives.

I reject the idea of the BBC Board being directly elected or the associated idea of setting up the BBC as a '*mutual*' similar to eg. Nationwide or the National Trust.

There would be dangers of ideological or vested interest capture in such developments.

## **RECOMMENDATION 4**

There should be a Unitary Board of Trustees or Commissioners at UK level but with an appropriate federal structure to establish unitary boards in each of the nations.

## **RECOMMENDATION 5**

The Governing Board(s), all things being equal, need to reflect the aspirations of the Scottish Government in respect of gender balance on public bodies.

The composition of the BBC Board should be comprised of members who are able to reflect and represent a diversity of views and interests in and across civic society. In other words, the viewers and listeners.

## **RECOMMENDATION 6**

A majority of Board places should be allocated to those articulating the views of the licence fee payer, ie to those who represent the citizen and public interest.

## **RECOMMENDATION 7**

In the case of representation for Scotland on the BBC unitary board (and also OFCOM's main board) there should be a minimum of two individuals;

One with knowledge of Scotland and media policy issues etc and the other to provide a voice for the Gaidhealtachd.

### **3.4 MISSION AND PUBLIC PURPOSES**

The Green Paper suggests *“putting research, development and innovation firmly back at the centre of the BBC’s public service activities, potentially as part of a new Public Purpose on driving growth”*.

There is a case for amending the public purposes to strengthen the need to represent the nations more fully to address the lower levels of trust in the BBC in and across Scotland.

Any such change in purposes needs to be accompanied by organisational and cultural change in the BBC to enable it to become a federal entity and to deliver devolution in the BBC to align with political and administrative devolution in the UK.

### **RECOMMENDATION 8**

There needs to be a new public purpose and remit for the BBC and BBC Scotland.

For example: The BBC and BBC Scotland in particular will represent and reflect the culture(s) of Scotland to Scotland, across the UK and more widely.

Or perhaps The BBC and BBC Scotland will bring Scotland to the World and the World to Scotland.

### **3.5 A PUBLIC PURPOSE TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH**

This seems already to be priced in but there needs to be specificity in relation to the budgetary allocation for each of the nations. As will be argued below, it is no longer sufficient to have an out of London/M25 set of strategies but explicit targets for the nations.

As Sir Michael Lyons, the then Chairman of BBC Trust and then Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, concurred on September 20<sup>th</sup> 2007 at the opening of BBC Scotland’s new headquarters at Pacific Quay, such targets need to be ‘a floor not a ceiling’.

That was nearly twenty years ago. No wonder these debates generate déjà vu. Nonetheless, the BBC under Sir David Clementi is to be commended for the establishment and funding of the BBC Scotland Channel.

This should be ringfenced and/or increased if a federal BBC is not created, as there is a danger that any future cuts will harm the BBC Scotland Channel

### **3.6 ECONOMIC INVESTMENT IN THE NATIONS**

The Green paper states that :-

*“We would like the BBC to drive growth further in the nations and regions, focused on growing creative clusters and centres of excellence, and supporting growth in British production.*

*One area we are looking at is requiring the BBC to move more commissioning and budgetary decision-making powers outside of London. This is something that the BBC are already striving for through their Across the UK strategy.”*

Moving the BBC into a more federal structure would, at a stroke, achieve many of the ambitions for improved performance, representation and audience approval ratings in Scotland and demonstrate that the BBC remains:

‘*Still Game*’ for quality Scottish content.

The Green Paper further suggests:-

*“a range of interventions to support the BBC and the production sector in the nations and regions, which could include:*

*further quotas or obligations around production in the nations and regions, or making adjustments to the ‘Out of London’ quotas set out above “.*

The devil will be in the detail but it is at least encouraging that the issue is on the agenda.

Again this needs to be nation-specific and obligations could include achieving value for money by ensuring that Scottish content is also shown on the UK networks

The example of the non-broadcasting of ‘*River City*’ south of the border was where the best value for expenditure was not achieved by the Corporation and should not be repeated.

Despite repeated written and oral communications with various levels of the BBC, including a number of BBC Chairs, I never received a satisfactory answer as to why viewers in Scotland could watch *Eastenders* on BBC One Scotland but *River City* was not to be shown on BBC One UK wide.

The Green Paper also refers to the need for :-

*“new targets for basing senior commissioning staff outside London and...*

*governance changes to devolve budgets and decision-making to regional commissioners or other regional governance structures”.*

This is yet another example where the Westminster government and indeed at times the BBC itself has difficulty in navigating between the terms ‘Nations and Regions.’

Scotland is a nation. BBC Scotland should serve both the nation and the four nations.

### **3.7 A WIDE RANGE OF CONTENT**

The Green Paper asks whether:-

*“The BBC should continue to provide a wide range of content and services that represent all audiences in a way that brings communities together, supports social cohesion, and helps build a unifying national story throughout the next Charter period.”*

Yes, but it is important to respect pluralism and diversity. And the BBC needs to help the nations of the UK to better know and understand each other.

The motto of the BBC is, after all, *‘Nation Shall Speak Peace unto Nation*. We live not only in the United Kingdom but the United Kingdoms plural and the BBC needs to take due account of this.

The adoption of the term ‘unifying national story’ needs to allow for nuance. There are many stories and many histories.

For example, April 2026 sees a significant anniversary, being that of the Battle of Culloden.

Will the BBC again broadcast the estimable and ground-breaking documentary *Culloden* by the late Peter Watkins?

Will it be shown only in Scotland or on the UK network?

I hope on the UK network, but it will also be very interesting to see how BBC Scotland and BBC UK deal with this newsworthy and important anniversary.

### **3.8 A FEDERAL BBC?**

The Green Paper Consultation asks:-

*Question 20. (1) To what extent do you agree or disagree that the BBC should be required to spread more of its spending, activities, and decision-making across nations and regions of the UK?*

The unequivocal answer is yes.

I am pleased to again call in evidence my namesake the late Lord Beveridge whose report in 1951 stated that:

*“The case for completely independent Corporations for Scotland and Wales had not been made but we thought no less strongly that there was a need for greater broadcasting autonomy in those countries than has been achieved hitherto Para 193 There needs to be ‘federal delegation of powers’ in the form of a Broadcasting Commission for each constituent country*

*Report 1951 para 534 onwards as well as increasing financial independence (para 533)”.*



His recommendation for broadcasting commissions ie devolution. was ahead its time and was rejected by HMG which, in its response, claimed that:

*“ 18. The Government attach great importance to the maximum devolution to all areas on programme policy and otherwise, and they agree with the Broadcasting Committee that the existing arrangements are inadequate. This applies particularly to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with their distinctive national characteristics, which are not only valuable for their own sake, but are essential elements in the pattern of British life and culture :it applies in only lesser degree to the English Regions which also have a rich and diversified contribution to .make and should be given full opportunities for making it”*

“UK Cabinet Papers Catalogue Reference: CAB/129/46 Image Reference:0033 THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT SECRET CP. (51) 183 21<sup>st</sup> June,1951 “

Plus ca change.

We have had 70 years since the 1951 Beveridge report on Broadcasting.

The time is long overdue to implement its recommendations which are even more relevant today. I have been calling for a federal BBC for many years, including in 1998, criticising the then BBC Governors when they rejected the proposal for a Scottish Six. Their view was that the BBC should stay in step with devolution, not be ahead of it.

It is my contention that the BBC is not in step with devolution but lags behind it.

Unless the BBC changes in significant ways, it will be unable to regain the trust of many of the licence fee payers in Scotland -with untold consequences.

Despite what the then Secretary of State David Mundell claimed when he stated, in relation to our union, that:

“Scotland is part of the UK not a partner”.

In relation to the BBC it would be better for BBC Scotland to be a partner in the BBC, a federal BBC, not just part of the BBC with more or full autonomy over schedules.

BBC One Scotland should be just that, run from Pacific Quay in the interests of viewers in Scotland and analogous to the operations of BBC Radio Scotland.

STV can determine when and where to broadcast content. I am sure we all remember the upset when they chose not to show Downton Abbey at the same time as it was being broadcast south of the border.

BBC Scotland should have the same freedom of action. There should be at the very least, a full service BBC Scotland Channel, not just in the evening.

This would go some way to enabling the BBC to address, via better representation and content, audiences as both citizens and consumers and thus improve public support in Scotland.

## **RECOMMENDATION 9**

There needs to be a change in the organisational structure and culture of the BBC. If we can have devolution in the UK, then we need more and better devolution in the BBC.

The Green Paper also asks about *“committing the BBC to develop further long-term strategies for regional creative sector development, building on the current Across the UK programme; and*

*amending the rules around the BBC putting out commissions to independent production companies, to add a regional or geographic component”*

Agreed.

All of these possibilities should be explored and adopted.

## **RECOMMENDATION 10**

The Scottish Government and Parliament are responsible for Cultural Policy which overlaps with media policy. They should take note of the fact that Edinburgh has the largest arts festival in the world but the UK broadcasters, all of them, singularly fail to pay enough attention.

I often see much coverage from Glastonbury and listen on the wireless to even more from the Hay-on-Wye Book Festival than the equally if not more important Edinburgh Book Festival.

The SG should consider developing frameworks and funding to encourage and enable better publicity and content to showcase the Edinburgh Festivals.

Indeed, there needs to be further showcasing of, and partnership with other festivals, theatres and events, such as the Borders Book Festival, the Balfron Book Festival, Pitlochry Festival Theatre and events from Lerwick to Stranraer.

## **RECOMMENDATION 11**

There would be mileage and value in, for example, locating the headquarters of a merged BBC2 and BBC4 television channel in Scotland, preferably in Edinburgh, one of the few capital cities in the world not to have a requisite broadcasting infrastructure.

### **3.9 A TRUSTED BBC**

The Green Paper Consultation asks:

*“Question 16. What, if anything, do you believe would improve the value and relevance of BBC news and current affairs to you? This includes all BBC news and current affairs content, including its TV, radio and online news services, and local, national and international news outputs.*

*Question 17. Thinking about the next Charter period, what role, if any, do you think the BBC should have in ensuring UK citizens can recognise and access trusted and accurate information?”*

The recent series of scandals involving BBC talent or staff have generated immense public scrutiny, not least amongst the enemies of the Corporation and its competitors, all of whom have vested interests.

BBC management have allowed standards to slip. That is easily done in such a large organisation and they are far from alone.

One thinks of other scandals, eg The Post Office, Thames Water etc. However, the BBC has always been much more in the firing line from media competitors and those with vested ideological interests.

By contrast, there has also been largely careful stewardship of public money and successful, if painful, navigation through the cuts inflicted between 2010 and 2021. The results are apparent in the number of repeats on radio and television.

Where there is a clear problem is in the need for better supervision of independent production companies so that they and their staff and output are more fully trained in BBC values, ethics and procedures.

This needs to be much more than a compliance tick box exercise and any and all applicants for commissions need to demonstrate commitment to BBC values and appropriate training to secure these.

Beyond these internal problems, it is clear that the BBC has difficulties in navigating news values in a deeply divided polity.

There is no easy answer to the difficulty in gaining respect for truth-telling in a world of disinformation and propaganda but continuing to prize accuracy and owning up to mistakes is necessary and politicians of all views should give the BBC support as well as constructive criticism, rather than weaponising honest mistakes in the culture wars.

*BBC Verify* is an excellent counterpoint to the misinformation spread by bad actors as is the excellent Radio 4 programme *More Or Less*.

Above all, the BBC needs to place accuracy before balance.

Above all, the regulator OFCOM needs to deal firmly with those who break the broadcasting code, eg GB News.

### **3.10 BBC SALARIES**

Much was made of the salary of Gary Lineker and others but when you consider how much he is now being paid in the private sector, as far as one understands, a different view emerges.

In the context of Scotland, the Chief Executive of STV is reportedly paid a salary not too far from or perhaps even more than that of the Director General of the BBC.

When you compare and contrast the size of the BBC with STV and consider the responsibilities, a more measured analysis of the differences between Public Service and commercial market-based imperatives emerges. Therefore:-

## **RECOMMENDATION 12**

I am pleased to once more recommend that the salaries of both the Director, Scotland and the BBC Director General contain a performance-related element such that there must be improvements in audience satisfaction in Scotland if the salaries are not to receive reductions.

Failure to meet this target should result in reductions in performance-related pay for both the Director General and the Director, Scotland as a minimum.

This recommendation comes after a decade, if not decades, of under-performance in Scotland and failures to devise and implement policies which would have enabled the BBC to reduce the purpose gap.

This despite substantial evidence of the problem and exhortations from the Audience Council Scotland and others to do so.

The real issue is what levers exist to ensure that there is appropriate executive action when the purposes are not fully achieved. The evidence has been clear for decades. The licence fee payer in Scotland deserves better.

I first proposed this some fifteen years ago but note that it was never taken up.

### **3.11 SUSTAINABLE AND FAIR FUNDING**

The Licence Fee has been a successful way of paying for the BBC for around one hundred years. During this time, the economic, cultural, social and technological changes have been immense but this method of funding has continued and continued to be successful.

Unlike the British Film Industry, which has endured a roller coaster of ups and downs, sometimes needing quotas in cinemas to stay afloat, at others a levy on ticket sales to invest in production, British television and radio has constantly been the envy of the world.

Furthermore, when it comes to democracy and news, we have had and need to keep, universal access, in the national and public interest.

There should be no Paywalls in Public Space.

The BBC needs to be available to all, not least at times of emergency, such as the Covid Pandemic etc.

It is trusted at such times. It is Universal Funding for Universal Access.

But we need to change the process of setting the licence fee.

We need a UK-wide independent body to assess and determine the Television Licence Fee and as will be seen below, I favour the continuation of the Licence Fee as the primary means of funding what is a cultural health service.

I believe there would be support for this which reflects Select Committee findings over many decades and through successive Charter reviews and inquiries and also academic research eg by Professor Patrick Barwise and others.

The continuation of the licence fee, a funding model which has been successful for nearly a century, which has and continues to be the least worst option through gigantic social, economic and technological change, could thereby be secured.

It needs to be continued as, again, we are citizens, not just consumers.

However, there needs to be a fair benchmarking of what the Licence Fee is with a ban on further top-slicing to meet government social or political objectives.

In particular and as a minimum:-

### **RECOMMENDATION 13.**

There needs to be established an independent body to determine and award the Licence Fee.

### **RECOMMENDATION 14.**

The BBC World Service must be funded by Grant-in-Aid from the Foreign Office as was the case for most of its existence.

### **RECOMMENDATION 15.**

The Social Policy of HMG in respect of the Licence Fee for pensioners who are in receipt of Pension Credit, should be paid by HMG not the Licence Fee payer.

### **RECOMMENDATION 16.**

The current funding for the Local Democracy Reporting Initiative (LDRS) may be continued but not increased.

The BBC often finds itself having to make up for gaps in provision by other news providers. Newspapers have problems due to the changing nature of the news industry, eg the migration of advertising to the internet and social media, not because the BBC provides a website.

#### **4. STV, BORDER AND PSB MORE GENERALLY**

As we see in Scotland with STV trying to change its STV North News service, and ITV's retreat from a federal structure and regional broadcasting south of the border, eg news in the ITV Border area, how long will it be before siren voices start asking for contestable funding for regional TV or radio news and a slice of the BBC licence fee?

This should be resisted. In relation to STV and STV North, it is difficult to understand why OFCOM might allow STV to reduce its news in STV North at the same time as allowing STV to launch a new radio station.

How might this be in the citizen interest? Under the Communications Act (2003) this is a primary duty of OFCOM.

It is a matter of regret, but understandable, that STV staff are, currently scheduled to have been on strike the day before the this committee's session on 08 January 2026.

STV needs to remember that they are a public service broadcaster.

If they wish to relinquish the licence and become fully commercial in the market-place, then that is a matter for them. But being a PSB is about meeting more than financial objectives.

One way forward could be for the committee to explore:-

#### **RECOMMENDATION 17**

OFCOM should be encouraged to pay more explicit attention to its duty under the Communications Act (2003) to secure the public interest in Communications matters.

I am unaware as to whether the SG and/or the SP could institute a judicial review of the projected compromise which will allow STV to, in effect, relocate its STV North newsroom etc to Glasgow, leaving some reporters on the ground.

How far this meets the needs of localism is a moot point but it certainly does not meet the citizen interest and will lead to much less news and content in the licence area.

I am confident that the consultation responses from viewers of STV North will overwhelmingly reject the STV and OFCOM proposal. What happens in such a circumstance?

STV (and OFCOM) should not just disregard the judgements of all the Scottish political leaders but more importantly of the audience.

Having said that, it is surprising that STV have not taken the opportunity to brand and publicise the new provision as what Scotland has needed for decades, that is - *a Scottish Six*.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 18.**

In the interests of viewers and listeners in the South of Scotland, there needs to be a break-up of ITV Border and the creation of a One Scotland franchise area.

STV or any successor could thus meet the needs of viewers across the nation and of viewers in the South of Scotland so that they receive better coverage of the deliberations of their Parliament in Edinburgh.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 19.**

There should also be established a Scottish Digital Network.

After all, the SP voted unanimously to accept the excellent report from the SBC, chaired by Blair Jenkins.

There is merit in the Scottish Parliament requiring the Scottish Government to follow and implement the decisions of the Parliament as expressed in the unanimous support for the recommendations of the Scottish Broadcasting Commission.

It has been a signal failure of media policy in Scotland and of the Scottish Government over the many years that this opportunity has not been grasped. The Scottish Government and Parliament should establish a '*Platform for Success*'

#### **RECOMMENDATION 20.**

There should be no take-over of STV or merger with ITV Plc without the full consent of the Scottish Government and Parliament.

Even if broadcasting remains reserved to Westminster, the principle of respect between the two governments and Parliaments suggest that as an absolute minimum.

The rationale for this mirrors the cultural exception promoted by France in WTO/GATT negotiations.

Cultural Industries are more than economic entities. Their ability to create narratives and images which reflect and represent our nations is such that we need to have media policies which, as much as possible, enable us to tell our own stories rather than having them imposed upon us from the outside.

Although, for the record, it must be acknowledged that sometimes outsiders can achieve high quality and success in helping us to “*see ourselves as others see us*”.

A notable example being the Hungarian, Emeric Pressburger and an Englishman from Kent, Michael Powell, in their wonderful film shot on Mull ‘*I Know Where I’m Going*’ (1945).

## **5. TECHNOLOGY.**

The UK State is facing a policy decision in the near future, regarding the upgrading or not, of the UK broadcasting transmission network.

There is a strong lobby for a migration to IPTV rather than renewing digital terrestrial television with various interested parties not wishing to pay the costs of renewal.

Apart from the state security aspect in keeping a set of transmitters, there are many who could not afford to move to broadband internet protocol tv (IPTV)

The Scottish Government and Parliament need to secure the best deal for our people in these developments and help to determine who pays and how much.

## **6 SCOTLAND, WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

### **RECOMMENDATION 21.**

There is a strong case for the SP, the Senedd and the Northern Ireland Assembly sharing ideas, research and strategies with a view to adopting a common approach to the future of media policy in a devolved UK. Professor Medhurst of Aberystwyth University and the relevant committee of the Senedd are already showing the way and this committee would do well to organise a conference to enable the interested parties and stakeholders to meet and learn from one another.

## **IN CONCLUSION**

I remember once being in a conference in Asia where I was told by a senior Asian politician that the BBC was so important to the world that he wondered whether or not the British could be trusted with it.

Let us put his fears at rest and update it for the next twenty or more years in the digital and internet century, not least by ensuring that it stays in step with, not behind, the changing nature, constitution and cultures of the UK.

The BBC, in particular, needs to regain the trust of significant sections of the audience and licence fee payers in Scotland.

Implementing some of the recommendations above may help to restore that trust and deliver a better service for viewers and listeners in Scotland.

Having said that, many of these problems were identified by the late Lord Beveridge in 1951 so the time has surely come to address and resolve them.



The Scottish Viewing and Listening Public should no longer be stranded in Groundhog Day.

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**Edinburgh 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

## **REFERENCES**

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Ref: ISBN 978-1-5286-5996-3, E03454201 12/25, CP 1459  
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The analysis and recommendations of the Commission remain as relevant today as when they were written.

*The Report of the Broadcasting Committee 1949* (Cmnd 8116) was published and presented to Parliament on Thursday 18 January 1951

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