

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
Thursday 8 January 2026
1st Meeting, 2026 (Session 6)

Scottish broadcasting

Inquiry

1. The Committee has agreed to undertake a short and general inquiry on Scottish broadcasting which will also inform its input to the consultation on the BBC Charter renewal.
2. The Committee wishes to—
 - To examine the health and future vitality of Scottish broadcasting
 - To assess the effects of consolidation and centralisation on Scottish content, employment, and plurality
 - To consider whether current regulatory frameworks — particularly Ofcom’s local content obligations — are fit for purpose;
 - To examine the role of broadcasting in sustaining Scotland’s democratic and cultural traditions

And

- To explore what the priorities for BBC in Scotland should be in the following areas—
 - News provision at a Scotland and regional level
 - The production of Scottish-made outputs
 - Supporting skills development
 - Content that meets the expectations of Scottish audiences
 - Reflecting changing consumption habits

And

- How/whether the BBC should support wider outcomes in Scotland
 - Including how it works with public bodies.

Role for the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament in the BBC Charter renewal process

3. The Agreement following the Smith Commission included a commitment to ensure that there is a “formal consultative role for the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament in the process of renewing the BBC’s Charter”. A further Memorandum of Understanding set out what this consultative process entails and this was also addressed in the current Charter.
4. The key steps in relation to the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament (and the other devolved administrations and parliaments) are—
 - The UK Government’s Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) will consult with ministers on the draft terms of reference for the review of the Charter in advance of their publication
 - Scottish Ministers will lay the finalised terms of reference in the Scottish Parliament
 - DCMS will consult with ministers through the process of reviewing the Charter
 - The Scottish Government will lay a draft revised Charter and Framework Agreement in the Scottish Parliament
 - The Scottish Parliament may have a ‘take note’ debate on the content of the draft Charter and Framework Agreement
 - DCMS will consult with ministers before making a recommendation to grant a further Charter to His Majesty.
5. [Schedule 5 of the Scotland Act 1998](#) reserves broadcasting and specifically the BBC. Nevertheless, the work of the BBC interacts with a number of devolved policy areas, including: screen production; music; news; education etc.

Key dates

6. DCMS published its Green Paper and consultation on 16 December 2025 and the consultation is open until 10 March 2026.
7. The Committee will hold evidence session on 8, 15, 22 January and 12 and 19 February, with the aim of publishing its report by the consultation deadline.
8. It is anticipated that a “take note” debate will take place in the Chamber in the next session, likely in the autumn. The Committee can highlight its report and findings in its legacy report for the benefit of the committee in session 7 that will hold the culture remit.
9. The current BBC Charter runs from 1 January 2017 until 31 December 2027.

Witness panels this week

10. We will begin taking evidence for the inquiry this week, with a panel of academics—

- Professor Robert Beveridge, former visiting Professor, University of Sassari
- Professor Catherine Happer, Professor of Media Sociology, University of Glasgow
- Professor Nicholas Higgins, Director of the Creative Media Academy, University of the West of Scotland)

and one representing news and journalism

- John McLennan, Director, Newsbrands Scotland
- Nick McGowan-Lowe, National Organiser for Scotland, NUJ
- Catherine Houlihan, Managing Editor, ITV Border

11. A SPICe briefing can be found at **Annexes A** and written submissions from the witnesses at **Annexes B, C and D**.

Clerks, January 2026

Annexe A

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
Thursday 8 January 2026

Broadcasting inquiry and informing the BBC Charter & Framework renewal

Introduction

This paper is intended to support the Committee's first session of its inquiry on the broadcasting landscape in Scotland and the BBC Charter and Framework renewal. During this inquiry, the Committee's plans to explore a range of issues relating to the broadcasting sector and the Charter renewal.

The Committee will take evidence from two panels this session. The first is a panel of academics with a range of expertise. The second panel will have a focus on news and journalism.

This paper sets out: the process we expect for the BBC's Charter renewal; highlights some of the challenges and changes facing broadcasting and media sectors; support for the screen sector; and the news market.

BBC and Framework Renewal

The Department for Culture Media and Sport published [Britain's Story: The Next Chapter - the BBC Royal Charter Review](#), a Green Paper and public consultation on the charter renewal process. There is a role for the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament in this process.

The BBC is constituted through a Royal Charter. The current BBC Charter began on 1 January 2017 and ends on 31 December 2027.

In previous charter renewals the UK Government has also published a framework agreement. These two documents form key parts of the governance of the BBC. The BBC is also regulated by Ofcom through its licensing regime and there are a number of statutory duties in relation to the output of the BBC (and other broadcasters). It is important to note, therefore, that the Charter is high level and is not the totality of how the BBC is regulated.

The current Charter sets out 5 public purposes of the BBC. These are:

1. To provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them
2. To support learning for people of all ages
3. To show the most creative, highest quality and distinctive output and services

4. To reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom's nations and regions and, in doing so, support the creative economy across the United Kingdom
5. To reflect the United Kingdom, its culture and values to the world

Department for Culture Media and Sport Green Paper

As noted above, the Department for Culture Media and Sport ("DCMS") published a Green Paper and consultation in December 2025. The consultation is open until 10 March 2026. The Green Paper was structured around four chapters:

- A trusted institution – how to improve public trust in the BBC
- Delivering services for the public good – how to “futureproof the BBC ... enhancing its digital capabilities, providing a counterpoint to false narratives and disinformation, and ensuring it has the highest editorial standards”
- Driving growth across the UK
- Sustainable and fair funding

In her foreword to the Green Paper, Lisa Nandy MP, the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport said—

“Our vision is for a BBC that is trusted, loved and belongs to us all, providing those shared spaces and places that have become so rare and so precious in recent decades. Sustainably funded, with a strong presence in every nation and region so that all of us can see ourselves reflected in our national story. A broadcaster known for its unique strengths, from the highest quality children's programmes to impartial and trusted news and documentaries, the world over.”

The Green Paper also noted that the charter renewal process would sit alongside wider policy development for TV distribution and a framework for public service broadcasters/media. (p9)

A trusted institution

The Green Paper said:

“Beyond its domestic impact, the BBC is also one of the UK's greatest cultural exports and a source of national pride and soft power. ... However, the BBC's value as a trusted and relevant British institution, and its ability to provide a range of essential services for communities, is under pressure. It is important to recognise that there have been recent, serious editorial and operational failings. The BBC itself acknowledges this and has committed to a number of steps in response, which it has already begun to take forward, including actions to improve workplace culture following an [independent review](#). As our national broadcaster, the BBC has a responsibility to uphold the highest

standards, and where these standards have not been met, firm and swift action must follow.”

DCMS set out the areas of policy focus under this chapter. These were:

- Enhancing accountability
- Improving public engagement
- Enhancing governance, oversight and transparency
- Upholding the BBC’s independence
- Focusing on the BBC’s organisational standards and culture.

The Green Paper highlighted the role of Ofcom in regulating the BBC. It also discussed how the BBC could better engage with the public, including potentially through citizens assemblies, specific consultative frameworks for the regions/nations, and audience research.

The text of the Green Paper discussed setting a charter for longer than the current ten-year period within the context of maintaining the BBC’s independence from Government.

Delivering services for the public good

This chapter focused on the outputs of the BBC. DCMS stated that it wishes to ‘futureproof’ the BBC. The Green Paper stated:

“This means enhancing the BBC’s digital capabilities, countering misinformation, ensuring it is relevant to and trusted by all audiences, and embedding digital inclusion so that everyone can benefit from its services. At the same time, we recognise that it must have sufficient flexibility for it to thrive in a constantly changing world.”

The Green Paper set out three areas for consideration: news; “telling a national story”; and utilising new technology.

In relation to news, the Green Paper explored two aspects. The first was around ensuring that BBC news is “trusted, impartial and accurate”. The text of the Green Paper said that it was consulting on whether to update the mission to “give accuracy equal importance to impartiality”, although the consultation questions do not make this explicit. The Green Paper also explored how decision-making processes would be more transparent and how the BBC would engage with audiences to ensure that its news is “accessible and reflective of the public”. The second aspect of news production the Green Paper addressed was the BBC’s role in countering misinformation and disinformation. In terms of local news, the Green Paper suggested that “the priority is to ensure the BBC complements high quality local providers, instead of displacing them, so the public can benefit from a thriving and diverse local news market.”

In relation to “telling a national story”, the Green Paper noted that evidence suggests that a significant minority of people across the UK do not feel that the BBC’s output reflects people like them or reflects the region or nation in which they live. The Green Paper also explored the tension between the BBC producing content that is relevant to a wide audience and prioritising genres which are “underserved by the market”. The Green Paper set out DCMS’ ambition that the BBC would be renewed as “a national, civic institution for the online platform age” and that it would be “a truly universal service, able to speak to and represent the diverse communities who fund it, including supporting minority language broadcasting.”

In relation to utilising new technology, the Green Paper said:

“The government will work with the BBC, and the other public service media providers, to develop a strategic response to the opportunities and challenges presented by the digital world. ... As part of this wider strategy, we must ensure the BBC’s Charter and wider regulatory framework consider the pace of change since 2017. We want to support the BBC’s transition from a traditional public service broadcaster - once rooted in linear television and radio channels - to a public service media entity, fit for the platform age. The Charter must be adaptable to manage further changes that will come. But the Charter should do more than let the BBC adapt to changing technology: it should help the BBC to drive innovation for the public good.”

The Green Paper said that DCMS would consider “giving the BBC a new role to support the development of digital skills among its audiences, including around AI”. The Green Paper also suggested that DCMS will consider how the BBC ensures “a broad range of public service content is promoted within the BBC’s own [digital] platforms” as well as how it might use third party platforms such as YouTube. The Green Paper said that to reflect changing viewing habits, DCMS is “considering the future of TV distribution”. As part of this, DCMS will consider whether the BBC’s obligations may need to change and particularly “how the BBC can make sure that no one is left behind in any transition to online viewing by centring digital inclusion in its services and activities.”

Driving growth across the UK

DCMS described the BBC as “the most significant public policy intervention in our creative economy”. (p7) The Green Paper continued—

“In 2023, the creative economy was worth £124 billion, over 5% of the UK economy’s Gross Value Added (GVA). Since 2019, it is estimated that the BBC has contributed almost £5 billion each year to our economy. It is the single biggest investor in UK content, investing £1.2 billion in 2023 in original content - equivalent to 23% of all investment in UK original content. With major production hubs in Belfast, Cardiff, Glasgow, Salford and - from 2027- Digbeth [Birmingham], the BBC has a footprint in our nations and regions, unmatched by any other provider, driving growth, jobs and opportunities for communities across the UK, and drawing on talent that exists in every nation and region.”

This chapter of the Green Paper suggested that the DCMS is minded to include a specific public purpose in the next Charter on driving economic growth across the UK and to support the creative sectors, including supporting research and development.

This chapter discussed the impact of the BBC in the nations and regions in the UK. It noted that there had been criticism of Ofcom's criteria for determining whether productions qualify as, for example, Scottish. DCMS said that it would explore "a range of interventions to support the BBC and the production sector in the nations and regions".

DCMS also said that it would seek to encourage the BBC to "go further in leveraging its public funding to develop enhanced, mutually beneficial partnerships, both with public service media providers and other organisations."

The second part of this section was around the regulation of the BBC. The Green Paper said that DCMS supports the continuing arrangement whereby Ofcom regulates the BBC. DCMS indicated that it would consider "reducing administrative burdens" while also "retaining or enhancing measures that protect certain markets from adverse competition impacts."

Sustainable and fair funding

The last chapter is on the future funding model for the BBC. The Green Paper was not specific about the overall level of funding it envisages for the BBC; it said that the level of funding should match the ambitions DCMS has for the BBC. The Green Paper noted that DCMS does not consider the BBC to only be a "market failure intervention".

The paper suggested that the BBC should continue to make efficiency savings and to maximise its commercial income. In relation to maximising commercial income, the Green Paper discussed ways in which BBC Studios may be supported to grow. It also said that DCMS will explore a range of options for BBC to sell advertising opportunities and to have some parts of the BBC's output behind a paywall.

The Green Paper framed the new options for revenue raising as being able to reduce the direct costs of funding the BBC on households, or at least some households. The Green Paper said that DCMS was not considering abolishing the licence fee. It said—

"As the licence fee is a tried and tested public funding model, we are not considering replacing it with alternative forms of public funding, such as a new tax on households, funding through general taxation, or introducing a levy on the revenues of streaming services to fund the BBC."

The Green Paper indicated that DCMS will consider:

- Reforming the process for determining the cost of the licence fee
- Updating licence fee concessions

- Options for “fairer collection and enforcement”

The Green Paper also said that DCMS will consider how the World Service is funded as well as S4C and MG Alba.

Recommendations from Glasgow University Media Group

The Committee received a submission from the Glasgow University Media Group. This included a number of recommendations for what the BBC should seek to deliver in Scotland in the future. These were:

- 1) A BBC which represents the diversity of the public in respect of demographics, geography, interests and political opinion and does not simply report a narrow agenda focused on the Central Belt or Holyrood political debate.
- 2) A sustainable funding model for public service media which moves beyond reliance upon the license fee to a more hybrid model of targeted investment and direct subsidies which can respond to challenges as they arise.
- 3) A more participatory approach to setting journalistic agendas which may involve members of the public getting involved in identifying topics of importance and moving away from a narrow range of sources (business people, politicians, media personnel) to those with expertise and experience of all areas of public life.
- 4) A BBC which is independent from government in respect of both journalistic freedom, and a BBC Scotland which has autonomy from London in respect of its reporting practices and agenda.
- 5) A BBC which responds to a changing set of informational needs in respect of new forms of expertise and more relatable content with everyday application - a good example drawn from research with focus groups is Martin Lewis, moneysavingexpert.com, with his cross-media model of trusted expertise and audience participation.
- 6) A BBC that can be trusted to offer the best, most accurate account of what is going on in the world and which is not compromised by ‘AI slop’, clickbait headlines, or the tabloidization of reporting.

Wider challenges and changes for broadcasting

This section looks at broadcasting and viewing and listening habits. It does not explore news, which is addressed in a later section. Ofcom’s research and output provide key public resource of data in these areas. Ofcom has duties under the Communications Act 2003 to provide an annual factual and statistical report on the TV and radio sectors as well as to undertake consumer research. Every year, Ofcom publishes its Media Nations reports and it also publishes additional research from time to time.

The GUMG submission said—

“Scotland’s broadcasting market faces significant structural issues which are the product of an increasingly globalised media system in which Scottish content competes with content from all over the world. In particular, the emergence of global streaming platforms such as Netflix, which produce programming on massive budgets with significant cross-media advertising campaigns, and YouTube, which shares content from all over the world, pose challenges in respect of capturing and holding audiences, especially young audiences.”

The DCMS Green Paper stated—

“While the wider creative industries continue to remain a powerhouse of the UK economy, our screen and television industry is facing challenging market headwinds, with falling advertising revenues, high production costs and increased competition from global streamers for investment.” (p13)

Trends in viewing in Scotland and the UK

In broadcasting and audio-visual media there has been a shift away from people watching live broadcasts and a move to a variety of online platforms. These include:

- Broadcaster Video on Demand (“BVoD”) – for example the iPlayer or STV Player
- Recorded live broadcasts
- Subscription Video on Demand (“SVoD”) – for example, Netflix
- Video-sharing services – for example, YouTube

In its Media Nations 2025 report, Ofcom noted that at a UK level “growth in viewing to broadcasters’ online video services has not offset a decline in linear TV viewing – but broadcaster content still accounts for the majority of in-home viewing.”

Linear TV nevertheless remains the most-used service. Different groups access video content differently, under-35s spend more time watching SVoD/AVoD content in the home than broadcast TV, and over-35s watch video in a more traditional way, primarily through broadcasters’ services. In Scotland Ofcom reported that:

“Individuals aged 65 and over continued to watch the most broadcast television, with their average daily viewing increasing by 3% to 5 hours 44 minutes. Adults aged 35-44 recorded the largest percentage increase, with viewing time rising by 7% to 1 hour 44 minutes. Conversely, there was a decline in viewing among younger audiences. Viewing among children (4-15) dropped by 10%, while adults aged 16-24 had the sharpest decrease, at 19%, bringing their daily viewing time down to just 33 minutes per person – the lowest of all age groups.” ([Media Nations 2025](#) – Scotland, p10)

The BBC was the most-used video service in Scotland. When accounting for both the iPlayer and linear TV, the BBC's share of home-viewing in Scotland was 17% - the next most popular service was YouTube at 14%, followed by ITV/STV (12%). Netflix's share of in home viewing was 7%, higher than both Channel 4 and Channel 5. Ofcom also reported that 71% of households in Scotland had a SVoD subscription in 2024, with Netflix being the most popular.

In July 2025 Ofcom published [Transmission Critical: The future of Public Service Media](#). This highlighted a number of challenges for the Public Service Broadcasters ("PSBs"):

- Audience Shift: Linear TV viewing has fallen below 40% of in-home viewing. Younger audiences spend far more time on YouTube and TikTok than on PSB services.
- Discoverability: PSB content is harder to find on third-party platforms, undermining universality and exposure to trusted news.
- Financial Pressures: Licence fee and advertising revenues have dropped significantly in real terms since 2016, while production costs have risen.
- Production Sector Impact: Reduced PSB commissioning budgets and reliance on international co-funding risk limiting UK-relevant content and affecting smaller producers.
- News and Trust: Online news consumption is growing, but trust in social media news is much lower than in PSB news. Misinformation and algorithm-driven polarisation are concerns.
- Technology Disruption: AI is reshaping content creation and distribution, raising issues around trust and copyright.

Radio and audio

Radio has a wide reach in Scotland and across the UK – weekly reach of all radio is around 87% in both Scotland and the UK as a whole. Ofcom reported that in Scotland, BBC UK-wide radio accounted for 31% of listening in the first quarter of 2025, and Scotland-specific BBC radio around 6%. Taken together, the share of radio listening of BBC stations was lower than England and Wales and similar to Northern Ireland. Ofcom reported that:

“Commercial radio again accounted for the majority (62%) of total radio listening across Scotland in Q1 2025, 6pp clear of the UK average (54.8%). Of this listening, the majority was to local commercial stations such as Clyde 1, Heart Scotland and Original 106”. (Media Nations – Scotland 2025)

As with audio-visual broadcasting, there are a range of platforms through which consumers can access radio: FM/AM, DAB, and online (including smartspeakers). In relation to Scotland. Ofcom stated—

“The picture of platform listening looks very similar to last year’s: AM/FM’s share of listening remains relatively unchanged at 28.9% of total hours, while DAB accounts for 44% of radio listening. The gradual shift to online listening continues, with smart speakers, smartphones and other internet-enabled devices accounting for over a quarter (25.5%) of all radio listening in Scotland in Q1 2025. Listening via smart speakers, as opposed to through apps or browsers, accounts for 15.6% of all listening.” (Media Nations – Scotland 2025)

At a UK level, new stations have entered the digital radio market. In late 2024, Global launched 12 new digital stations and the BBC also expanded its digital audio offering, including new music streams on DAB+. There is greater coverage of DAB networks of both homes and major roads in England than in the other nations of the UK. The table below shows this:

		BBC	Commercial			Small-scale
			Digital One	Sound Digital	Local DAB	
UK	Homes	97.4%	91.7%	82.6%	92.0%	32.2%
	Major roads	87.4%	80.2%	72.6%	76.8%	NM
England	Homes	98.4%	94.8%	86.7%	93.4%	31.8%
	Major roads	94.5%	93.9%	89.8%	87.4%	NM
Scotland	Homes	95.3%	81.7%	69.0%	85.4%	34.5%
	Major roads	69.1%	45.5%	33.6%	45.6%	NM
Wales	Homes	92.2%	67.5%	56.9%	83.1%	35.1%
	Major roads	78.1%	53.3%	37.7%	61.9%	NM
Northern Ireland	Homes	87.3%	85.4%	56.8%	87.5%	36.1%
	Major roads	79.3%	86.9%	55.0%	87.8%	NM

Source: Arqiva, BBC, Ofcom. Note: Coverage of SSDAB is measured on a homes basis only. ‘NM’ denotes that levels are not measured.

Ofcom noted that major commercial radio operators continued to consolidate local services into national networks across the UK. It said—

“These changes were, in part, facilitated by reforms under the Media Act 2024, which removed some requirements on local analogue stations relating to locally-made programming and what music they play. The Media Act also puts in place new requirements relating to the provision of local news and information by local commercial analogue stations.” (Media Nations 2025)

The [Committee explored this issue with Ofcom in May 2025](#) and Cristina Nicolotti Squires, Ofcom’s group director for broadcasting and media, said, “deregulation [as a result of the Media Act 2024] means that radio stations are not required to have the same formats as they had before, but there is a requirement for them to provide locally gathered news for their audiences”. [Ofcom consulted on local news and information on analogue commercial radio in the summer of 2025](#).

In the digital space, the podcast market has grown substantially in recent years, and Ofcom reported that “online music services (such as Spotify, Apple and Amazon) now have similar levels of weekly reach among adults in Scotland as music radio.”

Advertising

Ofcom reported that commercial broadcasters are seeing decreases in the advertising revenue for linear TV, down 2% in 2024 compared to the previous year. Nevertheless, the advertising revenue for linear TV in 2024 was £3,939m and this accounted for around 75% of UK TV advertising revenues. The advertising revenue for video on demand was £1,333m in 2024, a 26% year on year increase. These trends have led to shifts in approaches of the PSBs. Ofcom’s Transmission Critical report noted:

“The PSBs are continuing to develop their BVoD offerings to increase personalisation and help audiences discover content. They are increasing the volume of content on their players and in some cases adding to the number of live channels audiences can access on them. Many PSBs are also shifting their commissioning strategies to target genres that are successful on streaming services (for example premium dramas and entertainment shows) and high impact content to entice viewers to their BVoD players.”

A [2024 report on the production sector in Scotland commissioned by Screen Scotland found](#):

“There has been a recent decrease in commissioning activity by the PSBs due to pressure on revenues, with the BBC’s reduction in originated hours and Channel 4’s recent commissioning freeze. This is combined with a wider industry trend of polarisation in content spend with commissioners prioritising fewer, high value originations alongside lower budget content. These factors could affect Scotland to a greater degree than other parts of the UK to the extent that Scotland is recognised as a leading producer of daytime, factual and factual entertainment programmes. Despite this, the outlook for the UK’s audiovisual sector remains positive in the long term.”

In May last year, the Committee scrutinised the [BBC’s decision to discontinue River City](#). Hayley Valentine described this as “an editorial decision based on changing viewing habits and on audiences moving away from long-running dramas to high-impact, short-run drama series, and we must deliver what the audiences want to watch.”

In relation to radio, Ofcom reported that UK-wide:

“After a period of growth, commercial radio revenues dipped slightly in 2024 to £651m, from £667m in 2023. This modest decline reflects a more cautious advertising environment, shaped by ongoing economic uncertainty and shifting media strategies. National advertising increased, helped by a slight improvement in the economy in 2024, while local revenues continued to decline in what is starting to look like structural change in the market. This shift is also probably driven by advertisers favouring national inventory

packaging, and by the continued centralisation of programming across national networks by major groups such as Bauer and Global.”

Support for the Screen sector in Scotland

Film and high-end television are global businesses. Countries around the world are competing to attract productions. [A 2024 report by Olsberg PSI found that:](#)

“Over the past decade, governments around the world have introduced or expanded production incentives in order to attract valuable investment and foster the development of their film and television sectors.

“As of October 2024, 120 incentives are in operation globally, all following common principles, but with tailored rules and objectives based on local priorities. Government investment in these programs aims to stimulate long-term industry growth, with a particular focus on attracting valuable film and television projects that drive crossindustry spending and create high-quality jobs.”

The UK Government provides tax-credits to the creative industries including for High-end TV and films. There are also [a number of UK-wide grant schemes administered by the BFI](#). Generally, these are funded through lottery income. A DCMS funded scheme, [UK Global Screen Fund](#), aims to support export growth.

The budget for Screen Scotland in the current year is around £18.5m. Around £10.15m of this is supported by funding from the Scottish Government and around £8.35m is lottery funding. This year, the Scottish Government increased Screen Scotland’s budget by £2m. This is intended to support the objective of achieving £1 billion gross value added to the Scottish economy by 2030. Screen Scotland has a range of funds available for film-makers, distribution & screening, professional development, and education.

[Screen Scotland’s strategy](#) was published in March last year and runs to 2030-31. Some of the outcomes this identifies are:

- More high-quality films and TV originated in Scotland
- More coherent pathways for entry into the industry and for career development
- Increase in higher value incoming production creating employment opportunities for skilled crew
- Better developed infrastructure for screen production, distribution and exhibition

PSBs’ support

There has been a long-standing concern that too much TV (and film) production is concentrated within the M25.

[Ofcom sets out the rules](#) for how a programme's geographic allocation is determined. These rules are complex, but, in brief, since 2021 three criteria are used to determine the nation/region allocation:

- Substantive base - The production company must have a substantive business and production base in the UK outside the M25. The production in question must be managed from that substantive base.
- Production spend - At least 70% of the production spend must be spent in the UK outside the M25.
- Off-screen talent - At least 50% of the production talent (i.e. not on-screen talent) by cost must have their usual place of employment in the UK outside the M25.

Generally, which nation or region a production is allocated to, is determined if at least two out of three criteria apply. Where each of the criteria have a different location and the substantive base is outside of London, that criteria would be used to determine the allocation (this is what happened in the case of *The Traitors* which attracted some debate early this year).

The regional production quotas only apply to first-run programmes on the main networks which are made within the UK and exclude news. Different broadcasters have different quotas. These are set out below:

BBC

- Overall: 50% of programmes by spend and hours made outside the M25.
- Out of England:
 - 8% spend/hours in Scotland.
 - 5% spend/hours in Wales.
 - 3% spend/hours in Northern Ireland.
- English Regions: 30% spend/hours in English regions.

Channel 3 Services (ITV/STV)

- Overall: 35% of programmes by spend and hours made outside the M25.

Channel 4

- Overall: 35% of programmes by spend and hours made outside the M25.
- Out of England:
 - 9% spend/hours out of England.

Channel 5

- Overall: 10% of programmes by spend and hours made outside the M25.

The different quotas reflect the different funding and governance arrangements of the PSBs, the BBC and Channel 4, which are publicly owned, have more detailed and/or challenging targets than Channel 3 and Channel 5. Ofcom agreed Channel 4's new licence in October 2024. This licence will increase the Made Out of England (MoE) spend/hours to 12% from 2030. [Channel 4](#) also has a range of funds aimed at supporting independent producers.

There has been some criticism of Ofcom's criteria. During [a session with the BBC in January 2025](#), the Committee explored the designation of the Traitors as a Scottish production. Traitors was a 'Scottish' production on the basis of the "substantive base" criterion. Traitors was produced by [Studio Lambert Limited](#) which describes itself as an "independent television production company based in London, Manchester, Glasgow and Los Angeles." [Tim Davie told the Committee](#)—

"We are not trying to game a number. I am not interested in that. I am not trying to find an excuse—I have nothing to excuse in that way. My ambition is to grow production in Scotland. I am simply being very transparent, I hope, in saying that nine of our 66 productions hit only one criterion. That criterion could be having a base in Scotland. Bluntly, that could also mean that the programme is shot elsewhere. The fact that "The Traitors" has come to Scotland and created tourism and so on is good news, which we should celebrate. I would like more of our productions to repeat and to hit our quota with at least two ticks, which means that you get the majority of the spend. That is our ambition."

[Screen Scotland's report](#), prepared by Oliver & Ohlbaum and published in late 2024, assesses the trends in the production sector in Scotland. This found that Scotland's TV production sector has grown steadily since 2003 and that the BBC and Channel 4 are key in the commissioning of productions. It also noted that most of the production sector in Scotland is centred in Glasgow. The report also found that:

"Producers with a Scottish HQ won more such PSB Network commissions than producers with a branch office in Scotland in 2022 (42 titles compared to 24). However, this represented fewer hours (267 hours compared to 534 hours). Much of the difference in hours is due to commissions for sports coverage (notably the snooker and bowls coverage mentioned above), plus some entertainment strands, which had a high volume of hours per title."

Screen Scotland's strategy to 2030-31 also highlighted some actions in relation to supporting TV production and how rules around out of London programming support this. It said Screen Scotland would—

- Continue to develop Scotland based talent in priority genres such as drama and entertainment development and production through FormatLab and similar initiatives.
- Engage with the PSBs, Ofcom, the UK and Scottish Governments and Parliaments to press for intellectual property ownership to be part of any Ofcom measure of what qualifies a production as 'Scottish'.

- Advocate for Scotland-based producers, writers, directors, production companies and crews to be the primary means by which the UK PSBs meet their Scottish quotas.

The [Screen Scotland's report](#), prepared by Oliver & Ohlbaum said that the growth of global SVOD commissions has “altered dynamics in the sector, notably around budgets and expectations for production staff wages”. It also noted that the large SVOD commissions have tended to be in high-end drama and it continued, “although SVOD commissioning activity has grown rapidly, it remains a relatively small segment in terms of the number of programmes commissioned each year compared to that of traditional broadcasters, particularly the UK PSBs”. DCMS’ Green Paper also noted the changing market conditions; it said:

“The screen industry is struggling with rising production costs and underemployment. As the UK production industry increasingly makes content for global organisations, they don’t retain ownership of the intellectual property (IP), as the rights and revenue streams are held outside the UK - unlike working with a UK public service broadcaster, where independent producers retain rights under the favourable Terms of Trade.”

PSB Partnerships with Screen Scotland

An [MoU between Screen Scotland and the BBC was agreed](#) in February 2019 which set out how together they intended “to build a sustainable television industry in Scotland and to improve the on-air representation and portrayal of Scotland and its people”. This was [renewed in December 2021](#), and the news release at the time stated—

“The renewed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), will see the BBC and Screen Scotland jointly invest £3million to support the production of new TV drama, entertainment, scripted comedy, documentary and factual formats on the BBC’s network television services from Scotland and to develop the skills and talent required to devise, develop and produce those new shows.”

There was discussion between [Channel 4 and Screen Scotland to develop an MoU](#) in 2020. This does not appear to have come to fruition, although over the years, there has been some partnership working. There does not appear to be any formal partnerships between Screen Scotland and ITV, STV, or Channel 5.

News

Over the past several decades, news provision has undergone significant challenges, due to changing technologies and consumer habits. Last session the [Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee held a one-off session on Print and Online Journalism](#). More recently the Committee took an interest in STV’s plans to reduce its news footprint in Aberdeen.

News Consumption in the UK and Scotland

In terms of where consumers get their news from, at a UK level, Ofcom reported that:

“While online news consumption (70%) is on a par with watching news on TV, including on-demand (68%), it is significantly higher than linear broadcast TV channels (63%). Social media is a significant element of online news consumption and half of UK adults (51%) now use it as a source of news. Television (including on-demand) as a source of news skews towards an older demographic, with 90% of those aged 75 and over using it, compared to 52% of young people aged 16-24. The reverse is seen in the use of online for news – 81% of 16-24s are using online services, compared to only 37% of adults aged 75 and over. Just under four in ten people use the radio for news, and about one in five adults say they get news from a printed newspaper. In both cases, this is highest among older age groups.” (Media Nations UK 2025)

The BBC has the highest reach across all of its platforms (e.g. TV, radio, online). [Ofcom's News Consumption Survey 2025](#) found that the BBC reached 67% of adults. In Scotland this was slightly lower: 64% of adults.

Ofcom reported that the single biggest news source for Scottish consumers in 2025 was Facebook (38%) of adults, followed by BBC1 (36%) and STV/ITV1 (35%). (Media Nations Scotland 2025)

People in Scotland have a higher level of interest in news about their own nation than other nations in the UK. 48% of those aged 16+ say they are ‘very interested’ in news about Scotland – the UK average is 29%. This rises to 88% when including those who say they are either very or quite interested in news about Scotland – which compares to the UK average of 76%. The main individual sources that people in Scotland use to access news about Scotland are:

- ITV1/STV – 27% of adults
 - BBC One – 22%
 - Facebook – 17%
 - BBC news website/app – 11%
 - Clyde 1/Forth 1/West Sound/Tay FM/Northsound/MFR – 7%
 - BBC Scotland TV – 7%
 - BBC Radio Scotland – 6%
- (Media Nations Scotland 2025)

In relation to broadcast news, Ofcom's Media Nations 2025 reported that in Scotland:

“Across weekday early evenings (6pm-7pm) in 2024, the BBC’s Reporting Scotland reached an average of 18% of individuals in Scotland aged 16 and over per week, while STV News reached an average of 17% per week.”

The Glasgow University Media Group submission said that there has been a decline in trust in news providers and for many this is “due to what is perceived as the political agenda of professional news which serves those in power and does not speak to the interests and priorities of normal people.” The submission warned that there is a risk of a two-tier news system with more privileged groups consuming broadcast news, while others turn to unregulated alternatives.

Ofcom review of local media 2024

In [2024 Ofcom undertook a review of local media in the UK](#). The purpose of the review was to examine the “provision, role and value of local media in the UK, including how providers are adapting to changing audience behaviours.” Ofcom published two reports as part of this review in 2024. The first was published in July 2024 and included “initial findings ... providing a snapshot of the availability of local media, particularly local news, across the UK and giving insights into how people are using it.” The second was published in November 2024 and this focused on responding to a UK Government request to look at the “BBC’s position in the local news sectors and set out our approach to considering the competition impact of future changes to BBC local news services”.

The initial report found that “local media has a vital role to play in the social fabric of the UK.” It said that its research had found that “people recognise the potential civic benefits local media can deliver but generally tend to place greater personal value on the immediate, tangible benefits of day-to-day news and information, such as traffic and weather.”

Ofcom reported that the local media sector is facing a range of challenges “resulting from changing audience behaviour and funding pressures”. These included:

- audiences migrating from print and TV news sources to online;
- falling advertising revenues;
- the expansion in the role of online intermediaries in the news value chain;
- fierce competition online for the attention of audiences who are largely unwilling to pay for news;
- growing numbers of people who are disengaging from, or actively avoiding, news more widely.

The initial report stated—

“Local media providers generally accept they must evolve to have a sustainable future. Outlets of all shapes and sizes are looking for ways to reinvent their offering, attract audiences and diversify revenue streams. Most larger providers have tended to focus on consolidation to achieve economies

of scale. Some are innovating – embracing newer distribution platforms and emerging technologies or experimenting with the type of content they provide, as well as branching into podcasts, video-content and user-generated content. Some providers are actively investing in producing quality long-form public interest news to entice paying subscribers, or selling stories to national titles, as well as offering training, seeking out philanthropic funding and grants, entering into partnerships or even achieving charitable status.”

In its final report, Ofcom found that there is “scope to do more to help support trustworthy local news provision in the UK, and deliver the benefits of a more stable local media sector to audiences, society and the economy.” It identified a number of challenges which may need to be considered in supporting the local media sector. These were:

- ensuring the wide availability of, as well as easy access to, trusted and accurate local news;
- Improving the public’s understanding and appreciation of the value of local news to them both as individuals and as citizens; and
- securing audiences’ engagement with reliable local news sources.

Ofcom considered the BBC’s potential competition impact on local news services through the lens of local radio, TV/broadcasting and online news.

In relation to radio, Ofcom said that it considered it “unlikely that the BBC increasing or enhancing local news on its existing nations/local stations would have a significant impact on local commercial/community radio stations.” However, Ofcom noted that the impact of any future changes of BBC’s nations/local output may differ in different location and that, “the BBC should consider whether it would be proportionate and beneficial to look at the competition impact of significant changes in specific geographic locations.”

In relation to local/regional/nations TV news, Ofcom said that while “a relatively small proportion of Channel 3’s overall revenues are likely to derive from regional [or nations’] news”, it would consider the impacts on competition “if a material change to BBC nations/regions TV news is proposed.”

In relation to online content, Ofcom noted that the BBC’s reach in relation to local news varies considerably across the UK (including the Channel Islands and Isle of Man). Ofcom noted that the [BBC had recently invested](#) more in English local content and reported that the BBC’s share of monthly average page views of local/nations’ news had grown between 2022 to the first half of 2024 – at a UK level from 26% to 37%. There had also been an increase in Scotland from 44% to 52%. Ofcom reported that its research found that consumers liked the BBC’s local output which is seen to be accessible without paywalls and advertising. Ofcom reported that the BBC was “perceived to have fewer ‘sensationalist’ stories, and people felt confident that the information provided was more likely to be fact checked than some other online sources”. Ofcom discussed mixed evidence and views on whether the BBC is crowding out local commercial news providers. It said—

“We recognise that increased BBC online local news forms part of the headwind facing local publishers and there may be some local areas where BBC viewing is displacing commercial viewing. In addition, it is possible that future BBC changes will have a different impact on commercial publishers. For example, our qualitative research noted that if the BBC provided more localised online content people might choose it over alternative online sources, suggesting greater potential for substitution. Therefore, some future BBC changes may require further consideration by the BBC and Ofcom.”

Print and Online Journalism

In addition to Ofcom’s report, there have been a number of reports on local media including the [Cairncross Review](#) published in 2019 and the [Department for Culture, Media & Sport \(DCMS\) Committee inquiry into the sustainability of local journalism published in 2023](#).

One of the key issues has been the fall in advertising revenues of local newspapers this century. The DCMS Green Paper on the BBC noted that “the sustainability of the local news environment is under threat, with a reduction of £2 billion in local and regional print classified advertising in under 20 years.”

Last session the [Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee held a one-off session on Print and Online Journalism](#). Subsequently the Scottish Government established [a short-life working group on Public Interest Journalism](#).

[The 2021-22 Programme for Government](#) stated—

“We will ensure the long-term sustainability and resilience of public interest journalism in Scotland. We will listen and respond to the recommendations of the Public Interest Journalism Working Group, due this summer, to ensure journalism in Scotland remains transparent and strong, as a key element of Scottish democracy.”

The group [published its report in November 2021](#). It recommended—

1. The Scottish Government should work with stakeholders to establish a Scottish public interest journalism institute
2. The Scottish Government and OSCR to “take steps to enable non-profit public interest news providers to register as charities”
3. Media literacy to be embedded in the school curriculum
4. The Scottish Government to “examine the feasibility of introducing provisions” which would support community ownership of local news providers
5. Audit Scotland to monitor the annual advertising and marketing investment by the Scottish Government and public bodies and that the “Scottish Government should invest no less than 25 per cent of its central advertising and marketing budget with public interest news providers”.

6. Audit Scotland to monitor the annual use of public notices and that the Scottish Government “improve the accessibility of public notices and strengthen the ties with public interest journalism, and issue best practice guidelines for local authorities and other public bodies”.
7. In the context of the “rapid emergence of digital technology giants” Scottish Government should work with the UK Government to ensure that “public interest news providers of all shapes and sizes to thrive in the digital economy”
8. Scottish Government should engage with the UK Government to create tax incentives for businesses to advertise with public interest news providers.

[The Scottish Government's response](#) to the report was published in June 2022. It said that it would “use its convening powers to bring together institutions and stakeholders at a cross-industry roundtable in Autumn 2022” to consider a Scottish public interest journalism institute. The Government noted that decisions on charitable status are a matter for OSCR and that “some public interest news publishers may be able to gain charitable status as the law stands”. The response said that the Scottish Government would, “engage with relevant stakeholders to understand what further action could be taken, and resources developed, to support the further embedding of media literacy in schools.” In relation to a “right to buy” local titles, the Government said that “further investigation is required to establish what [this] would achieve and how it could be delivered.” The Scottish Government noted that it has a framework for its spending on advertising in the media and that “the Scottish Government makes decisions on marketing based on the best return of investment for taxpayer funds. In relation to public notices, the Government said that it would “engage with public notice procurement and local authorities to establish if any further action can be taken to increase the visibility and reach of public notices and strengthen ties to public interest journalism.” The response to the final two recommendations indicated that the Government would consider these matters further.

BBC Local Democracy Reporter Scheme

The BBC funds around 165 [local democracy reporters](#) across the UK. These reporters are funded by the BBC but employed by local or regional news organisations. The purpose of the scheme is to “provide impartial coverage of the regular business and workings of local authorities in the UK, and other relevant democratic institutions”.

The content produced by local democracy reporters is made available to the BBC and other participating news providers. DCMS' Green Paper on the renewal of the Charter said—

“[The Local Democracy Reporter Scheme] supports the vital role of local news in encouraging civic engagement, by helping communities and local businesses to scrutinise decisions that impact them. It funds public interest journalism which may be less commercially profitable and is therefore more vulnerable. The initiative is broadly supported among local news providers

and there have been calls for its expansion, though it is acknowledged that it cannot fix all the challenges the sector faces alone.”

STV

On 25 September 2025 STV published [interim financial results for the 6-months ended 30 June 2025](#). STV’s half year results in the first half of 2025 showed the operating profit was down 49% compared to the first half of 2024. STV set out a cost savings plan with the aim of delivering additional cost savings of £3m per annum. STV stated—

“Management is implementing a comprehensive cost savings programme to protect profitability and provide balance sheet flexibility in response to the deterioration in the advertising and content commissioning markets, and ensure the business is well set for growth as market conditions improve.”

It was reported that this cost savings programme may result in the loss of around 60 jobs across the organisation. Part of the initial cost saving plan was to replace the current news programmes for STV North and STV Central with one news programme covering both areas. The new programme would be broadcast from Glasgow.

The Committee took [evidence from stakeholders and executives from STV on 9 October 2025](#). Rufus Radcliffe, the Chief Executive of STV, told the Committee—

“We are clear about the long-term strategic direction of our business. However, as a commercial public service broadcaster that receives no public funding, we face significant challenges, which are driven by changing viewer behaviour and a very tough macroeconomic backdrop. We are facing declining linear viewing, reduced advertising revenues as companies hold back on spending, and a slowdown in commissioning for STV Studios. ...

“Part of our proposal involves changes to news services, reflecting both changing viewer behaviour and economic realities. We have approached Ofcom to amend licences unchanged since 2009. Sharing material from both regions will allow us to deliver high-quality journalism across Scotland from Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Holyrood and Westminster. We will tell these stories both on air and through our growing digital news offering. Our plan is designed to protect regional journalism, because it is not financially sustainable in its current form. We are confident that our plan will deliver more stories to more people, wherever and however they want to receive them.”

Changes to operating licences requires approval from the regulator, Ofcom. Ofcom opened a consultation on changes to [STV’s licences on 16 December 2025](#). The proposal would include a new STV News at 6 programme with shared or co-produced output across the STV Central and STV North licences. The proposal includes:

“[STV] to share up to 70% of material in its 6pm weekday programmes, STV News at Six, where it is of particular relevance to audiences in both licence areas, with the rest of the material to remain bespoke for each region.”

The initial proposal did not include the 30% of bespoke output for each region. In a letter to the Committee, Ofcom explained that STV made a revised request following “a period of engagement between Ofcom and STV, as well as STV’s own internal consultation process”. Ofcom is proposing to accept the revised request.

Ned Sharratt, Researcher (Education and Culture), SPICe

Date: 30/12/2025

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Annexe B

Professor Catherine Happer and Catriona Forrest, Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG)

Scottish Broadcasting

About: [The Glasgow University Media Group](#) is a research network which has been based in the Sociology department at the University for over 50 years. It has an international reputation for innovative methods of media analysis, and, in particular, its development of a holistic approach to understanding the role of media in shaping outcomes in society. Empirical studies on, for example, media and climate change, refugees, and the criminal justice system have integrated a combination of methods including interviews with journalists, content analysis and focus groups with audiences. The following insights and recommendations are drawn primarily from: a) [a series of focus groups](#) conducted over 15 years which have charted changing models of media trust with research conducted in Scotland and the UK (reported in full in [Happer, 2024](#)) and b) a research and consultation exercise conducted in 2022 which involved a series of stakeholder workshops with representatives from BBC Scotland, STV, Ofcom and a range of professional and independent news outlets, academics and experts to examine the sustainability of Scotland's media sector ([see final report here](#)) and c) expertise in journalism and broadcast skills and methods education via delivery of teaching programmes. The work of the GUMG is concerned with news provision and reception and the role of journalism in society and so this submission shares this focus.

Catherine Happer is the Director of the GUMG and Lead of the Culture, Media and Society subject group in the School of Social and Political Sciences, and is also a board member of the new government-supported organisation, Scottish Institute of Public Interest Journalism (SPIJI).

Catriona Forrest leads the Masters in Media, Communications and International Journalism at the University of Glasgow and is Director of the University's Journalism and Factual Storytelling Education Network. She is a member of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and a committee member of Women in Journalism Scotland (WiJS), for whom she leads a mentoring programme.

Both Catherine and Catriona have previously worked as journalists and factual programme makers, including at the BBC and as freelancers.

1) Broadcasting market in Scotland and the impacts of new technologies and changing market environment.

Scotland's broadcasting market faces significant structural issues which are the product of an increasingly globalised media system in which Scottish content

Annexe B

competes with content from all over the world. In particular, the emergence of global streaming platforms such as Netflix, which produce programming on massive budgets with significant cross-media advertising campaigns, and YouTube, which shares content from all over the world, pose challenges in respect of capturing and holding audiences, especially young audiences. STV, for example, have responded to this threat in 2025 by announcing [a new business strategy](#) aimed at building the brand as a 'globally recognised content powerhouse'.

In this context where the role, relevance and status of domestically produced broadcasting is increasingly questioned, not all genres are impacted to the same degree or in the same way - for example, in entertainment and drama, increasing competition poses a major threat in respect of dwindling audiences for local content. In news and current affairs, whilst there are issues of trust which we will discuss, broadcast news content continues to reach significant audiences, albeit much reduced if viewed historically.

[Evidence from Ofcom's 2025 survey of Scottish news consumption](#) indicates that broadcast TV remains a highly popular way of accessing news and the BBC is the most popular news provider. More than 80% of Scottish adults are interested in 'news about Scotland' which is higher than the figure for the other nations. However, this must be seen in what is perhaps the most significant finding from the survey which is that social media platforms have, for the first time, emerged as the most popular way of accessing news. As Facebook, YouTube and so on do not actually produce news content, what these figures represent is the increasing cannibalisation of broadcast content produced and paid for by the BBC, STV and other providers. Many people simply do not know the origins of the content they consume. Currently these platforms are subject to limited regulation in respect of these practices due to the weak implementation of copyright legislation, and [news providers are only compensated where there is a contractual relationship in place which guarantees it](#).

Findings

Through our research, we identify the following issues:

Decline in trust: Broadcast news from BBC Scotland and other professional news providers has seen a decline in trust in recent years, again this is a wider issue impacting on all forms of traditional news (also newspapers now delivered largely online). For many audience groups, this is due to what is perceived as the political agenda of professional news which serves those in power and does not speak to the interests and priorities of normal people. Political reporting of the economy, in particular, is perceived to be remote from everyday lives. There is a perceived lack of diversity both in industry personnel and what makes its way onto screen: key issues are the class backgrounds of journalists, and the dominance of news from London and the Central Belt. Many people seek out alternatives to counter what they perceive as 'mainstream media bias'.

Fragmented audiences: This decline in trust is experienced particularly by those in the lower income groups and young people. There is also a correlation between those most disaffected with the political system and the likelihood of investing trust in

Annexe B

alternative information sources. Here our findings are also supported by survey work at the [Reuters Institute at Oxford University](#) which evidences that moves away from broadcast news are highly differentiated along socio-economic lines. The longer term risk is that we see the emergence of a two tier model for broadcast news: where those who are in the higher income groups and/or more highly educated are well served, and the under-privileged go elsewhere for news and often to places where disinformation thrives.

Increase in popularity of social media news influencers: In recent years, we have seen the emergence of social media influencers who have moved into the provision of information or what we might call 'news alternatives'. These are highly popular and influential with audiences again in particular with young audiences. Our research shows the way in which audiences often regard influencers as more relatable and authentic than traditional news providers. The mode of presentation can create the impression of proximity and relevance to everyday issues which has played a role in driving audiences away from local news, and to which Scottish news providers have responded by reducing regional content.

Lack of regulation of 'news alternatives': There is currently no regulation in respect of the funding or practices of information gathering which influencers and other content producers engage in to report 'news'. [Some influencers are funded by political parties and/or politically motivated lobby groups](#), for example, but this is an area that is very under-researched. Evidence suggests that influencers often have no professional standards such as corroboration of evidence or protections in place for those they report on such as would be demanded of conventional news providers. As noted above, in addition, often professionally produced news content is reproduced without authorisation or consent.

AI generated content: The most recent challenge – the full impacts of which are not yet known – is the emergence of generative AI. Generative AI is a general term for a whole range of mechanisms, practices and impacts: the circulation and influence of AI generated audio and visual content which is highly authentic (such as 'deep fakes'); AI 'fact-checkers' in social media apps and news organisations' websites; and the use of AI in media production. The latter most directly impacts broadcasting as it may lead to jobs cuts and a reduced skills base in the industry however the other practices have more complex implications which intensify these questions of the authority and status of professional media services.

2) Public service broadcasting and the Scottish Government's role in this.

By public service broadcasting, we refer to BBC Scotland primarily but public service rules also apply to different degrees across the terrestrial channels such as STV, Channel 4 and Channel 5. Public service broadcasting in Scotland has been under attack for some time coming under pressure both from Conservative voices in Westminster and pro-independence commentators, as well as disaffection from segments of the audience as above. Questions around funding, independence from government, and competitiveness within a globalised media system are particularly acute in discussions of the sustainability and future of public service broadcasting. Progressively undermined in its negotiations with successive governments, the BBC

Annexe B

is currently operating at a reduced capacity to provide services. This limits its ability to provide the sort of independent critique and impartiality the public needs and expect. It also strains its capacity to generate high-end content that can compete with the highest quality offers of the streamers.

Findings and recommendations

Models of funding: In our stakeholders workshops, we discussed alternative approaches to the current funding model which might be more sustainable in the current technological and political environment. The license fee based on the principle of universality has been undermined in the digital era in which, as above, people engage with BBC content via social media and apps without realising that they need a TV licence. This is only going to get worse as the moves to online content via platforms increases. There is a need to rethink the current model and here lessons can be learned from comparable small territories which implement more hybrid systems of funding to meet the needs of the current climate – for example, [Denmark supports its media](#) through taxation for direct subsidies, indirect subsidies, and investment in public service media.

Visibility of content: The BBC Scotland channel lacks prominence on the electronic programme guide (EPG) in comparison with the other five main network channels and this further limits the visibility which is critical to maintaining domestic audiences. Audiences to the channel's flagship news show, *The Nine*, now cancelled, are likely to have suffered from this listing. There is a need to address questions of visibility of content both at the EPG and listings level but also the more complex issue of regulating use of BBC content by other information providers.

BBC independence: The recent fall-out from the re-editing of the Panorama programme on Trump's January 6th speech, and subsequent resignation of the Director General, opens up new questions about the independence of the BBC from government and other political actors. The suitability of political appointees made to the board, and journalistic relations with government ministers, both in the UK and Scotland, should be assessed in respect of fitness for purpose. Other models exist - for example, [in Quebec there is shared responsibility between government, industry and civil society for setting standards and ethics](#). The lobby system in which select journalists have privileged access to briefings and materials (and the now routine practice of 'leaking' online) is also contributing to perceptions of politicisation. There is a need to explore alternative ways of sharing information in a more participatory media system.

Rebuilding trust: There is an urgent need for initiatives to maintain – and in some cases rebuild - trust in public service media, particularly amongst those groups most affected. This should be paralleled by efforts to foster a stronger media literacy in those groups most drawn to alternative content. The key point is that news has to change: to include a greater diversity of voices, a need to counter the agenda of politicians, and to move to more accessible forms of language and presentation of news. It is not enough to simply direct people back to mainstream news for 'truth' or 'accurate information'. Audiences must believe news is serving their interests. Our research shows however that audiences still turn to broadcast news in times of crisis

Annexe B

– for example, millions tuning into the BBC during the pandemic and there is much to be learned from the ways in which both mainstream audiences and those most disconnected were reached during this time.

3) Skills development in the screen and broadcasting sectors.

As our [Scotland's Sustainable Media Future report](#) acknowledged, the scale and nature of job losses in the local and national screen and broadcasting sectors within Scotland are not fully known, and there is a pressing need for research leading to in-depth national data on the scale of reduced investment in media, and the impacts on journalism provision, loss of broadcasting and screen industry personnel and general precarity. Similarly, there is need for more robust data on the skills needs in respect of producing the next generation of journalists to perform their democratic role in a fast-changing technological landscape.

Findings and recommendations

Media skills and training: The question of skills training is highly topical in the journalism education, broadcast and screen communities in Scotland and globally. There is acknowledgment of the need to prepare industry entrants for a portfolio career. Individuals are likely to change roles multiple times and will need to adapt as technologies and the industry change, often rapidly. To prepare for this 'automation resilience', training and development will be required to move from the traditional focus on technical skills and towards the 'soft skills' which are less easily replaced by artificial intelligence, and which build resilience among the workforce, and encourage a media practice which serves the public interest: critical media literacy and digital literacy; fact checking and verification; storytelling skills such as identifying stories and making ideas clear, engaging and memorable; inclusive leadership and teamworking; reflective practice; writing and communicating effectively; environmental awareness; financial skills and an awareness of the industry and its new business models; and an understanding of legislation and how it affects journalism practice. Possibly the most important skills will be critical thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, curiosity and flexibility.

The impacts of generative AI: AI brings challenges in terms of skills and ethics, hand in hand with positives and opportunities. Journalists will need sufficient technical skills to identify and use appropriate AI tools, leveraging AI to work faster. However, specific technical skills will become less crucial than a broader knowledge of how AI in its current forms can be applied as a tool to support great storytelling, supported by a critical awareness of its potential bias and other ethical challenges such as copyright. Because of the legal and ethical considerations posed by AI, key journalism skills will continue to be an awareness of media law, and the ability (and the time) to keep up with a changing legal landscape and how the law impacts on reporting.

Impacts of constant upskilling: The need for constant upskilling raises concerns for diversity in the industry, with freelance broadcast workers and journalists from lower income backgrounds potentially missing out on opportunities for training and development. In our media programmes at the University of Glasgow we see

Annexe B

increasing pressures on media students - the cost-of-living crisis; housing insecurity; caring roles; wellbeing and mental health - all with a constant undercurrent of anxiety over jobs and prospects. Signposting the value of media skills in other sectors builds confidence and empowers individuals who seek to apply their training in other industries or career pathways ([Forrest, et al, 2023](#)). We need to encourage widening participation in education and promote greater diversity. [With the Reuters Institute identifying under a third of top editors in global brands are women](#) - and the UK at around 46%, we can do more to encourage women into leadership and editorial roles. A homogenous workforce can only serve to further erode trust in media, as noted above.

Coaching and mentorship: Informal and formal coaching, mentorship and training opportunities will become increasingly important ways to support industry entrants and career returners, and to address diversity issues. Women in Journalism Scotland (WiJS) runs mentorship schemes which encourage women to enter sports journalism and other underrepresented areas. The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and BECTU, ScreenSkills, and many other organisations including some publishers such as the BBC and investigative journalism outlet, The Ferret, deliver up to date industry skills and media literacy training. There is however a lack of coherence in information about broadcast, screen and journalism skills forecasting and training opportunities, and Scotland would benefit from skills forecasting research as well as a central national resource which would help avoid skills gaps, overlaps and missed opportunities as learners transition into employment.

Curriculum for Life: The University of Glasgow has developed a model, the Curriculum for Life, which aims to help students transition into employment: 'for students to graduate as creative leaders, social innovators, global citizens or change makers, they must have space to practice taking power, acknowledging their own accountability as investors in their futures, from work futures to democratic futures' ([Ferrie et al, 2025](#)). This approach is an important consideration in future media skills training – encouraging media industry entrants to become confident and active citizens who use quality storytelling skills to hold power to account.

4) The BBC Charter and Framework renewal process: what should a future BBC deliver for Scotland, particularly in reference to the above points.

In 2027, the government will examine and renew the BBC's Royal Charter, establishing the terms for how the BBC operates in this challenging global media landscape. In our opinion, and drawing on the previous points, a future BBC should aim to deliver for Scotland:

- 1) A BBC which represents the diversity of the public in respect of demographics, geography, interests and political opinion and does not simply report a narrow agenda focused on the Central Belt or Holyrood political debate.
- 2) A sustainable funding model for public service media which moves beyond reliance upon the license fee to a more hybrid model of targeted investment and direct subsidies which can respond to challenges as they arise.

Annexe B

- 3) A more participatory approach to setting journalistic agendas which may involve members of the public getting involved in identifying topics of importance and moving away from a narrow range of sources (business people, politicians, media personnel) to those with expertise and experience of all areas of public life.
- 4) A BBC which is independent from government in respect of both journalistic freedom, and a BBC Scotland which has autonomy from London in respect of its reporting practices and agenda.
- 5) A BBC which responds to a changing set of informational needs in respect of new forms of expertise and more relatable content with everyday application - a good example drawn from research with focus groups is Martin Lewis, moneysavingexpert.com, with his cross-media model of trusted expertise and audience participation.
- 6) A BBC that can be trusted to offer the best, most accurate account of what is going on in the world and which is not compromised by 'AI slop', clickbait headlines, or the tabloidization of reporting.

Annexe C

Professor Nick Higgins, Director of the Creative Media Academy & Professor of Media Practice Scottish Broadcasting

Introduction

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Scottish Parliament Culture Committee inquiry on Scottish broadcasting. This written contribution is informed by over 20 years' in the screen and broadcasting industry, encompassing professional practice, support for students and new talent, as well as academic research in this field. In particular, it draws on a commissioned report for Screen Scotland, published in 2023, mapping filmmaking and television teaching provision across Scotland.

The submission sets out key considerations and recommendations to support the Committee's scrutiny of Scottish broadcasting, informed largely by engagement to date with BBC Scotland and reflecting on current challenges, examples of best practice, and opportunities for the future.

For over 20 years, the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) has delivered undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes across film, television, journalism, radio and podcasting, in addition to music, performance and digital art. In 2012, UWS became one of only three Scottish higher education institutions to be recognised by Creative Skillset as a centre of excellence in creative industries teaching, resulting in the establishment of the UWS Creative Media Academy (CMA). The Creative Media Academy continues to focus on employability and industry relevance, demonstrated through professional accreditation from ScreenSkills, the Joint Audio Media Education Support (JAMES), the Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC) and the Scottish Music Industry Association (SMIA).

The recurrent success of our student films at the Royal Television Society (RTS), BAFTA and Grierson Awards is testament to our standing within the UK and internationally. Most recently, two UWS student films were nominated for the 2025 BAFTA Scotland Best Short Film Award: *My Dad and the Volcano* by MA Filmmaking graduate Gavin Reid, and *The Flowers Stand Silently, Witnessing* by doctoral student, Theo Panagopoulos.

At undergraduate level, Mathilde van Ooijen's short documentary, *On the Red List*, won three 2025 RTS awards including the National RTS Student Television Award for the category of Saving the Planet. Additionally, director Daniel Kelly's film, *Gas and Electricity*, won both Best Scotland and Best UK Student Drama at the 2025 RTS National Awards. Daniel is also the recipient of a 2026 BAFTA Studentship to study on the MA Filmmaking programme at UWS, one of only six such scholarships in the UK.

Annexe C

The UWS Creative Media Academy views itself a key stakeholder in the Scottish screen industry ecosystem and as such has a strong interest in the current health and future vitality of BBC Scotland and STV, particularly in the following respects:

1. As major employers of our graduates, both as production crew and talent.
2. As commissioners of programmes and content that provide opportunities for our alumni, both directly and indirectly through independent production companies.
3. As the leading Scottish broadcast platforms for the expression and exploration of cultural representation and democratic values.

Skills development and employment

In 2023 I was the lead author on a report commissioned by Screen Scotland that mapped existing filmmaking and television teaching provision in Scotland, with a view to determining the need for – and viability of – a national film and television school for Scotland.¹

The report set out to identify the educational and skills pipeline for filmmaking and television production students, from school through to college and university, and ultimately, to the highest level of education, postgraduate study.

Unlike previous reports, analysis followed CILECT² and ScreenSkills criteria, considering only college and university programmes with pedagogical approaches in which at least 50 per cent of core teaching is practice-based. This threshold reflects programmes that can be considered to “deliver film and television audio-visual training to a level that would be considered a professional preparation for industry”.³

Our research found that, as of 2023, Scotland's provision comprised:

- 1,112 students enrolled on 35 film and TV production relevant programmes at 12 further education colleges.
- 814 students across eight undergraduate degree programmes at five universities
- 101 students across five postgraduate degree programmes at four universities

Given the international student focus of current higher education business models, we also analysed the proportion of Scottish-domiciled students being instructed on

¹ *A Film School for Scotland: Mapping Existing Provision* (2023, University of the West of Scotland, 128 pages) research report commissioned by Screen Scotland and produced by Professor Nick Higgins (lead author), Dr Alesandra Webb & Dr Niclas Hell.

² CILECT is the International Association of Film and Television Schools (French: *Centre international de liaison des écoles de cinéma et de télévision*, CILECT), the association of the world's major film and television schools.

³ See the sections on Undergraduate Filmmaking Education & Postgraduate University Education in *A Film School for Scotland: Mapping Existing Provision* (ibid) pp. 40-63 & pp. 66-71 respectively.

Annexe C

each higher education programme. The results revealed lower numbers of Scottish students than might have been expected, particularly at the most advanced level of Masters study:

- 538 (66%) of those enrolled on identified undergraduate programmes were Scottish-domiciled
- 52 (52%) of those enrolled on identified postgraduate programmes were Scottish-domiciled

In theory, this educational pipeline represents the main source of skilled labour for the Scottish broadcast and film industry. Given the BBC's recognised role (according to the charter review) in skills and workforce development, we therefore recommend that BBC Scotland formally adopts a sector leadership role through the establishment of new mechanism to support sharing opportunities, training and work experience with the six identified universities actively delivering practice-based education in the sector.

In previous years, we have benefitted from such an approach through the Creative Skillset Scotland National Board; a forum chaired by BBC Scotland that brought together representatives from Skillset accredited film and television programmes in Scotland, alongside major film and TV industry employers including STV, production companies and facilities houses, serving as a key mechanism and interface between education and the screen industry.⁴

At its best this national screen skills board:

- Enabled hundreds of students to participate in the Commonwealth Games broadcaster initiative⁵
- Support university and college staff to engage in CPD programmes facilitated by the BBC
- Sowed the seeds of the STV local TV-university partnership, leading to the establishment of a newsroom on the UWS Ayr campus
- Crucially, supported the difficult transition from education into employment, resulting in real jobs and positive graduate outcomes for many students

Currently, BBC Scotland engages with the college sector through 'The Social' initiative, an online digital project that has been running since 2015 and supports young people across Scotland to develop and create short form, presenter-led, low-cost online content for The Social's social media channels. While this initiative has been a welcome and valuable addition to the media landscape, it does not offer a clear progression route from the educational pipeline we have identified that seeks to professionalize craft skills such as cinematography, sound recording, editing,

⁴ For an overview of Creative Skillset activities in Scotland in 2015 see parliamentary submission from Alasdair Smith <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/58565/pdf/> Creative Skillset was relaunched as ScreenSkills (UK) in 2018.

⁵ See Host Broadcaster Training Initiative (HBTI) 2014 summary report (01.09.2014)

Annexe C

producing and directing. If it does, it only offers skills development within a very limited online format.

BBC Scotland staff also make a welcome contribution through regular guest lectures and seminars across the six higher education institutions that deliver professional level film and TV education in Scotland. This contribution is very much appreciated by staff and students alike. However, this engagement is not formalized and operates on an ad-hoc basis. Nor does it offer a transparent, equitable or formal entry point into the institution.

We therefore recommend that BBC Scotland adopts a renewed, sector-leading role approach to skills and workforce development in Scotland, which might include:

1. The establishment and leadership of a new Screen Skills Scotland National Board, bringing together the six higher education institutions that currently offer a professional level of screen skills education (UWS, Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh College of Art, University of the Highlands and Islands, Glasgow Caledonian University and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland), alongside further education representatives, major broadcasters, production companies and facilities houses. This would serve as a key mechanism and interface between education and the screen industry, promoting opportunities for students, staff and graduates.
2. The introduction of targetted graduate bursaries and paid internships
3. Sponsorship of a Scottish Students on Screen Festival
4. Broadcast the best student films on the BBC Scotland channel

Production of Scottish-made outputs

As a major supplier of crew and talent to the screen workforce in Scotland, the UWS Creative Media Academy has growing concerns about a number of recent developments within the BBC that risk impacting the sustainability of the Scottish screen industry ecosystem. In each of these cases, our concern centres on the loss of opportunity for our graduates and the longer-term implications for a sustainable production sector in Scotland:

1. **Closure of River City.** The decision to close River City – the longest running broadcast soap – is of particular concern. As a long-running, studio-based drama, the programme offered one of the few reliable sources of regular income for freelance screen professionals in Scotland. Crucially, it also functioned as a skills and progression pipeline. The closure of the River City Training Academy – and prior to that, the loss of more informal but regular opportunities for emerging directors, such as Ruth Paxton and Siri Rodnes, to experience studio production – has removed one of the few avenues BBC Scotland offered for the development and talent progression of directors and craft practitioners, reducing opportunities for progression at early and mid-

Annexe C

careers stages.⁶

2. **Lack of Scottish crew on *The Traitors*.** We also share wider sector concerns regarding the lack of Scottish behind-the-camera crew on productions identified as ‘Scottish-qualifying’, such as the documented case of *The Traitors*. While the programme met Scottish quota requirements on paper, there was a failure to meaningfully employ Scottish crew, therefore contradicting the intent of such policies to support Scotland-based commissioning. Such gaming of the quota system harms the wider broadcast ecosystem, exacerbating the already recognised precarity of the Scottish freelance sector that the BBC should be supporting. We therefore encourage the BBC to undertake greater scrutiny of qualifying productions and to ensure the percentage of crew from Scotland meets their own nations and regions targets.⁷

It would be remiss not to welcome the commissioning of three new dramas; *Grams*, *The Young Team* and *Counsels*.⁸ Nevertheless, with two of the commissioned production companies having their main base in London, concerns remain regarding the employment of Scottish crews, directing talent and entry level opportunities for recent graduates. We therefore seek assurances that BBC Scotland will prioritise the engagement of indigenous crew and talent across these productions.

3. **The overhaul of the Radio Scotland schedule.** BBC Radio Scotland has recently announced significant changes to its late-night music programming, axing four long-running shows that have been a fixture of Scotland’s musical broadcasting for decades. Commentators and critics, including independent writers and sector organisations, argue the decision risks ‘gutting’ the national broadcaster’s commitment to Scottish music at a time when curated, specialist shows provide rare, trusted platforms for new and established artists alike.⁹ Without dedicated platforms that value depth, diversity and discovery over broad, mainstream formatting, there is a risk that the next generation of radio makers will have fewer role models, fewer gateways into the profession, and fewer spaces where innovative, culturally rooted Scottish music can thrive. Emerging artists, in particular, may face even greater challenges in breaking through in an increasingly crowded and algorithm-

⁶ <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/constitution-europe-external-affairs-and-culture-committee/equity-river-city-briefing-for-constitution-europe-external-affairs-and-culture-committee-15-may.pdf>

⁷ Figures on the Scottish impact of *The Traitors* remain under dispute, see both the BBC report <https://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/documents/bbc-the-traitsors-scotland-economic-impact-report.pdf> that recognises a lack of local crew deployment and the case for closer scrutiny of the BBC figures and justification <https://www.thenational.scot/culture/25607361.scotlands-talent-loses-celebrity-traitsors-attracts-11-million/> & https://substack.com/inbox/post/178700520?r=5bkjfp&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web&showWelcomeOnShare=false&triedRedirect=true

⁸ See <https://theknowledgeonline.com/news/bbc-announces-new-scottish-dramas-as-river-city-is-axed>

⁹ See <https://www.thenational.scot/news/25661773.petition-calling-bbc-scotland-reverse-schedule-changes-hits-13k/> & <https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2025/12/17/scottish-musicians-in-open-revolt-against-bbc-scotland/>

Annexe C

driven media environment, with far less opportunity to be heard on national airwaves.

Opportunities for Innovation

Whilst recognising the challenging environment that all linear broadcasting operates within, with a loss of viewers to streamers and online content, we welcome the proposed plans to place greater emphasis on the opportunities offered by the BBC iPlayer.

In this context, we would encourage BBC Scotland commissioners to embrace a more creative and inclusive approach to programming. The current BBC Scotland channel relies heavily on a number of formats within its schedule, however, with a monthly audience share of 0.12 per cent,¹⁰ we would suggest there is scope to experiment more boldly with its schedule.

The following recommendations are based on a desire to see the BBC Scotland channel offer a greater variety of programmes and, in doing so, to play a more active role in the development, championing and showcasing of new and existing talent within the wider Scottish screen industries.

1. **Feature documentaries (investment & procurement).** Scotland excels in quality authored feature documentaries that regularly screen at international festivals and receive theatrical releases. A recent example is the forthcoming feature *Everyone to Kenmure Street*, directed by Felipe Bustos Serra, that will premiere at this year's Sundance Film Festival but currently has no BBC investment. BBC Scotland could create a regular documentary slot to support Scottish talent, as well as strengthening its international perspective that will help overcome the dangers of an overly insular production model. Such a slot could include:
 - New commissions, potentially through co-production models similar to those used by other small national broadcasters in Finland, Sweden and Denmark¹¹
 - The procurement of Scottish-produced documentaries from previous years.
2. **Drama pilot season.** The BBC Scotland channel could offer a low budget opportunity, offering screenwriters the opportunity to create a series of drama pilots. This model would both develop emerging talent while lowering the risk of commissioning high-end TV drama series, allowing scope for creativity, more experimental concepts, testing and refinement.
3. **Showcase short form filmmaking.** BBC Scotland could play a vital role in showcasing the best short films (documentary and fiction) produced by both students and the Screen Scotland funded documentary and drama

¹⁰ <https://www.barb.co.uk/monthly-viewing/> accessed on 17 Dec 2025 based on July 2025 figures

¹¹ See Nick Higgins & Inge Sørensen (2025) Documentary funding in the age of the streamers.

In: Nash, Kate and Williams, Deane (eds.) *The Intellect Handbook of Documentary*. Intellect Books.

Annexe C

development schemes (Bridging the Gap and North Star Shorts). This would help to provide visibility, and a new progression pathway for early career filmmakers.

4. **Current Affairs international features.** BBC Scotland could take the lead in commissioning reports from similar sized European nations, allowing for a reflective and comparative analysis of how small nations are governed and what Scotland can learn from our close neighbours.

The Role of Broadcasting in Sustaining Scotland's Democratic and Cultural Traditions

In 2022, Screen Scotland adopted the BFI Diversity Standards, incorporating Scotland-specific criteria to help make projects more representative of the Scottish population.¹² In doing so, Screen Scotland recognised that there are specific barriers faced by under-represented groups within Scotland's screen sector (both on-screen and off-screen) that are not fully captured by the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Two of the eight additional characteristics included are 'being from a background of socio-economic disadvantage' and 'being resident in Scotland within an under-represented geographical area, whether a region, location or community'. Projects seeking funding from BBC Scotland are also required to meet these criteria.

As Scotland's leading institution for widening access, UWS strongly welcomes this advancement in Scottish-specific understanding of diversity, and the recognition that Scotland's diversity challenges are distinct from those elsewhere in the UK. With nearly half (44.8%) of UWS undergraduates being the first in their family to attend university, and 32% of Scottish undergraduate students coming from SIMD20 areas, UWS is actively committed to supporting student success regardless of background or circumstance. This commitment is delivered through initiatives such as the Foundation Academy, strong college partnerships, and our Student Success model which supports retention and progression. We therefore welcome wider sectoral initiatives that align with this ethos and continue to support our graduates into sustainable employment.

A UWS four-year doctoral research project, initiated in 2021 and funded by the Scottish Graduate School of the Arts and Humanities (SGSAH), focuses on understanding diversity within the Scottish screen sector and is delivered in collaboration with the University of Glasgow and BBC Scotland.¹³ While the research has focused primarily on the experiences of ethnic minorities in Scotland, a number of its conclusions have broader relevance for achieving Scotland-specific diversity targets across the sector. As the research nears completion, several conclusions are particularly pertinent to BBC Scotland's role as a public service broadcaster:

1. Clearer careers information for students

¹² <https://www.screen.scot/funding-and-support/support/bfi-diversity-standards-screen-scotland>

¹³ Undertaken by doctoral researcher Perpetual Brade and funded by the Scottish Funding Council through the SGSAH Applied Research Collaborative Studentship (ARCS) scheme on a project initiated by Professor Nick Higgins.

Annexe C

2. Ringfencing of roles based on Scotland-specific diversity targets¹⁴
3. Specific graduate & Scotland-specific diversity freelancer pools¹⁵
4. Collaborative pathway partnerships with HE
5. Presenting and sharing data on diversity and commissioned productions
6. Clearer updates on progress towards diversity targets

Scotland is – in its own specific way – a multi-cultural and young modern democracy. As such, BBC Scotland has a vital role to play in ensuring that this diversity is represented both on-screen, as well as in the talent and crew working behind the cameras and microphones.

The BBC Charter Renewal offers BBC Scotland an opportunity for a reset that builds on its current successes and places it more firmly at the heart of the Scottish screen ecosystem, acting as a catalyst for new talent, fresh programming and the creation of an inclusive and sustainable production infrastructure.

¹⁴ <https://bectu.org.uk/news/three-quarters-of-creative-industries-jobs-go-to-friends-and-connections-reveals-bectu-bectu-survey>

¹⁵ <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/A-Class-Act-1.pdf>

Professor Robert Beveridge

Scottish Broadcasting

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 20th 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 20th 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”

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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 Balfour 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 (LDRI) 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.

Professor Robert Beveridge FRSA FSA Scot

Formerly of the University of Sassari, Sardinia, Italy

Edinburgh 4th January 2026

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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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