



Bectu submission to the Scottish Parliament Culture Committee, review of Scottish Broadcasting 2026

9 January 2026

Within Scotland, the BBC continues to play a fundamental and integral role in the health of the industry. Programmes produced directly by the BBC or commissioned by it, or through support it offers to partners and production companies, are essential in underpinning the wider industry. This is especially true in terms of sustaining the skills base necessary to ensure that productions see Scotland as an attractive option when considering where to base their productions.

STV also plays a key role in supporting the production community in Scotland through STV studios, however as a Production company it is entirely dependent on largely London based, or international, commissioners for all its work.

Overall, across the UK many would argue that there is a more positive landscape as we move into 2026 but there are clear challenges facing the industry going forward. Successive Licence fee settlements have severely and negatively affected the BBC's programme making and commissioning capacity across the UK. Light touch regulation and commissioning practices do not offer sufficient protection to ensure Scottish based crews are employed as much as they should be. Attempts to politicise the BBC are also an ongoing concern for Bectu.

The increase in streaming, video on demand and social media channels continues to present real issues for traditional linear broadcasting too, particularly within News. YouTube is now considered to be the second-most-watched service in Scotland amongst the under 35s. While the centralisation and consolidation of news output at both the BBC and STV are largely attributed to these changes in viewing habits by the broadcasters, they will nonetheless significantly reduce plurality and local relevance across Scotland. This brings with it a resultant loss in regional identity and local employment opportunities.

Across the wider industry, areas such as High End TV Production and Film Production are fairly stable.

Latest figures suggest that the number of productions dropped slightly in 2025 although overall spend in Scotland increased. However Scotland's once vibrant unscripted sector continues to see a significant lack of commissions which has a devastating effect on employment amongst the Freelance workforce.

It is hoped that the BBC's recent changes to its commissioning model along with the promised increase in "Out of London" spend will translate into a significant increase in unscripted commissions across Scotland.

When considering the health of the industry it is essential to ensure that skills development has a high priority and that Fair work policies are robustly implemented and maintained at all levels. Too often production companies are allowed to claim a commitment to training because they have taken on a few trainees for a few weeks in random skills. More often than not these companies, particularly brass name plate entities, have no real knowledge of where the industry wide skills gaps are across Scotland.

Over the past 15 years BectuVision, working in partnership with Screen Scotland and the BBC, has transformed the landscape around training and skills development and its strategic cross Scotland approach has been fundamental to addressing real skills gaps through its long term skills planning and career development programmes.

With regard to Fair work, the industry is predicated on complex commissioning supply chains which can involve public sector or corporate customers or Sports governing bodies.

Broadcasters then commission production companies who in turn utilise facility companies and/or a range of suppliers. The whole commissioning process is ultimately supported by a Freelance workforce. Unrealistic commissioning tariffs and intense budgetary pressures result in excessively long hours and poor employment practices being the norm for too many.

These pressures and the freelance ad hoc nature of the employment creates an inherent insecurity which amongst other things proactively discourages workers from having an effective voice in the workplace and is detrimental to their health and wellbeing.

Looking ahead, there are several ways in which the Scottish Government can play an important role in ensuring that there is a brighter and healthier future for the Industry in Scotland.

It should press the UK government to support a realistic licence fee as the best model for PSB provision; Stable funding is critical to the BBC's ability to deliver public value. Retaining the licence fee, adjusted for inflation, ensures the organisation can plan long term, support diverse services, and maintain independence from political or commercial pressures. Any reliance on advertising or subscriptions risks undermining universal access and the production of distinctive UK content.

It should press the UK government to ensure that the BBC is free from political interference and that board appointments are non-political; Independence from government is central to the BBC's credibility. It allows the organisation to report impartially, hold those in power to account, and make editorial decisions free from political interference. Safeguards must be maintained to protect impartiality across commissioning, in-house production, and editorial content. The BBC should continue to operate at arm's length from government while remaining accountable to regulators such as Ofcom and to Parliament in a structured and transparent way.

It should closely monitor the BBC commissioning model changes and challenge Channel 4 to increase Scotland's commissioning decision making control. The BBC's UK-wide presence is central to its public service remit but must be conducted meaningfully.

It should lobby for Ofcom to be required to stringently apply all three of its key "regional production" criteria and to be given greater powers to protect regional culture, identity and employment across the distinct regions of Scotland. Regional production quotas must be meaningful, providing long-term opportunities, senior decision-making roles, and real place-based growth rather than simply serving as a compliance exercise.

The Scottish Government must also mandate agencies such as Creative Scotland/ Screen Scotland, Event Scotland, Sport Scotland and Local Authorities to play a full and robust role in addressing the serious deficiencies in Fair work created by the "long hours, no complaints" culture prevalent within the industry for too long now.