

# **Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee – Inquiry on Broadcasting In Scotland**

## **Written Submission from the Scottish Government**

The Scottish Government welcomes the Committee’s inquiry into broadcasting in Scotland. Broadcasting plays a central role in Scotland’s civic life, cultural expression and creative economy. This submission sets out the Scottish Government’s views on the current health of the broadcasting landscape, the challenges and opportunities facing the sector, and areas where policy and regulatory frameworks could better reflect the needs of Scottish audiences and industry.

While broadcasting is reserved, the Scottish Government has a clear interest in its sustainability and its contribution to Scotland’s cultural, democratic and economic wellbeing.

### **Context**

Television and radio remain among the most influential cultural and democratic institutions in Scotland. While there are areas that require improvement, our public service broadcasters (PSBs) – the BBC, STV/ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 – continue to deliver:

- impartial, trusted news;
- content reflecting Scotland’s nations, regions and communities;
- support for democratic participation;
- investment in the independent production sector; and
- a platform for Scotland’s culture, languages and creative talent.

Broadcasting is central to the health of Scotland’s creative industries. It supports a huge number of jobs, drives investment in skills and infrastructure, and contributes to Scotland’s international profile.

However, under the current devolution settlement, policy decisions, regulation and governance remain reserved. This limits Scotland’s ability to shape how PSBs serve Scottish audiences and how economic value from production is retained in Scotland. It remains the firm belief of the Scottish Government that broadcasting should be devolved, so that it can fully meet the needs of Scottish audiences and creative professionals.

### **Current Health of Scottish Broadcasting**

The Scottish Government strongly values and supports public service broadcasting and the critical role that broadcasters play in Scotland’s democratic life, cultural representation and creative economy. We support Ofcom’s continued recognition that audiences must be able to access a wide range of content that is produced across the UK and reflects its diversity, and be able to find and access a plurality of news that is duly accurate, duly impartial and trusted.

The Scottish Government recognises the challenges identified by Ofcom, broadcasters and other stakeholders. Technological change, market pressures and

evolving audience behaviour are reshaping the sector. At the same time, we believe it is important that broadcasters and Ofcom should have a strong focus on protecting access to high-quality broadcast content, including news; ensuring content remains discoverable on digital platforms; monitoring risks from misinformation, algorithmic distribution and AI-generated content; and maintaining plurality across the broadcast ecosystem.

People in Scotland watch more broadcast television than any other UK nation and nearly nine in ten people listen to radio weekly.<sup>1</sup> PSB channels remain highly valued and widely used. However, Ofcom's research shows that audience habits are rapidly shifting, with more news and entertainment consumed online, through streaming services, and via short-form video platforms.<sup>2</sup>

These shifts pose challenges for all the PSBs, including the commercial PSBs such as STV, whose business models depend on advertising. Changes to news at BBC Scotland and proposals to reduce regional news commitments at STV illustrate the pressures facing the sector.

While recognising the financial constraints, the Scottish Government has consistently expressed concern about proposals that would negatively impact Scottish broadcasting, and in particular news access and plurality. The Committee may wish to refer to our recent responses to Ofcom consultations on:

- [Scottish Government response to Ofcom consultation on STV regional programming commitments](#)
- [Scottish Government response to Ofcom consultation on BBC Scotland news changes](#)

We fully respect the independence of broadcasters and the media, while maintaining a strong interest in the sustainability, accountability and public value of PSBs. Ensuring that PSBs remain viable, protect jobs and meet their public service obligations is critical. It is key that Ofcom's regulation of the sector supports these aims, and resists any moves to reduce access to content on which audiences rely.

As noted above, broadcasting is a reserved matter, and we work constructively within that framework to ensure that Scottish audiences' needs are fully understood, and we will continue to advocate as strongly as possible for Scotland's interests in all our engagement with the UK Government, Ofcom, the PSBs, and others.

## **Economic and Cultural Contribution**

Scotland's screen sector has grown significantly in recent years, with Screen Scotland's latest research indicating £718m Gross Value Added (GVA) across the screen sector in 2023 (up from £567.6m in 2019); 12,260 FTE jobs supported; strong inward investment production from global companies; and continued importance of PSBs as the core source of demand, financing and commissioning of TV programmes and documentary films made by Scotland-based producers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ofcom, 2025: [Media Nations 2025 - Scotland](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ofcom, 2025: [Transmission Critical The future of Public Service Media](#)

<sup>3</sup> Saffery and Nordicity, 2025: [Scotland Screen Sector](#)

The Scottish Government is a strong supporter of our screen sector. We are committed to seizing the significant opportunities for growth, and working with our dedicated public body, Screen Scotland, to maximise the cultural and economic benefits that the sector brings. Since its establishment by the Scottish Government in 2018, Screen Scotland has played a transformative role, supporting both indigenous content and international investment.

As set out in our Programme for Government, we continue to support Screen Scotland to deliver its Strategy to 2030/31, with the shared ambition of achieving £1 billion GVA by 2030. Grant-in-Aid funding increased to £11.25m this financial year, and there is an additional £800,000 in the budget for 2026/27.

This allows Screen Scotland to continue their excellent work across the screen and broadcasting sectors, including support for the Production Growth Fund and Broadcast Content Fund, support for studios and infrastructure, the work of the Screen Commission, development of strategic partnerships and international engagement, and education and skills, making a career in film and television more accessible for more young people in Scotland, and helping our sector to stay globally competitive for future generations.

## **Representation and Quotas**

The Scottish Government supports Ofcom's aim to ensure public service content reflects the UK's diversity. We also welcome initiatives from broadcasters to increase support for the creative sector in Scotland. However, we continue to emphasise the need for Scotland's creative sector to be properly represented and supported, including through commissioning that delivers meaningfully Scottish content and sustains careers for Scotland-based screen and broadcasting professionals.

Scotland has a huge pool of talented producers and creative teams who can bring new ideas and new perspectives to UK audiences, and this must not be overlooked by those making commissioning decisions. The spirit of production quotas should be fully embraced, to ensure a strong, sustainable future for broadcasting in Scotland.

The Scottish Government shares the concerns highlighted in research commissioned by Screen Scotland and undertaken by Oliver & Ohlbaum Associates regarding the operation of Ofcom's Nations and Regions production quotas. The evidence shows that a high proportion of programmes counted as "Scottish qualifying" were commissioned from companies headquartered outside Scotland, and the use of "substantive bases" in Scotland as the basis for allocating productions to Scottish quotas often results in limited long-term economic or creative benefit to Scotland. The research highlighted that Channel 4's commissioning model has delivered greater value and more genuine Scottish origination than the BBC's network approach in recent years.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Oliver & Ohlbaum Associates Ltd., 2024: [2024-oliver--ohlbaum---20-years-after-the-comms-act-2003-v2-.pdf](#)

While we welcome Channel 4's plans to further invest in skills development across the UK, we also remain disappointed with the decision on the Made Outside England quotas for Channel 4's latest licence<sup>5</sup>, which we believe do not recognise the need for a publicly-owned PSB to represent and support all parts of the United Kingdom that it serves on a fair basis. As we previously set out to Ofcom, we are clear that Channel 4's Made Outside England quotas should fairly reflect the populations of the nations, and the size and growth potential of their creative industries.

Ofcom considers that Channel 4 needs to do more to improve representation, including by commissioning programmes set in the nations that authentically portray the lives of different communities within them, and we believe that quotas play a vital role in achieving those aims. We believe that supporting the next generation of talent, from all backgrounds, is key to growing our screen sector sustainability.

The Scottish Government will continue to do everything we can to support an increasing presence of Channel 4 commissioners in Scotland, and to maintain and enhance Channel 4's nations quotas to help improve local representation, develop our creative industries, and grow new Scottish talent.

The Committee may wish to see the Scottish Government's response to the latest consultation on this matter: [Scottish Government consultation response to Channel 4 Licence Renewal](#)

Overall, the Scottish Government supports a review of the quota framework to deliver:

- better alignment between quotas and genuine economic impact;
- stronger incentives for commissioning from Scottish-founded and Scottish-led companies;
- improved retention of intellectual property; and
- greater transparency over how quotas are met.

The Scottish Government notes the findings of the *Independent Thematic Review of Portrayal and Representation in BBC Content* (published January 2026)<sup>6</sup>, which provides important evidence on the under-representation of nations and regions in network content. The review concludes that while the BBC has made significant progress in diversifying voices and investing across the UK, material gaps remain – particularly in the portrayal and representation of working-class audiences and people living outside London and the south of England.

The review highlights that the BBC does not currently measure nations or regional background in network output, meaning structural under-representation of Scotland often goes unrecognised and therefore unaddressed. BBC Scotland's own internal analysis found that Scottish visibility on major network brands, including iPlayer, was

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<sup>5</sup> From 1 January 2030 at least 12% of the hours of programmes made in the UK for viewing on Channel 4 must be produced outside England, and at least 12% of Channel 4's expenditure on programmes made in the UK for viewing on the service must be allocated to the production of programmes outside England and using production centres in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Scottish Government strongly called for 12% (alongside individual nation quotas) by 2027 and reaching at least 16% by 2034.

<sup>6</sup> Anne Morrison and Chris Banatvala, 2006: [thematic-review-of-portrayal-and-representation.pdf](#)

substantially below Scotland's population share. Commissioners reported they were surprised by these findings, underscoring the consequences of not measuring nations data systematically.

The Scottish Government welcomes the review's recommendation that the BBC develop a new, more comprehensive measurement framework, including class and geography. We support actions that ensure portrayal is authentic, geographically grounded, and driven by commissioners who understand the communities being depicted. The review finds that genuine production, rooted in the location, made by people who understand it in depth is fundamental to on-air authenticity.

## **News Provision and Democratic Value**

Quality news plays a crucial role in society, helping contribute a great deal to informing audiences, empowering communities, and holding local institutions to account. Ofcom's report on the future of public service media, published in July 2025, states that audiences' access to accurate local, national and international news they trust provides the foundation for civic debate and democratic society.<sup>7</sup>

Ofcom finds that the PSBs remain the most trusted source of news. Under half of those who regularly use social media for news score it highly for accuracy (43%), trustworthiness (44%) and impartiality (44%). In contrast, the PSBs have significantly higher levels of trust in their broadcast news – 68% for regular viewers of STV/ITV.<sup>8</sup>

Ofcom's latest Media Nations: Scotland report, published in July 2025, shows that there continues to be a significant amount of interest in news about Scotland. Just under half of all people aged 16+ in Scotland who follow news claim to be 'very interested' in news about Scotland (48%) – this is higher than the equivalent figures for other UK nations and rises to 88% for those who are either 'very' or 'quite' interested in accessing this content. STV is the most used for news about the nation, with 27% using STV, while 22% use the BBC.<sup>9</sup>

Ensuring continued access to impartial, reliable news is essential for democratic participation. As noted above, in relation to STV's proposed changes to regional programming commitments, which the Committee has been taking evidence on, the Scottish Government has significant concerns about the long-term risks associated with centralisation, reduced regional specificity, and weakened local news provision.

Key considerations from our response to Ofcom include:

- Plurality and local representation are fundamental to trusted media. Any weakening of regional obligations undermines Ofcom's own stated policy objectives around representation, democratic accountability and trusted news.
- Regional and sub-regional news is essential to democracy. It enables scrutiny of local institutions, supports informed civic participation, and reflects the distinct issues, voices and identities of communities across Scotland.

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<sup>7</sup> Ofcom, 2025: [Transmission Critical The future of Public Service Media](#)

<sup>8</sup> Ofcom, 2025: [Transmission Critical The future of Public Service Media](#)

<sup>9</sup> Ofcom, 2025: [Media Nations 2025 - Scotland](#)

- Scotland faces a cumulative decline in public interest journalism, with structural pressures across BBC Scotland, commercial broadcasters, local newspapers and digital outlets. Ofcom’s regulatory decisions must therefore mitigate, not intensify, this risk.
- There is no persuasive evidence that consolidation models centred in Glasgow or elsewhere maintain audience trust, engagement or editorial diversity equivalent to locally rooted production.
- Digital expansion is welcome but cannot substitute for universally accessible broadcast news.

These points are highly pertinent to the broader work on trusted media. The sustainability of quality news from reliable sources is crucial in the fight against false or misleading information, and the Scottish Government considers it vital to protect public service media news commitments, including for local and regional news coverage. We will continue to urge Ofcom to ensure that its regulatory approach is aligned with the need to preserve plurality and local relevance across news services in Scotland, as we did in our response, noted above, to their recent consultation on STV’s proposed changes to its news provision in the North of Scotland.

The *Independent Thematic Review of Portrayal and Representation in BBC Content* (published January 2026)<sup>10</sup>, identifies risks arising from continued centralisation of senior editorial power in London. While the BBC has expanded production across the UK, the review concludes that too many editorial decisions affecting network news and current affairs remain London-centric, reducing the diversity of perspectives presented at UK level. Audiences in the nations reported frustration at rarely hearing contributors from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on pan-UK issues. These findings reinforce the Scottish Government’s view that decentralised editorial control and stronger commissioning in the nations are essential to providing trusted, pluralistic and relevant news for Scottish audiences.

As we have set out to Ofcom, STV’s proposals follow wider changes and challenges across the journalism and broadcasting sectors in Scotland. This includes Ofcom’s decision to approve a request by the BBC to reduce the hours of news provision required by the Operating Licence in peak time on the BBC Scotland channel from 250 to 125 hours per calendar year – this change does not reflect the evidence on Scottish audiences’ interest in national and regional news as presented by the PSBs.

Across the wider journalism sector, Reach plc, which owns a number of titles including the Daily Record, announced in September 2025 a proposed restructure for its editorial function, reducing journalists in Scotland and putting at risk coverage across Scotland. The NUJ says this serves a “devastating body blow” to the publisher’s journalists. PA Media also announced proposed job cuts last year, representing a reduction of about 8% of its UK editorial staff.

The decline of public interest journalism, and a lack of structures to support it, has been a focus for the Scottish Government for some time. That is why the Scottish Government supported the creation of the Scottish Public Interest Journalism Working Group to strengthen local journalism, and why we continue to consistently

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<sup>10</sup> Anne Morrison and Chris Banatvala, 2006: [thematic-review-of-portrayal-and-representation.pdf](#)

stress the importance of sustaining high-quality, locally relevant news, in our engagement with broadcasters, Ofcom and other stakeholders. While this Committee is focussed on broadcasting, the Scottish Government is clear that decisions about broadcasting should be made holistically in the context of public access to reliable, locally-relevant news and media.

We remain committed to ensuring that Scotland's media landscape is robust, sustainable, and representative of all communities across Scotland, and we do not agree with Ofcom's provisional assessment to amend STV's licences, just as we did not agree with proposals to reduce the BBC's news output.

### **Concerns about UK Network News Performance**

The Scottish Government also remains concerned about the performance of UK network public service news services, which continue to fall short in adequately and accurately reflecting the devolved landscape of the UK. While there have been improvements over time in some aspects, these gains have not been sufficient to address the structural and recurring shortcomings that persist in UK network coverage.

More than twenty-five years on from the establishment of devolution, and seventeen years after the King Report on BBC network news coverage, persistent systemic shortcomings remain. These include misleading use of terms such as "the NHS" or "the Government" when the institutions being referred to apply only to England or to reserved UK-wide matters, as well as a consistent tendency to frame devolved Scottish policy developments primarily through their perceived implications for the UK Government, rather than treating them as matters in their own right.

It is essential that UK network public service news providers meet their core obligations to provide trusted and accurate news, and to reflect the diversity of the UK's nations and regions. These duties must be interpreted meaningfully, with proper understanding of devolved responsibilities, ensuring that coverage accurately reflects each part of the UK.

### **Gaelic Broadcasting**

The Scottish Government places strong importance on supporting Gaelic as an indigenous minority language that requires safeguarding, and views broadcasting as essential to its visibility and long-term sustainability. Gaelic broadcasting plays a crucial role in strengthening communities, supporting economic growth – particularly in rural and island areas – and contributing to Scotland's creative industries.

The Scottish Government directly funds MG Alba and remains committed to strengthening BBC Alba and BBC Radio nan Gàidheal. The Scottish Government's commitment to Gaelic broadcasting is demonstrated in the recent funding increases. The Scottish Government budget announcement for 2026-27 included £15m for MG ALBA and this was an important increase from the 2025-26 figure of £13.1m. Following that increase, an additional £1.8m was allocated to MG ALBA and £699k for capital purposes in 2025-26.

Gaelic broadcasting is critically important, however our view is that it does not currently receive the recognition it deserves, including its omission from the Terms of Reference for the BBC Charter Review, despite the Scottish Government advocating for its inclusion. The Scottish Government continues to call for fair and balanced treatment of Gaelic broadcasting, comparable to that afforded to Welsh-language services, and believes that the Media Act 2024 should have more explicitly reflected the need to safeguard Gaelic.

The Scottish Government emphasises the importance of ensuring that minority language broadcasting receives consistent and fair recognition and support across the UK. A fuller acknowledgment of the specific needs and challenges facing Gaelic broadcasting is required, particularly in comparison with the treatment afforded to Welsh language provision.

The Scottish Government will continue to engage closely with stakeholders, including MG Alba, and will respond to the BBC Charter Review consultation to advocate for fairer support for Gaelic broadcasting and strengthened support and regulatory attention. This will help ensure the delivery of high-quality Scottish-produced content and sustain long-term investment. Our aim is to secure a resilient, visible, and well-supported Gaelic broadcasting environment that reflects Scotland's diversity and serves audiences across the country.

### **BBC Charter Review**

The Scottish Government has a strong and ongoing interest in the BBC's role in supporting the creative economy across the UK. We expect the BBC to fully represent all the nations and communities of the UK and invest a fair share of its licence fee here to support our creative sector.

Historically, the BBC has spent a lower proportion of licence fee raised in Scotland in the nation compared with other parts of the UK. We continue to press the BBC to increase and maintain a fairer level of spend. While welcome the work that Screen Scotland and the BBC do together to support Scottish productions and the skills development of Scottish screen professionals who work on those productions, we expect to see a greater number of network productions being developed and produced in Scotland. This is vital both for strengthening the creative economy and ensuring that Scotland's diverse communities see themselves reflected in BBC output.

We will continue to advocate for the BBC to enhance its impact for Scottish audiences through distinctive, high-quality content that reflects, represents, and serves the people of Scotland, while supporting a sustainable and thriving creative sector.

The Scottish Government will submit a full response to the UK Government's Green Paper consultation. We welcome consideration of the decentralisation of spending, activity, and decision-making across the nations. This Review must strengthen commissioning in the nations to support genuine, meaningful, and sustainable growth within Scotland's creative economy. The Scottish Government is absolutely clear that this must change, and the BBC's regional commissioning structures – and

the regulation of these – must be improved so that companies genuinely based in Scotland are not losing out to those based elsewhere.

The Scottish Government believes that the future strength and credibility of public service broadcasting in Scotland depends on a significant expansion of autonomy for BBC Scotland. We note the evidence presented to the Committee during this inquiry setting out that the current arrangements – where strategic, editorial and financial decisions are largely controlled from London – are not adequate for the needs of Scottish audiences. We agree with experts who assert that Scotland requires a BBC that is empowered, accountable, and structurally equipped to operate as a genuinely national broadcaster.

One key area from the evidence was the call for a more federal BBC structure, in which BBC Scotland would operate as a genuine partner within the wider organisation rather than as a regional outpost. Such a model would provide meaningful control over schedules and commissioning, enabling BBC Scotland to serve Scottish audiences more effectively rather than relying on limited opt-out arrangements.

Concerns were also raised about the London-centric nature of BBC editorial control – an issue that, as noted above, must be addressed in the next Charter. The Scottish Government agrees with witnesses that BBC Scotland requires greater structural independence, enhanced editorial authority, more appropriate governance arrangements, and stronger financial resources. These changes are essential not only to ensure that Scotland's stories are told authentically, but also to support democratic accountability, rebuild public trust in journalism, and secure a resilient future for Scottish broadcasting.

Recent evidence presented to the Committee regarding changes to BBC Radio Scotland's late-night schedule also highlights the importance of the BBC's cultural responsibilities in Scotland. While the Scottish Government fully respects the BBC's operational and editorial independence, we recognise the significant role that the BBC plays in Scotland's cultural landscape and the importance of its public service remit. We acknowledge the music sector's concerns about the potential impact of these programming changes on emerging Scottish artists and the visibility of Scottish cultural output.

The Scottish Government places high value on the contribution of Scotland's music industry and the crucial role that showcasing new and emerging artists plays in sustaining the talent pipeline. We remain committed to supporting opportunities for new and emerging artists to share their work – whether through radio play, grassroots venues or touring. Given this, and in order to fully understand the implications of the revised schedule, the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture has written to BBC Scotland to seek a meeting to discuss the internal monitoring undertaken by the BBC regarding the number of Scottish artists featured, and to ask for further detail on the mechanisms in place to ensure that emerging Scottish talent – particularly those without established mainstream reach – continues to have a prominent and meaningful platform on BBC Radio Scotland. The Scottish Government also wishes to understand how the BBC intends to engage with Scotland's music sector going forward.

We welcome the exploration of funding models and agree that ensuring the BBC's sustainable funding enables its crucial role in driving the growth of the creative industries in the UK, and supporting minority language broadcasting, as well as continuing to deliver the wide variety of content which audiences want and need. We will continue to stress that any approach to funding must take account of minority language broadcasting equitably across the UK, which has not been the case to date.

The Scottish Government welcomes the BBC Executive's commitments in response to the *Independent Thematic Review of Portrayal and Representation in BBC Content*<sup>11</sup> including: strengthening the measurement of portrayal and representation; doubling spend on high-impact content in the nations; expanding commissioner posts outside London, and; establishing improved decision-making closer to audiences. These are positive steps and align with our long-standing position that Scotland requires a fairer share of commissioning power, investment, and visibility within UK-wide broadcasting.

However, the Review also makes clear that these improvements must be embedded structurally through the Charter period. We will continue to press for governance and regulatory frameworks that ensure the BBC's portrayal of the UK's nations is measured transparently and improved consistently over time. Sustained focus on Scotland's representation – on screen, off screen, and in commissioning – must be a key outcome of the Charter Review.

### **Skills, Workforce and Education**

Sustaining a skilled workforce is essential to Scotland's creative and screen economy. Screen Scotland, our dedicated public body for screen, invests in skills and workforce development, supporting entry-level roles, specialist craft and technical skills, VFX, animation and post-production, and structured placements on PSB and inward-investment productions.

The Scottish Government recognises the impact of recent production changes – notably the cancellation of *River City* and wider uncertainty in parts of the sector – and remains committed to supporting strong skills pipelines and employment opportunities across Scotland. We are deeply disappointed that the BBC has cancelled *River City*, with the impacts that has on skills development as well as for audiences and the cast and crew. We could not be clearer that we want to see more BBC investment in production in Scotland. The BBC should seek to protect and enhance the network of professionals who contribute to their productions in Scotland, such as those involved in *River City*. It is vital that people working in Scotland's screen sector can continue to access meaningful career and skills development opportunities, including those provided through *River City's* long-standing training academy, although we understand that the BBC do intend to.

The Scottish Government remains concerned that meaningfully Scottish, and Scotland-based, production is not adequately prioritised, and this has obvious impacts on the skills and development opportunities open to those working in the

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<sup>11</sup> Anne Morrison and Chris Banatvala, 2006: [thematic-review-of-portrayal-and-representation.pdf](#)

sector. We have been clear in our engagement with the BBC – and with Ofcom as the regulator – that more can and should be done to support authentically Scottish productions and Scotland-based screen and broadcasting professionals who choose to build their careers here.

More broadly, investing in Scottish skills and talent, and opening up new opportunities, is the best way to ensure that Scottish voices are represented throughout the production journey and that our communities are authentically reflected both here and around the world. Strong and sustainable pathways into the sector are critical, and schools play an important role in fostering the knowledge, skills and career routes essential for young people.

In the 2025–26 Programme for Government, the Scottish Government committed to supporting schools to access high-quality film and screen learning, ensuring Scotland develops the workforce required to meet the demands of a £1 billion film and screen industry by 2030. Screen Scotland’s Film and Screen Education Programme is central to this ambition, creating accessible pathways for Scotland’s next generation of filmmakers. This national offer is delivered by Screen Scotland in collaboration with Education Scotland, SQA, GTCS and local authorities.

The aim is to provide all young people with the platform to acquire the knowledge and skills that can lead to fulfilling, successful careers in a thriving film and television sector, while nurturing authentic Scottish storytelling and creativity. The programme takes a practical, experiential approach that enables learners to create, present and evaluate filmmaking, aligned with Scotland’s Expressive Arts curriculum.

Between 2023/24 and 2025/26, Screen Scotland’s total investment in Screen Education activity is £1.19 million. This includes £600,000 for the Draft Film and Screen Curriculum and associated development work; £200,000 for Schools Screen Education and Screen Education funds; and £390,000 for strategic partnership activity. In the senior phase, the SQA has developed Film and Screen Awards at SCQF Levels 5 and 6 to equip learners with the skills and knowledge required for further study or employment. This programme builds on the longstanding work of education and film organisations that support schools through initiatives such as the Participation Framework and the Screen Education Fund.

## **Future of Digital Terrestrial Television**

Universal access to free-to-air television remains vital for communities across Scotland. As has been highlighted during the inquiry, many Scottish households continue to rely on Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) as their primary means of accessing television. The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that audiences can continue to access the free-to-air television and radio services they enjoy and depend upon.

Broadcasting is a reserved matter, and the Scottish Government has long argued that it should be devolved so that services can more effectively meet the needs of Scottish audiences. We therefore join public service broadcasters and other stakeholders in urging the UK Government to consider the future of DTT carefully, and to ensure that any future switch-off is managed inclusively and does not

disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, including those in rural and island communities and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

The Scottish Government welcomes the BBC's stated position, reiterated when at Committee, that no audience should be left behind in any future transition away from Digital Terrestrial Television. We share this view of the BBC's responsibilities as a universal public service broadcaster, and agree that any future changes to distribution technologies must be planned and delivered in a way that guarantees continued access to public service content for all households.

The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture wrote to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, on 19 January 2026 to urge the UK Government to carefully consider the impacts of the prospective Digital Terrestrial Television switch-off on vulnerable groups, including older people, those in rural communities, and those with lower household incomes. The Cabinet Secretary specifically raised the issue of potential health and wellbeing impacts, should households lose access to television services.

The Scottish Government has made clear that broadband is not universally available and can be costly for households, meaning that requiring it for television access could exclude some audiences from services they have a right to receive. While we recognise the evolution of the broadcasting sector and support public service broadcasters as they adapt to a digital-first environment, we are clear that any switchover must be managed carefully, with substantial notice and robust mitigation for those who rely on DTT.

Scottish Government officials have raised the importance of safeguarding DTT in discussions with UK Government counterparts and will continue to do so as part of ongoing engagement on broadcasting policy. We will also continue to emphasise to both the UK Government and Ofcom the importance of ensuring that broadcasting remains sustainable, resilient and accessible to everyone in Scotland. Our position is clear: any transition away from DTT must not disadvantage those who rely on it. No audience — whether in rural or island communities, or among older people — should be left behind.

We are committed to ensuring that everyone in Scotland has the skills, confidence, and access they need to participate fully in the digital world. The Scottish Government continues to help extend the reach of fast, reliable broadband infrastructure across Scotland through our £600 million investment in the Reaching 100% (R100) programme and key role in delivering Project Gigabit in Scotland.

## **Conclusion**

The Scottish Government strongly supports a vibrant, pluralistic broadcasting sector that reflects Scotland's identity, strengthens our democracy and sustains our creative industries. We will continue to work with Screen Scotland, PSBs, Ofcom and industry partners to champion:

- sustained funding for PSBs;
- fair investment and representation for Scotland;

- transparent and effective regulation;
- stronger representation of Scotland's interests in regulatory and governance structures;
- sustainable, high-quality news provision, including local representation;
- strong skills pipelines; and
- a broadcasting system that fully reflects the needs and interests of people across Scotland, including Gaelic language broadcasting.

We welcome the Committee's continued focus on broadcasting and look forward to constructive engagement as this inquiry – and the BBC Charter Review – progresses.