



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

AGENDA

27th Meeting, 2012 (Session 4)

Tuesday 30 October 2012

The Committee will meet at 10.00 am in Committee Room 2.

1. **Broadcasting:** The Committee will take evidence from—

Paul McManus, Scottish Organiser, Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU);

Peter Murray, Scottish Representative on the Executive Council, National Union of Journalists.

2. **Work programme (in private):** The Committee will consider its work programme.

Terry Shevlin
Clerk to the Education and Culture Committee
Room T3.60
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
Tel: 0131 348 5204
Email: terry.shevlin@scottish.parliament.uk

The papers for this meeting are as follows—

Agenda Item 1

Written Evidence

EC/S4/12/27/1

Agenda Item 2

PRIVATE PAPER

EC/S4/12/27/2 (P)

Education and Culture Committee

27th Meeting, 2012 (Session 4), Tuesday, 30 October 2012

Broadcasting: Written Evidence

Clerk's note

The Education and Culture Committee will take oral evidence from the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU) on broadcasting on 30 October 2012.

A letter was received by Stewart Maxwell MSP, Convener to the Education and Culture Committee, from Paul Holleran of the NUJ on 1 October 2012:

Letter from Paul Holleran, NUJ

Page 2

The BBC Scotland have provided the following written submission in advance of the meeting:

BBC Scotland

Page 4

**Jonas Rae
Committee Assistant
25 October 2012**

Letter from Paul Holleran, NUJ

I have been made aware that Messrs McQuarrie and Entwistle have declined your invitation to attend the Culture committee to answer questions about BBC Scotland and feel that I must inform you of the NUJ's concerns regarding that organisation.

The unions NUJ and BECTU are involved in a major consultation on the latest round of job cuts and savings under the heading Delivering Quality First (DQF) at BBC Scotland. A target of 35 job reductions has been set, including 17 in News and Current Affairs.

It is clear that there will not be enough volunteers for redundancy in this area as only one person has so far come forward to accept the deal. This inevitably means we are heading towards a conflict with industrial action a real possibility if any compulsory redundancies are announced.

In an attempt to prevent this scenario the joint unions have called for a moratorium on the move to select people for redundancy (set to start October 15th). At a meeting last Thursday we told management that we believed the selection process was flawed and unfair and called for a halt.

We had been informed the day before that management were "working on a bid" for funding from London to cover the Commonwealth games and Independence referendum. However they could not tell us

- how much they were asking for
- what the timescale was for submitting the bid
- when they expected the extra funding to be available in Scotland.

We requested formally that they fast track the relevant decisions and make that information available to the joint unions. We asked them then to enter into meaningful talks with the unions on how that money would be spent in resourcing these important issues.

It would be fair to say the response shocked those present on the union side of the table. Among the management statements were suggestions that

- this additional funding would not affect the BBC Scotland business plans up to 2016-17;
- that both the Commonwealth Games and Independence referendum were "one-off events";
- "the referendum would be over in one night";
- "the Commonwealth Games won't be like the Olympics";
- "it will just be business as usual".

The comments give us major concerns as to the management attitude towards resourcing BBC Scotland. This is an opportunity to negotiate meaningful funding packages at a time when jobs are being cut. We believe there is a real prospect to ensure financing to

- save jobs at risk;
- prevent a serious industrial conflict;

- resource coverage of the Commonwealth Games to have a similar impact to the Olympics;
- set up and resource a political/news and current affairs unit to ensure a quality journalistic reportage and analysis of the Independence referendum.

I have written to Ken McQuarrie expressing our concerns and I would ask your committee to look at this serious abrogation of responsibility by BBC management and come to your own conclusions.

BBC Scotland

Delivering Quality First: Overview

As a result of the UK Government public spending review, the BBC Licence Fee has been frozen at its current level - £145.50 per annum – until the end of the current Royal Charter (December 2016). With additional financial responsibilities placed upon it – World Service funding, the Welsh language service S4C, support for Local TV, etc. – this has necessitated a BBC budget saving of approximately 16% - 20% over the period.

The impact on the BBC, and on BBC Scotland, was outlined in October 2011. In detail:

- BBC – average savings required per area 20%: in Scotland, requirement is 16%
- BBC Scotland will be required to reduce its local budget by £16.1million, from £102m to £86m, over the period to the end of financial year 2016/2017.
- The likely impact will be 100 – 120 post closures and we will look to voluntary redundancy, redeployment where possible/appropriate, etc.
- News posts will reduce by c. 30, with a simplified management structure (under DQF, 11 News posts were closed last year and 17 proposed for this year); radio potentially could lose 15-20 posts, though investment in distinctive programming will remain a priority, as will sharing content with BBC networks.
- There will be no drop in hours in News and Current Affairs from BBC Scotland - in fact there will be an increase, with more radio news at weekday lunchtimes. We have already reshaped our offering on Saturday mornings, with more news and current affairs on offer to our audience, instead of late night programming.
- The overall number of local TV programmes will reduce, though maintenance of quality will remain a priority. An increased number of nations' opts (local programmes) on network radio and TV will provide opportunities for increased representation and portrayal of Scotland and/or Scottish issues on network.
- The overall impact of the budget cuts will, we hope, be offset to a degree by increased network business, which will bring both funding and employment opportunities.

The current phase

By the end of August 2012, 39 posts had been closed. Whilst we will again find some of the savings from non-staff costs, by March 2013 we expect to close approximately 35 posts to achieve the required savings for 2013-2014.

These are in the following areas:

Radio, Scotland	8 posts
Gaelic	2 posts
News & Current Affairs	17 posts
Marketing, Communications & Audiences	6 posts
New Media, Learning & Outreach	2 posts

We will do all we can to support staff affected by the post closures and, as we would always do, we will be seeking to manage any post losses through voluntary redundancy and redeployment, thus avoiding compulsory redundancy wherever possible.

We continue to talk to the unions about the Delivering Quality First savings plan. A number of volunteers have come forward from the trawl for voluntary redundancy. However, some areas have not received enough volunteers and, consequently, we will still need to undertake selection for retention exercises in these areas.

Inverness

We had originally planned two News post closures in Inverness. However, as an organisation that has an on-going dialogue with our employees, we have been talking through our efficiency plans with staff and unions as part of the consultation process. Following those talks we have been able to reduce the proposed News post closures from two to one.

By way of general context, it should be noted that BBC Scotland has never had a greater newsgathering commitment to the Highlands and Islands than it does at present, with 21 News staff working on English-language and Gaelic output across TV, Radio and Online.

Of those 21, we have 13 Newsgathering staff covering Gaelic output from Inverness, Skye and Wester Ross, Argyll, Stornoway and Uist, while another eight News staff based in Inverness work largely on English-language output.

In addition to those 21, we also have a further team of 19 presenters and production staff who are part of the overall output teams for Inverness.

As the numbers indicate, Highlands and Islands has a considerable amount of BBC investment in Newsgathering and that is in addition to around 200 News staff based elsewhere in Scotland who can augment and add to that core team if there is editorial demand for it.

Going forward, it is our intention to deepen the collaboration which already exists between the English language and Gaelic news staff and to continue to invest in new technologies, such as satellite kits, to enhance our newsgathering capabilities across the region. We do not envisage such a development as placing greater pressure on our Gaelic service.

We are also aware of concerns having been voiced that such pressures as may consequently be placed on BBC Scotland by the need to make cost reductions could lead to Scottish Government resources being used to underpin the Gaelic language for mainstream news. This situation could never arise, as funding for all news programming, on all BBC services and broadcast platforms, must be derived wholly from Licence Fee and from no alternative source. This ensures the BBC's impartiality in its news reporting.

Aberdeen

Staffing will be impacted as a result of the decision to decommission the Tom Morton programme, the Beechgrove Potting Shed and Digging Up Your Roots. The news

operation will also be reduced by one post as part of the 17 post reductions in BBC Scotland News in this phase of the Delivering Quality First strategy (that one post has been identified through voluntary redundancy).

The BBC Trust recently reviewed the Radio Scotland service licence and determined that, in order for the station to remain distinctive, there should be a greater focus on speech-based programmes during the daytime schedules, with specialist music programmes featuring during evenings. To that end, we have decided to close the Tom Morton Show and to replace it with a speech-based programme, featuring Janice Forsyth, which will be produced from our existing radio features base in Edinburgh.

The Beechgrove Potting Shed will also be decommissioned, as we seek to develop a new approach to gardening. This will involve the development of a weekly Radio Scotland slot in the lifestyle strand, inserts to the MacAulay and Co programme and a new series, The Kitchen Garden, which will focus on all aspects of food, from growing and sourcing through to preparation and presentation.

It is our intention to make Aberdeen a base for social history and environmental science output and we are already planning series around both themes, building to a large extent on the expertise which exists within the Landward and Out of Doors teams.

Where particular posts are affected by the proposed changes, we will in the first instance look to voluntary redundancy and possible redeployment and we continue to have constructive discussions with the unions on these matters.

On the question of news coverage, we remain firmly committed to providing local news from Aberdeen using the team based there, both to offer a service for Aberdeen listeners and to feed into our national and UK news coverage. We will not reduce the amount of news coverage which we offer from Aberdeen; nor will compromise on the quality of that coverage or redirect the focus of our existing news coverage towards the Central Belt. A new sports journalist has also just been appointed in Aberdeen.

Our commitment to producing output of the highest quality from Aberdeen is reflected in programmes such as Out of Doors and Landward; we have recently re-commissioned The Beechgrove Garden; the six part television series, The Harbour, about Aberdeen Harbour and produced by Tern TV, began on BBC One Scotland on Monday 22 October; and this year's production of Children in Need will for the first time be based in Aberdeen.

Going Forward

We are in the process of preparing for coverage of the Independence Referendum and the Commonwealth Games. Both will benefit significantly from increased, fixed term resourcing from network BBC. Welcome as that funding will be, these monies are outwith the timeframe of the current phase of savings that are required of us and consequently do not impact on the savings that we currently have to make.

In the period up to and during the Independence Referendum we will offer comprehensive, authoritative coverage of the issues and provide a platform for debate and discussion, involving voices from across the political spectrum.

Our approach will be as thorough as that adopted in covering the signing of the Referendum Agreement on 15 October 2012. On that occasion, on television, the network Six O'Clock News and Ten O'Clock News were co-presented, with contributions from Nick Robinson and Brian Taylor; in Scotland, there were extended versions of Reporting Scotland and Newsnight Scotland; the story featured prominently across radio services, from Good Morning Scotland to the Today Programme to 5Live; Radio Scotland also ran a phone-in on the Tuesday morning. There continues to be collaboration over the content of our online Referendum website and collaboration across all Scotland and UK platforms on branding.

As we move towards the Referendum itself, we will offer more debates, more documentaries and new programming, across television, radio and online, where, particularly in the case of the latter, we are developing innovative ideas to engage and inform our audiences, specifically younger viewers and listeners.

Conclusion

We do not underestimate how hard it is to achieve these savings plans and how difficult it is for those facing the prospect of losing their jobs. In this respect, the challenge we face is similar to that in other parts of the Scottish media.

We would, however, like to underline our track record of success in delivering great content to our audiences and of significant investment in BBC Scotland over recent years. Our aim remains to provide high quality and distinctive programmes, content and services for audiences in Scotland and in the rest of the UK. Our proposals will ensure that we deliver those aims and respond to the demands of an ever-changing industry.