

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
Thursday 9 October 2025
26th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

STV

1. The Committee will be taking evidence this week in relation to STV's proposed news changes.
2. We will be hearing from—

Panel 1

- Nick McGowan-Lowe, National Organiser for Scotland, National Union of Journalists
- Paul McManus, Negotiations Officer Scotland, Bectu

Panel 2

- Rufus Radcliffe, CEO, STV
 - Bobby Hain, MD of Audience (News, Regulation and Audio), STV
3. SPICe have provided a briefing at **Annexe A** and there are written submissions from STV at **Annexe B**, Ofcom at **Annexe C**, Bectu at **Annexe D**, and the NUJ at **Annexe E**.

Clerks, October 2025

Annexe A

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
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STV announcement

On 25 September 2025 STV published [interim financial results for the 6-months ended 30 June 2025](#). These results included a cost savings plan with the aim of delivering additional cost savings of £3m per annum. These results said—

“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 has been reported that part of this cost savings plan is 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. This change may result in the reported loss of 60 jobs. [The Press and Journal quote Rufus Radcliffe, chief executive of STV Group](#), as saying:

“Today we’ve told our people that we will seek permission from Ofcom to make changes to both of our licences, which would allow STV Central and STV North to co-produce a single news service for Scotland.

“We’re also planning to move gallery production and presentation for STV News to Glasgow.

“Newsgathering teams will continue on the ground across Scotland and from all of our existing bases in Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

“The expansion of our digital news offering across platforms is ongoing.”

STV Licenses

Channel 3 is currently made up of [15 regional broadcasting licenses issued by Ofcom](#). Three relate to areas in Scotland, including [STV North](#), [STV Central](#) and [Border ITV](#).

The licences for the areas covering Scotland all include a requirement to broadcast a total of at least 365 hours per calendar year of news programmes that are of a “high quality” and “are able to compete effectively with other television news programmes broadcast nationwide in the United Kingdom.” At least 125 of these hours must be shown in Peak Viewing Times.

The licenses for STV North and STV Central include quotas on regional news programming. The quota requires that there is an average of 4 hours a week of regional news programming.

The licence for STV Central also requires that on average 5 minutes of the 6pm news programme includes “separate sub-regional news of particular interest to persons living in the Central Scotland East sub-region and the Central Scotland West sub-region”. Similarly, the news broadcast in STV North is required to include 5 minutes of “news of particular interest to persons living in the North of Scotland North sub-region and the North of Scotland South sub region”.

The licenses also allow for news programmes at the weekend to be the same across both STV regions, “provided that it contains material which is of particular interest to persons living [in both areas]”.

The licences require STV to produce a percentage of regional programmes within the licence areas (measured by a percentage of broadcast time). For STV Central, this is 90% and for STV North it is 70%.

All 15 licenses were recently renewed by Ofcom, commencing on 1 January 2025 for a 10 year term.

The proposed STV changes to news programming in Scotland would require Ofcom to allow changes to the licences for both STV North and STV Central. The [Television Licensable Content Service \(TLCS\) Guidance notes for licensees](#) issued by Ofcom explains that requests to change the nature of a licence must be submitted in writing before any changes are made. [The BBC reported that](#) an Ofcom spokesperson had confirmed that a request from STV "relating to its news programming" has been received.

A consultation process is expected, which may also set out the timeline for a decision to be made. Previous Ofcom consultations appear to have been open for around 1 month, with the final decision taking a varied amount of time after the consultation closes. It will be for Ofcom to determine if the proposed changes to the licences will be permitted.

STV annual report

The most recent STV [annual report covers the 2023-24 financial year](#). It states that annual revenue was £188m, up from £168.4m the year before. The total advertising revenue had also increased from £97.3m in 2023 to £102.0m in 2024. This figure does not include national revenue for the on-demand STV Player. The profit for the year to 2024 was recorded as £13.1m.

The annual report lists the strategic objectives of the company (p.3). It suggests that all of the KPIs are on track to make its 2026 targets, with green ticks against all but two of the KPIs listed. The two with an amber tick alongside them are:

1. Number of monthly active users – 2024: 1m, 2026 target: 1.5m

2. Number of paying subscribers – 2024: 22,000, 2026 target: 50,000+

Part of the Business model (p.11) states that the company intends to deliver value for its stakeholders by:

“Providing trusted news, facts and information through a comprehensive local news and current affairs service across Scotland; improving on and off screen diversity to reflect modern Scotland; raising much needed funds for families and young people in poverty in Scotland through the STV Children’s Appeal; driving the local economy through job creation; supporting Scottish business through the Growth Fund (making advertising affordable); and championing climate action through STV Zero, our sustainability strategy.”

The news programming provided by STV is discussed as part of the annual report (p.27). It states that “STV News at Six is the most-watched news programme in Scotland for the 6th year running.” The report also suggests that:

“STV’s news and current affairs output is at the heart of our Public Service Media remit... We produce two editions of the programme, both of which air at 6pm each weeknight, and their success is down to our inclusive and engaging story-telling, the friendly professionalism of our presenters and the talent of our wider production and reporting teams, as well as the unique regional split of stories making each show highly relevant to our viewers. Looking ahead to 2025, we will make significant investment in technology and in our Glasgow and Aberdeen live studios, relaunching the programmes with an exciting new look in the first half of the year.”

The [interim financial results for the 6-months ended 30 June 2025](#) provide a more up-to-date snapshot of STV’s finances. This noted that in the six months to the end of June 2025, the group’s total revenue was £90.0m, down £0.4m compared to the first six months of 2024. The interim financial results noted that increased revenues for STV Studios offset reduced advertising revenue. STV reported that in the first six months of this year, total advertising revenue was “£45.6m (2024: £50.7m) down 10%”. STV identified two reasons for this fall: a reduction nationally in TV advertising, and the inclusion of UEFA Euro 2024 in last year’s figures.

STV strategy refresh

STV announced on 21 May 2025 that it had refreshed its long-term business strategy to achieve new growth targets. The strategy, named [STV FastFwd to 2030](#), presents the steps STV is taking to build toward its aim of becoming a ‘globally recognised content powerhouse’ by the end of the decade. Under this new strategy, STV aims to more than double the revenue from its STV Studios division to £200m (up from £84m in 2023/2024). It will also combine its Broadcast and Digital divisions into a single Audience division. By combining these two divisions, STV aims to strengthen its advertising capabilities, using a new AI-enabled business model which, it suggests, will allow advertisers to deliver a more effective, future-proofed advertising programme.

The strategy includes launching a new commercial radio station, presented and produced from Scotland for Scottish audiences.

Audience

Ofcom's Media Nations report examines key trends in the media sector and sets out how audiences are served in Scotland, from a cross-platform perspective. [The report for 2025 was published in July this year.](#)

The key findings in the [report on Scotland](#) include:

- Audiences in Scotland spent 44 minutes a day watching YouTube – more than any other UK Nation.
- The BBC is Scotland's most-used news provider – 64% use it across TV, radio and online.
- About a quarter (27%) get access to news through STV, and one in five use BBC One (22%), through programmes such as STV News at Six and Reporting Scotland.
- The most watched programme in Scotland in 2024 was the Scotland v Switzerland men's Euro 2024 game.
- The reach of podcasts in Scotland is the highest in the UK – 23% of people listen at least once a week.
- In Scotland 52% of people listen to commercial radio.

The report stated that after Northern Ireland, audiences in Scotland viewed the most content from broadcasters, accounting for 56% of all viewing time. This included live TV, recorded TV and broadcaster video-on-demand. People in Scotland, however, also spent more time viewing content on video sharing platforms than any other nation.

Viewing time for broadcasters fluctuates significantly among different age groups, with individuals in Scotland aged 65+ watching an average of 5 hours 44 minutes a day, while adults aged 16-24 spent just 33 minutes a day watching broadcasters.

Of the Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) channels, the BBC has the highest share of the Scottish audience at 30%. STV/ITV has the second highest share at 21%.

The average weekly reach of BBC iPlayer is 28%, while the STV Player reach is 11%.

News content

While Facebook has become the most-used individual way of accessing news in Scotland, with 38% of adults accessing news in this way, the BBC is Scotland's most-used news provider with six out of the 20 most popular news sources in Scotland. Looking at its cross-platform reach across TV, radio and online, the BBC was used by six in ten people in Scotland (64%) for their news in 2025.

Scotland's Channel 3 providers STV and ITV1 (35%) and Sky News channel (22%) are the other TV channels in the top ten.

The report states 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...”

On average, in 2024, more than half (52%) of people aged 16+ in Scotland viewed national/international news on any channel weekly. Thirty-nine per cent watched nations'/regions' news. Most of the time spent viewing news was watched on linear channels (live or recorded) with only 5% of viewing to national/international and nations'/regions' news watched on demand.”

Advertising

In the [UK Media Nations Report](#) there is an a section on advertising revenue (p.13). The report notes that “total expenditure on radio and TV advertising has been more resilient than that on magazines and newsbrands.” It continues on to state that:

“Broadcast TV and VoD advertising and sponsorship spend grew by 3.8% to £5.3bn in 2024, as growth in VoD expenditure more than made up for a decline in traditional broadcast advertising expenditure.”

The report goes into more detail regarding industry revenues later in the report (p.44). It comments on structural changes in the sector and the differences in advertising revenue between pay-TV platform operators and commercial public service broadcasters. The report explains that:

“Commercial public service broadcasters’ revenues, largely driven by linear TV advertising, stabilised revenues at £2bn after facing declines in 2023. Although this marks a slight rebound in the TV advertising market, overall growth remained constrained by ongoing macroeconomic uncertainty and increasingly fragmented viewing habits. Digital multi-channels experienced contraction, with revenues down 3.2% to £2bn. BVoD revenues – generated by the VoD services operated by the commercial PSBs and multichannel broadcasters – continue to stand out as a key area of growth. They rose by 15% year on year to reach £1.1bn in 2024, highlighting their increasing importance as a driver of commercial sustainability for UK broadcasters.”

Laura Haley, Researcher, SPICe Date: 01/10/2025

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The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP www.parliament.scot

Annexe B

STV Group plc: Briefing Note for Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

On 25 September, we provided an update on trading to our investors, via the London Stock Exchange (LSE). We are duty bound to do so via the LSE, which limits what we are permitted to share with stakeholders, including employees, before that announcement.

In our statement, we explained some of the structural challenges faced by all broadcasters, including STV. Audience viewing habits are changing rapidly, the money we make from advertising is in sharp decline and the content commissioning market, strongly linked to macroeconomic shifts, consumer confidence and the strength of other, larger broadcasters' businesses, is also seeing a downturn. All these factors are constraining our revenues and – crucially – the profit that will allow us to invest in a company fit for the future.

To protect STV – and especially its news programmes - from these unavoidable and consumer-driven challenges, to retain as many of our employees as possible in the long-term and to ensure the company remains well funded and viable, we must make difficult decisions to reduce our costs in line with the fall in money coming into the business.

As part of this cost savings plan, we are also asking Ofcom to make the appropriate changes to our licences to allow STV Central and STV North to co-produce a single news service for Scotland. Newsgathering and journalist teams will remain based across Scotland, in Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and our commitment to local and regional news will not diminish.

Taking no action is not an option.

To ensure maximum transparency, we are pleased to provide the following information to MSPs:

- 1 The structure of STV Group plc**
- 2 FastFwd to 2030 strategy**
- 3 The market backdrop**
- 4 STV restructuring to set up for future growth**

1 The structure of STV Group plc

STV Group plc is comprised of Public Service Broadcaster STV, streaming service STV Player and STV Audio – which together make up the Audience Division; and production group, STV Studios.

Audience division:

- **STV** holds the channel 3 licences for central and north Scotland and has delivered a popular, high-quality schedule for viewers across licence areas for over 60 years.
- **STV Player** is our streaming service, offering the STV schedule, archive and acquired series, which is growing in popularity as linear viewing decreases.
- **STV Audio** includes new national radio station, STV Radio, and upcoming podcasts.

Content production:

- **STV Studios** is a portfolio of production labels which produce shows for a variety of broadcasters and streamers in the UK and internationally.

2 FastFwd to 2030 strategy

In May 2025 STV outlined a refreshed strategy and long-term business plan aimed at driving growth and delivering necessary transformation in the face of structural changes to our operating environment. Our strategic vision for 2030 is to become:

- **A globally recognised content powerhouse (through STV Studios)**
- **Scotland's leading platform for audiences and advertisers, reaching them and connecting them through TV, streaming and audio.**

STV Studios is a leading nations and regions producers with a growing reputation and scale. Our ambition is to build on our existing momentum with a focus on returnable content with IP for UK and international customers.

Our Audience business sits within a fast-moving dynamic sector, with a formidable competitor set and STV has the assets to build a strong, future proofed advertising business which will be extended into audio, including the launch of a new commercial radio station, STV Radio.

3 The market backdrop

3.1 Changing viewing habits

Across the UK, audiences are changing their viewing habits, as outlined in Ofcom's latest [Media Nations 2025 report](#). The decline of linear TV viewing continues, and traditional broadcasters are facing increased competition from streaming services.

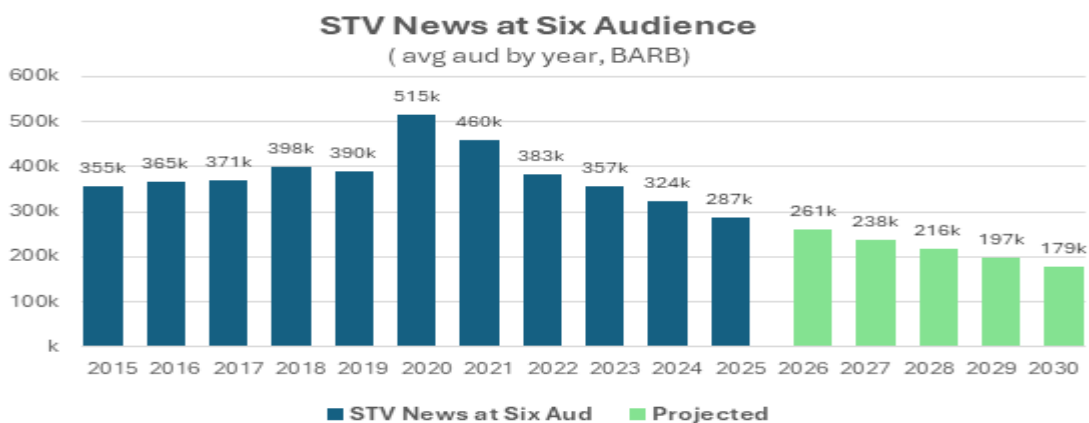
Ofcom reports that across the UK, Generation Alpha (those born between 2010 and 2024) are turning to YouTube first on their TV set at home, whilst over 55s are doubling their time on the service.

In Scotland:

- Average daily minutes viewed of broadcast TV has declined by over 19% in the past 5 years (208 to 166). Between 2023 and 2024, across age groups, adults aged 16-24 showed the sharpest decrease at 19%;
- The proportion of households receiving subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) services in Q1 2024 rose to 71% in Scotland;
- Individuals spent 44 minutes per day on average on YouTube in 2024, the highest of the UK nations.

There continues to be a significant interest in news about Scotland, with Facebook named as the most-used way to access news in general in Scotland at 38%.

These trends are reflected in the projected audience for *STV News at 6*. By midway through the current Channel 3 licence term (2030) the audience is projected to have fallen by 40% compared to the end of the previous licence period in 2024. Other news programmes are forecast to see similar reductions.



3.2 Slowdown in Advertising and Commissioning markets

The UK TV advertising market has been contracting for the past decade, declining by more than a quarter in real terms since 2016. [Ofcom](#) highlights that *‘this trend is driven by a major shift in viewing habits and ad spend towards digital platforms including SVOD, social media and online video, away from traditional linear TV’*; and that despite efforts to maintain relevance in a fragmented market by diversifying revenue sources, it is *‘unlikely that broadcast video-on-demand (BVOD) revenues will be able to fully compensate for declining linear revenue’*.

In addition to the challenges in the TV advertising market, STV Studios has been impacted by a slowdown in the content commissioning market, meaning that the volume of original content commissioned by broadcasters and streamers has declined. Prior to this slowdown, commissioning revenues were better offsetting the decline in advertising revenue.

3.3 Ofcom Public Service Media (PSM) Review

Ofcom has recently noted the challenges facing all PSM operators in its *“Transmission Critical”* review of PSM, calling out in particular the challenges to the future delivery of regional news. This review sets out six recommendations to help strengthen and maintain PSM in future, including the need for stable and adequate funding to sustain a broad range of PSM content.

Ofcom concludes: *“If no action is taken, the very existence of the PSBs – who are the main providers of PSM – will be threatened. Time is running out to save this pillar of UK culture and way of life.”*

4 STV restructuring to set up for future growth

4.1 Company-wide cost savings plan

On 25 September, we confirmed that we will deliver additional cost savings of £3m in response to difficult trading conditions in the advertising and content commissioning markets, and a structural change in viewing habits. Savings will be delivered through changes to the cost base of the business and the organisational structure, and over 60 roles will be impacted across the whole business.

We have done everything we can to limit the impact of cost savings on our people, but changes and savings are essential to rebalance the business in line with the changed operating environment we have outlined.

We are now in a consultation period and are committed to supporting our people through this period of necessary change.

4.2 Proposed changes to STV News

We are proposing changes to both of our Channel 3 licences which are necessary in the context of major shifts in viewing behaviour and to protect our future delivery of regional news by ensuring it remains affordable and sustainable. The changes reflect both Ofcom's key outcomes of their PSM Review and changing audience behaviour.

Under STV's proposed changes:

- STV Central and STV North would work together to co-produce a new, shared regional news service broadcast on both licensed services and across both licensed areas;
- Bulletins would always include material created and produced by our journalists in both north and central regions of interest to viewers in both licensed areas;
- The overall duration of news bulletins broadcast by both licences would remain unchanged at a weekly average of 4 hours;
- Newsgathering resources such as reporters and camera crews would continue to be based across Scotland to ensure a broad geographical spread and specialist knowledge of different regions;
- Senior staff in both licence areas would contribute to editorial decision making;
- Production and presentation of all regional news programmes would be centralised in Glasgow with contributions from around the country; *Note: this does not require Ofcom approval*
- A backup studio facility would be maintained in Aberdeen;
- STV would continue to grow its digital operations with the the publishing of news online, increasingly the preferred choice for audiences;
- 5-minute sub-regional bulletins for east/west central Scotland and north/south of the north region would no longer be broadcast, with local stories moving online;
This configuration reflects the existing weekend model where bulletins are jointly produced and broadcast by both licences, including material gathered in each licensed area;
- All the Scottish non-news programming such as current affairs (Scotland Tonight) and features (What's on Scotland) is also shared. No changes are proposed to existing levels of non-news programming within both licences.

4.3 Increased digital output

STV News has delivered a digital service to audiences for nearly 20 years. The ongoing transition from broadcast to digital remains challenging, but we have taken a considered approach to understanding the changing needs of audiences and building robust workflows that allow us to meet these needs, while keeping our PSM values and goals at the heart of what we do.

We are accelerating a shift to become a content led newsroom delivering trusted journalism across digital and broadcast channels. While protecting regional broadcast news we will also prioritise rapidly growing digital audiences by developing video first formats for social and third-party platforms, including YouTube.

This work includes short and mid form in-depth reporting from across Scotland, video explainers, podcasts, and consistent coverage of politics, sport, health, consumer, and social affairs. By producing accessible, platform native PSM content, we will better engage wider audiences, reach more people across demographics, and provide a vital counterweight to the misinformation and disinformation that proliferate online.

In summary, in seeking to make changes, STV's objectives are:

1. **To evolve public service regional news programming on television** to meet changing audience behaviours;
2. **To focus on stories of greatest significance** that best align with viewers' expectations;

3. **To create an affordable and sustainable model** of commercial public service news delivery;
4. **To grow a complementary digital and online presence** for STV news that viewers increasingly expect, alongside television provision.

Finally, looking across the wider industry, STV's proposed changes are not unique. There are a number of recent licensee requests for changes to news output agreed by Ofcom. These include BBC Scotland securing a 50% reduction in news output (2024); Channel 4 removing lunchtime bulletins and reducing current affairs programming (2024); and Channel 5 reducing its peak time news requirement by 75% (2021).

4.4 Making STV News affordable

Ofcom's [Transmission Critical: the future of public services media](#) report highlights the challenges for PSMs in continuing to deliver news as a genre which does not attract significant advertising revenues:

"In this increasingly dynamic environment, the PSBs are finding it much harder to fund the production and distribution of high-quality UK content to all audiences. PSB revenues from the TV Licence fee and linear TV advertising have declined by more than a quarter in real terms since 2016, with growth in BVoD revenues failing to compensate. Costs are also rising – PSBs have to provide content across linear and online services and they are increasingly investing in more expensive high end content to attract viewers to their services. This has put significant pressure on broadcasters' commissioning budgets and ability to continue providing both a breadth of content and some genres that attract less advertising revenue such as news..."

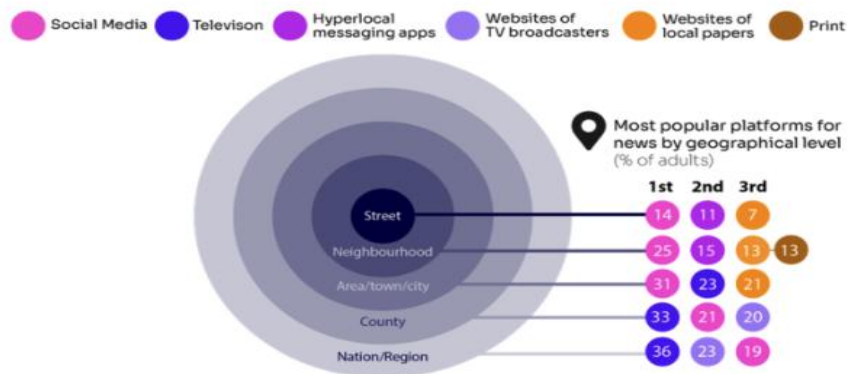
Ofcom's references to budgetary pressures are particularly resonant in the case of STV's news output. The reasons for this include:

- The combination of regional and sub-regional news obligations in both of STV's licences means that PSM news delivery in Scotland is significantly higher than Wales and Northern Ireland (8hrs 50mins v 4 hrs in other nations).
- The size of individual licence areas: STV North has the largest geographical area of any Channel 3 service, however, it is also one of the smallest licences by population at just over 1m adults. Both STV licensed areas cover large areas with geographical diversity including cities, towns, rural communities and island groups. This size and scale drives increased newsgathering costs in terms of infrastructure and travel. STV maintains five news centres in Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow, together with a presence at Holyrood and Westminster. This property portfolio is significantly larger with higher maintenance costs than other Channel 3 licences, who typically have only one base in each region.

Cost aside, there is also a strong editorial justification for sharing cross-regional content within Scotland. Areas such as education, politics, the energy transition, NHS capacity, and national transport policy legitimately span both licensed areas. Other such areas include: health; crime; consumer stories; weather events and major sporting events.

Ofcom's news consumption report 2025 presents a detailed view of the services that people use for different kinds of news. The graph below from the report illustrates that audiences look to TV first for "Nation/Region" and "County" news, but for the most localised stories, TV has fallen out of the top 3 sources cited, replaced by social media and hyperlocal messaging apps.

Figure 19. Services used for different geographical levels of news



Conclusion

The context for the proposed amendments is stark: STV projections show a 40% decrease in the linear TV audience for *STV News at 6*, currently Scotland's most watched news programme. In its review of PSM, Ofcom notes:

"If no action is taken, the very existence of the PSBs – who are the main providers of PSM – will be threatened. Time is running out to save this pillar of UK culture and way of life."

We recognise that change is always difficult and most of all impacts our colleagues through a reduction in roles.

There is, however, greater risk in not adapting legacy public service provision for the digital age to protect future news provision by ensuring it is affordable and sustainable on a commercial basis.

October 2025

Annexe C

Letter from Glenn Preston, Director, Ofcom Scotland

STV

Dear Clare

Following exchanges with the Committee Clerk and the Ofcom Scotland team, and ahead of your session with STV on 9 October, I wanted to get in touch and provide a short note on Ofcom's role in assessing STV's proposed news changes.

There is a limited amount Ofcom is able to say at this time. Following STV's announcement of their interim results and costs savings plans, we have begun the process of working with them to understand the full impact of their proposed changes in news provision.

As has been noted in the coverage and public discussion, these would require variations to STV's Central and North Scotland licences. Ofcom would have to consult on any changes and this would be done in line with our published [consultation principles](#).

While we are not able to commit to a timeline for any consultation at this stage, I do want to reassure the committee that Ofcom is aware of the strength of feeling these proposals have generated and the need for any process to be as swift as possible, not least given the potential impact on people's jobs.

I will ensure the Committee is kept across developments and we would be very happy to speak to Members as part of any consultation process.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glenn Preston". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Glenn Preston

Annexe D

BECTU

STV Redundancy Proposals

Bectu is a sector of the Prospect Trade Union and is the largest union representing members working across Broadcasting in the UK. It represents all categories of workers excluding performers and Journalists.

Bectu has significant number of members within the Glasgow and Aberdeen Newsrooms in STV and has a substantial number of members across all areas of the company who are all affected by these company wide proposals. Bectu also has many Freelance members across the UK who have faced immense challenges in continuing their careers through the current scarcity of new production commissions and they will also be hard hit by the lack of new STV commissions.

As you would expect there is a great deal of frustration and anger across the entire STV staff about the current proposals. Our members are united in their opposition to the scale and nature of the proposals and all have expressed their condemnation of the proposals in the strongest possible terms.

In particular, staff are devastated by the proposal to close the Aberdeen news programme and are outraged that STV is asking for OFCOMs agreement to this. The idea that STV would so easily abandon it's commitments to the cultural diversity and regional identity of people in the North of Scotland is abhorrent to all our members as indeed we believe it will be to the wider public. Since STV took over Grampian TV programming making in the North East of Scotland has diminished significantly to the extent that it is now essentially a news outlet. This has had a detrimental effect on skills, talent and employment opportunities in the North of Scotland.

Without a dedicated news programme In Aberdeen there will be a dearth of opportunities to enter the broadcasting industry in Aberdeen. New entrants to what is a predominantly Freelance Industry find it incredibly difficult to find work and to build the networks that provide employment opportunities. In the early stages of their careers they simply cannot afford to relocate to areas where there may be more opportunities and rely on local work initially to develop and build wider networks.

From the public's perspective a Glasgow based programme cannot reflect the cultural diversity and regional identity of the North of Scotland which has been a mainstay of the support that the public in the North Est have continually demonstrated for the North News programme. Viewers in the central belt will likely also suffer through this change as the new format will by default have less time to present regional stories from the Southwest and Southeast of Scotland.

Annexe D

More generally, STV made it clear to Bectu that it was expecting a tough year throughout 2025 and had adjusted sales targets and financial forecasts accordingly. STV has consistently put plans in place for year on year efficiencies to address the challenges it expected in both in securing new commissions and in trying to increase advertising revenues. It also predicts an up turn in advertising revenue during 2026 because it is a world cup year. With plans for a tough year already in place it is therefore all the more galling for sales staff, who have consistently met and/ or exceeded their targets so far this year, to be told their jobs are now at risk while their managers jobs are "safe".

Equally if there is a significant reduction in sales and creative staff STV will not be well placed to benefit from any increase in opportunities that are expected in 2026.

For a company that has consistently delivered year on year profits to it's shareholders we would expect a much more measured and restrained reaction to one disappointing half yearly result particularly as STV still expects the year to be profitable overall.


That year on year success has been delivered by the hardworking staff who are now as angry as I have ever seen them on being told they could face compulsory redundancy.

In conclusion therefore Bectu calls upon the Culture committee and all politicians to demand that STV withdraw its proposals to close down the Aberdeen News programmes and to seek any redundancies amongst technical staff in Aberdeen.

Secondly I would ask the committee to urge STV not to proceed with any plans for compulsory redundancies following the current voluntary trawl.

Finally we would urge the Culture committee to lobby OFCOM to reject STV's proposals to end the Aberdeen news programme.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul McMahon', with a stylized, cursive script.

Negotiations Officer Scotland

Bectu, a sector of prospect

Annexe E

National Union of Journalists written submission

STV

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) is one of two recognised unions at STV, the other being Bectu.

STV owns the two channel 3 licences outside the ITV network - STV Central and STV North. These licences were announced as renewed in March 2024 and came into effect on 1st January 2025 for a further ten years. Those licences contain provisions and undertakings as regard the amount of local news coverage

STV 650 staff, and around 150 in STV News, split between journalists and technical staff. Their main base is in Glasgow, with a second newsroom in Aberdeen, and smaller offices in Dundee, Edinburgh and also the Scottish Parliament. Their main programme is the News at Six, which has two different presenters and content for each region. Within each regional programme there is also a sub-opt-in, with five minutes of news from Edinburgh and Dundee for viewers in those areas. They also produce content online and for Youtube, which is not a licence requirement, as well as regional bulletins throughout the day, and Scotland Tonight, a half hourly current affairs programme from Monday-Thursday.

STV's income largely derives from on air advertising, as well as income from its own production houses. On air advertising is linked to consumer confidence and the economy and can be difficult to predict. Production income is more volatile, but once booked in can be predicted a year to 18 months in advance.

On Thursday 25th September staff were told of proposals were to cut 60 roles (with an estimated half of those from within News) and to merge the two separate 6pm bulletins into one, anchored from Glasgow, across both licence areas. These plans have been accurately described as the axing of the STV News at Six North programme.

STV News at Six

The STV News at Six North news programme plays a vital role in the North and North-East of Scotland in providing unique coverage of regional issues and stories from a local perspective. This flagship programme gives a voice to people and communities who would otherwise go unheard. On a typical weeknight, four in ten people in STV's broadcast area watching at that time tune in to watch the programme, a phenomenal audience in broadcast terms. The STV North programme has been broadcast from Aberdeen for 60 years, and ending it would not just change

Annexe E

the broadcasting map of Scotland forever but would also be an act of cultural vandalism.

- STV North broadcasts a high-quality half hour local news and sport programme 5 nights a week
- STV News at Six North covers a wide range of areas relevant to local audiences including the energy sector, fishing, farming and tourism. These industries would not receive the same level of coverage and scrutiny in a single programme. It covers the largest land mass of any broadcast region in the UK, from Shetland to North Fife, the Western Isles to Aberdeenshire. It is part of the fabric of society across a huge swathe of the country, giving a crucial voice to rural areas, the elderly, people living in poverty, ethnic minorities, gender organisations and diversity groups. It is important not only to protect the jobs STV management is proposing to cut, but also to protect local journalism for the people in these diverse communities, who do not have access to digital services.
- Last year the STV News at Six North programme won the News Award at the Royal Television Society Scotland Awards 2024 and was nominated for the Nations and Regions News Category at the RTS Television Journalism Awards.
- STV News at Six North regularly attracts an audience share of 40%, the highest viewing share of any regional news programme in the UK.
- The local advertising team at STV North have already met their targets for 2025 and are forecast to exceed £2m in sales this year.
- The production team has adapted and embraced new technology in recent years to become an extremely lean operation of only 37 staff.
- In January this year STV's new renewed 10-year Ofcom license for the North of Scotland came into effect. Prior to that, STV management had spent the previous two years in the bidding process for it.
- In May 2025 STV Chief Operating Officer Lindsay Dixon described the company as a 'cash rich business'.

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- In May STV announced plans for a new Glasgow based commercial radio station. These plans have not been included in the decision to make cuts, despite not being a licence commitment.
- STV plc's Audience Division reported a 25% drop in half-year profits (adjusted operating profit) for the 6 months ended June 2025, which still left a profit of £9.1 million. Across the whole business (including STV Studios) STV announced losses of £200,000.
- CEO Rufus Radcliffe issued a profit warning in July 2025 to the stock market stating that the company's full year revenues and operating profits would fall short of market expectations, with incremental cost savings of £750,000 identified, bringing the full year target to £2.5m.
- STV North launched a new set in August 2025, which cost the company £500,000. In the run up to this, staff engaged in a consultation, forming working groups to develop strategies for both the North and Central broadcast programmes.
- STV announced in September 2025 it is planning £2.5m in additional cost savings for the 2026 financial year as part of a broader cost-cutting effort in response to a challenging advertising and content commissioning market.
- Staff were told via video link of plans to consult with Ofcom to axe the North programme in favour of a single news programme broadcast from Glasgow, covering both the North and Central Scotland license areas. They were told production and presentation would move from Aberdeen to Glasgow anyway, even if Ofcom refuses to agree to one programme. The company is looking to cut 30 jobs in the news operation.
- The newsroom in Aberdeen was recently revamped at a cost of £500,000 just months ago, yet under these proposals it would be mothballed.
- STV management say viewing habits are changing and for many years have talked about the need to pivot away from linear broadcasting like TV and radio, towards digital news, but have given staff no detail of their strategy on how to achieve this.
- STV is a TV company, whose very raison d'etre is to make television programmes, that is what the broadcast license agreement with Ofcom has

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enabled our members to successfully do for 60 years, without this license and the advertising revenue it helps us generate, we would not exist.

- BBC Scotland already has Reporting Scotland, a well-established news programme covering the whole of Scotland. A single news programme from STV would not offer the viewer anything different and would be less well funded.
- While Scotland has distinct national issues, there are also clear regional differences within Scotland that should be reflected by a public service broadcaster. Our belief is that the STV North at Six programme is produced and broadcast from Aberdeen. Without this protection, viewers in this part of the world will be left with no voice.
- There is widespread anger among our members at STV about not just the cuts and the handling of this. These include, as reported elsewhere, a senior manager appearing to be interrupted by hotel room service while taking questions on people's jobs during a town hall meeting, joining the town hall from a hotel room in Aberdeen instead of going into the Aberdeen office and meeting staff in person.
- Last week the NUJ's chapel at STV has passed a motion of no confidence in senior management: "The NUJ members at STV have no confidence in the Chief Executive Rufus Radcliffe and his leadership team to continue to lead us in light of financial mismanagement and the failure and abandonment of the strategy refresh in May."