

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
Thursday 26 February 2026
8th Meeting, 2026 (Session 6)

Scottish broadcasting

1. The Committee is continuing its short and general inquiry on Scottish Broadcasting which will also inform its input to the UK Government's consultation and green paper on the BBC Charter renewal. We will also be highlighting this work in our legacy paper with a view to informing scrutiny of the Charter in Session 7.
2. The two panels on [8 January](#) focused on the perspectives of those representing news / journalism and academics. On [15 January](#) we heard from Ofcom and a panel representing production and skills, and on [22 January](#) from BBC Scotland.
3. This week is the final evidence session of the inquiry and we will be hearing from—
 - Angus Robertson, Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, Scottish Government
 - Jamie MacDougall, Deputy Director for Culture and Historic Environment, Scottish Governmentand
 - Emily Green, Head of Screen, Broadcasting and Print Media Policy, Scottish Government
4. A SPICe briefing can be found at Annexe A and we have also received:
 - a [submission from the Scottish Government](#):
 - a [submission from BBC Scotland](#)
 - a [letter from BBC Scotland](#)
 - a [letter from Ofcom](#)and
 - a [submission from MG ALBA](#):

Clerks, February 2026

Scottish Broadcasting inquiry - Themes from submissions

Introduction

The Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee is undertaking a short inquiry into the Scottish Broadcasting within the context of the BBC Charter renewal process.

Due to time constraints, the Committee did not issue an open call for views for this inquiry. The Committee has received submissions and papers from witnesses. In addition, SPICe sought views from academics through its knowledge exchange network. SPICe asked for views on:

- The broadcasting market in Scotland and the implications of new technologies and changing regulatory and market environment on broadcasting across Scotland.
- The development of the screen sector, PSBs and the Scottish Government's role in this.
- Skills development in the screen and broadcasting sectors.
- The BBC Charter and Framework renewal process: what should a future BBC deliver for Scotland, particularly in reference to the above points.

The Committee has received 18 submissions as well as two lengthier papers. This paper provides a brief summary of the themes of the submissions. All of the submissions, papers and details of the Committee's meetings on this inquiry can be found on the [Committee's website](#).

Changing landscape

Submissions explored the impacts of new technologies, global entrants into the market and changing habits of consumers, particularly younger people.

The submission of the Glasgow University Media Group said—

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

Screen Scotland's submission described the production ecosystem, saying that “broadcasting and production are two sides of the same coin”, essentially saying that

broadcasters require productions and producers require a market to sell their products. Furthermore, Screen Scotland said that the production companies require a skilled workforce as well as locations and studio space. It said—

“With Netflix, Amazon Prime, Apple, Sony and many other non-PSB now regularly active in Scotland, the publicly owned PSBs – the BBC and Channel 4 – are not the only source of production, but they remain the bedrock of our sector. Therefore, the Scottish sector’s health is directly dependent on both PSBs being adequately funded and focused – through their charters/licence, Ofcom’s quotas - on commissioning new programmes and series from Scotland.”

Ofcom’s submission said that “audiences in Scotland benefit from a wide choice of content, both from our public service broadcasters and international streamers”.

Some submissions also commented on falling advertising revenue and the real-terms fall in value of the licence fee; the BBC said that the real terms value of the licence fee fell 30% between 2010 and 2020. These funding pressures have knock-on effects on the PSBs; for example, Angus Dixon said that tighter fiscal environments could lead to PSBs not meeting the spirit of their regulatory obligations.

Changes to PSB commissioning

In response to the changing landscape and cost pressures, PSBs have altered their commissioning practices. This has meant more focus on higher cost dramas and low-cost programmes, with fewer mid-market productions. Angus Dixon explained that mid-market factual programmes (such as Location, Location, Location) are too expensive to be met from current advertising and of limited appeal to global streamers. Glasgow University Media Group’s submission said—

“In this context where the role, relevance and status of domestically produced broadcasting is increasingly questioned, not all genres are impacted to the same degree or in the same way - for example, in entertainment and drama, increasing competition poses a major threat in respect of dwindling audiences for local content.”

PACT’s submission also expressed concern that “ongoing structural changes in the market and the change in commissioning strategy by the PSBs to ‘fewer, bigger, better’ will have a substantial impact on the creative diversity of the sector”. Bectu’s submission said—

“Across the wider industry, areas such as High End TV Production and Film Production are fairly stable. Latest figures suggest that the number of productions dropped slightly in 2025 although overall spend in Scotland increased. However Scotland’s once vibrant unscripted sector continues to see a significant lack of commissions which has a devastating effect on employment amongst the Freelance workforce.”

Peter Strachan said that the industry is suffering from a “commissioning crisis”. He said:

“With commissioning levels decreasing and commissioner risk aversion increasing as the impact of falling advertising and reductions in license fee income took a greater toll, freelance job opportunities began to collapse from mid-2023. Far fewer single documentaries and short factual series, where many Scottish freelancers traditionally found work, were being commissioned. Also, historically, few returnable network series have been commissioned in Scotland which elsewhere in the UK provide longer freelance contracts, making broadcast production careers more sustainable. As a result, many have been forced to abandon hard-won careers. Meanwhile, instead of concrete initiatives to sustain established and experienced talent, millions are being poured into training for new entrants and “createch” jobs that do not exist at scale and possibly never will.”

Ofcom’s submission said:

“There have undoubtedly been challenges for production companies across the UK and Scotland is not immune to that. As we set out in our latest review of Public Service Media, Transmission Critical, fundamental financial pressures are likely to persist for our broadcasters when it comes to commissioning due to declining revenues and the increasing cost of production. In addition, broadcasters such as the BBC are increasingly focussing on fewer commissions with a higher impact to meet these challenges. Indeed a joint report by Screen Skills and 4Skills highlighted that work may be necessary to build resilience in the screen sector given the particular expertise that exists in Scotland in unscripted and children’s programming – both of which have faced declines in commissions in recent years.”

Bectu also said that there are cost pressures throughout the supply chain which can lead to “excessively long hours and poor employment practices being the norm for too many”.

Accessing News

The National Union of Journalists’ submission said—

“At a time of polarisation, social media disinformation, AI-supercharged fake news, and corporate consolidation of media ownership, independent quality journalism is vital in maintaining dialogue, democracy and truth. Scottish broadcasting news is dominated by two key players, BBC Scotland and STV. Both currently provide varied, diverse news coverage and quality local information to Scotland’s communities. Both also face challenges in terms of shifting patterns of news consumption and future funding.”

NUJ also noted that the BBC remains the most trusted news source in the UK.

The submission of the Glasgow University Media Group also had a focus on news provision. GUMG said that there is a high appetite for news about Scotland among Scottish adults. It said that increasingly people are accessing news through social media, although the submission noted that social media platforms do not produce

news content, rather that there has been “increasing cannibalisation of broadcast content produced and paid for by the BBC, STV and other providers.”

GUMG stated that its research has found a decline in trust in broadcast news from BBC Scotland and other professional news providers in recent years. It said—

“For many audience groups, this is due to what is perceived as the political agenda of professional news which serves those in power and does not speak to the interests and priorities of normal people. Political reporting of the economy, in particular, is perceived to be remote from everyday lives. There is a perceived lack of diversity both in industry personnel and what makes its way onto screen: key issues are the class backgrounds of journalists, and the dominance of news from London and the Central Belt. Many people seek out alternatives to counter what they perceive as ‘mainstream media bias’.”

GUMG said that the declining trust “is experienced particularly by those in the lower income groups and young people” and that there is a “longer term risk is that we see the emergence of a two tier model for broadcast news: where those who are in the higher income groups and/or more highly educated are well served, and the under-privileged go elsewhere for news and often to places where disinformation thrives.”

GUMG also noted that there has been an increase in popularity of social media news influencers and that, “there is currently no regulation in respect of the funding or practices of information gathering which influencers and other content producers engage in to report ‘news’.”

Role of Public Service Broadcasting

Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) are the BBC, Channel 3 broadcasters, Channel 4 and Channel 5. These broadcasters have particular obligations. Given the shift away from linear broadcasting, these bodies are sometimes referred to as Public Service Media (PSM), which encompasses the wider roles of these organisations online and through streaming services.

The submission from the University of Glasgow’s Centre for Cultural Policy Research said:

“The UK is home to a unique and diverse system of Public Service Media (PSM) whose success in serving audiences and supporting the UK’s creative economy is widely lauded but whose future is now under threat due to a changing economic and competitive media landscape, new audience habits and concerns about PSM funding mechanisms.”

University of Glasgow’s Centre for Cultural Policy Research’s submission said that the expectation on PSBs has evolved and while the Reithian values of ‘to inform, educate and entertain’ remain, there is greater focus on the “economic and industrial aspects of value creation by PSM through, for example nurturing creative talent, promoting regional and independent content production and, more generally, supporting the creative economy”. The submission said that PSM should be considered “key national infrastructural asset”, and it continued—

“In the digital environment, provision of trustworthy news in times of national crisis, representation of marginalised communities, building connectedness and sustaining social cohesion are key aspects of how PSM create value. As the roster of functions that organisations such as the BBC perform is re-shaped by advancing digital technology, the role played by PSM in underpinning culture and democracy and in supporting informed public discourse in the face of ever-rising levels of dis and misinformation is such that it now forms an integral part of the infrastructural assets needed to preserve and protect everyday life and national security. Moreover, as Scotland is a key screen production hub, serving domestic and global markets, Scotland’s PSMs are also an essential pillar of the creative economy. It is clear that BBC Scotland, MG Alba and STV make a vital contribution to the PSM landscape, in the Scottish context and across the UK.”

Bectu’s submission said that BBC remains “fundamental” to Scotland’s screen ecosystem, especially for skills and production sustainability. Bectu said that STV also contributes but is dependent on London-based or international commissioners. Screen Scotland said that the “Scottish sector’s health is directly dependent on both PSBs being adequately funded and focused – through their charters/licence, Ofcom’s quotas - on commissioning new programmes and series from Scotland”.

The submission from the BBC said—

“BBC is the key PSB supporting the creative economy of Scotland; the vast majority of PSB spend on first-run programming for viewers in Scotland in 2024 was by the BBC with the BBC responsible for 75% of all PSB content spend on TV production in Scotland.”

A number of the later submissions the Committee received noted that the BBC published the [Independent Thematic Review of portrayal and representation of the UK in BBC content](#). Ofcom’s submission stated—

“Public Purpose 4 of the BBC which requires it to reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all the UK’s nations and regions is the lowest-rated of all the Public Purposes by audiences, with there being particular challenges among younger audiences and those in [lower socioeconomic] households who continue to rate it less highly than other audience groups. Our recent review into why there is lower satisfaction among audiences from lower socio-economic groups highlighted the BBC’s perception as being ‘London-centric’ as being a particular challenge in connecting with audiences in the nations and regions.

“We note the BBC’s commitment to represent and accurately portray different groups of society, with our most recent figures showing that 56% of adults in Scotland have a positive impression of the BBC’s production of content that features Scotland. In the BBC’s recent thematic review, it recognised that although improvements have been made in representations of the devolved nations, it needs to better consider geography when making improvements in diversity. The BBC has committed to addressing this through both the programmes being made, and through having a spread of talent, including

senior editorial staff, independent local production companies, and skills development programmes out of London.”

Quotas and Commissioning

A key theme of the submissions and the Committee’s inquiry has been around the geographical quotas for PSBs. These quotas and how they are determined are set by Ofcom.

Ofcom’s submission said that it engages with the sector and it is aware that some stakeholders are seeking “more prescriptive” approach to how the regional quota regime is regulated. Ofcom said that the “criteria currently in place are designed to support a mixed ecology and the benefits this can provide to both homegrown producers and the wider creative economy of Scotland.” It continued—

“While we are not currently planning to review our regional production Guidance or the related quotas, we continue to engage constructively on all aspects of our regulation both in Scotland and across the rest of the UK to ensure our regulation remains relevant in a fast-moving environment. Indeed, we are actively looking at our wider regulation of broadcast TV and radio to ensure it continues to underpin innovation and growth and will consider any relevant evidence in response to our recent Call for Input into our Review of Broadcast Regulation in this space.”

PACT’s submission explained that it sees the regional/nations’ quotas as crucial. It said—

“The regional production quotas are an important part of the public service media system and have helped to move PSB commissioning spend to the UK’s nations and regions and contributed to the growth of local production hubs. Historically, London and the Southeast have dominated TV commissioning. However, London’s share of commissioning spend has been steadily decreasing over the years. In 2017, the majority (66%) of primary commissioning spend was going to London. This decreased to 52% in 2024.”

PACT also noted and welcomed the fact that both the BBC and Channel 4 have strategies to grow production outside of the south east of England. It said that the quotas should be a minimum for PSBs.

Screen Scotland’s submission referred to research it had commissioned looking at PSB commissioning over two decades. The submission said—

BBC network commissions qualifying as ‘Scottish’ were awarded to companies headquartered outside Scotland, often relying on the presence of a ‘substantive base’ rather than sustained economic or creative activity in Scotland. As a result, much of the long-term value of these programmes – particularly intellectual property ownership – accrues outside Scotland. [More recently] there are indications through the BBC’s drama commissioning that a more positive approach to commissioning from Scotland based companies is forming. ...

“Channel 4 was found to rely more heavily on companies formed and headquartered in Scotland, illustrating that different commissioning models are possible within the existing regulatory framework.”

Screen Scotland made recommendations in relation to the quotas, it said “the current Ofcom guidance, last revised in 2019, does not adequately reflect where economic value is created, nor does it support the long-term development of indigenous, Scotland-formed and operated, production businesses. For the BBC and Channel 4, Screen Scotland would like to see their public service remits to be delivered “at least proportionate to each nation’s share of UK population”. Screen Scotland suggested that Channel 3 licences should also be subject to “Scottish production commitments/quotas/licence obligations at a reasonable level”. Overall, Screen Scotland said—

“The majority of the programmes the PSBs commission under their Scottish production quotas should be commissioned from production businesses formed and operated in Scotland. Any production commissioned from elsewhere should only qualify as Scottish when they meet the Ofcom 70% production spend criteria in Scotland, employing Scotland-based talent, crew and facilities. We recognise that a mixed approach that allows for both types of sourcing for “Scottish qualifying” programmes has value.”

A number of submissions highlighted the case of the Traitors which is considered a ‘Scottish’ production under Ofcom’s rules based on having a substantive base in Glasgow. Professor Higgins’ submission said that there has been a “failure to meaningfully employ Scottish crew” and that this undermines the intent of such quotas.

Peter Strachan argued that the current system “fails Scotland’s freelancers”. He suggested that the current rules allow for productions which employ relatively few Scottish-based freelancers can be considered ‘Scottish’ under Ofcom’s rules. He also said that there is a particular lack of roles for Scottish producers, writers and directors.

PSBs have Terms of Trade when working with independent producers – importantly these govern ownership of intellectual property rights. PACT’s submission described the terms of trade as a “key regulatory intervention” in the market in supporting a diverse market of producers. The submission of the University of Glasgow’s Centre for Cultural Policy Research also described the terms of trade as being a “key measure” which allow independent producers to “retain a sizeable share of ownership of the IPRs”. This allows those producers to sell on their programmes or ideas to, for example, global streamers in the future. Commissions from non-PSBs do not necessarily have similar terms.

The location of commissioners was also raised in several submissions. In relation to the BBC, Screen Scotland’s submission said, “creative origination from within Scotland is best achieved by BBC commissioners for the BBC network who live and work in Scotland”. Angus Dixon’s submission said—

“The perception by commissioners that regional talent wasn’t sufficiently skilled, particularly at senior levels (series producers and execs) in these

specialist areas was often disputed by those who worked with imported senior production staff. The criticism was it was a lot more to do with informal relationships (a mainstay of TV recruitment) than objective levels of skill. However, there have been several schemes to develop skills for these roles in the regions but unfortunately there's now not the productions to hire them on."

PACT said:

"Pact is broadly supportive of moving decision making to the nations and regions. However, it's important that the commissioning process and how the BBC works with producers is as simple as possible. We would not want to see commissioning and decision making for drama, for example, split across multiple hubs and commissioners across the nations and regions. This could lead to longer decision-making timelines, more sets of notes from multiple commissioners and potentially fragmented relationships."

Workforce development and opportunities

A number of organisations set out training schemes which they were involved in.

Screen Scotland's submission set out work it undertakes with the BBC, including: Supersizing entertainment formats; River City training academy; and Traitors training opportunities. It also highlighted work Screen Scotland undertakes with a range of other partners, stating that it invested around £2m per year in this work. Scfreen Scotland highlighted: work with RC Media to develop and deliver RESET, a dedicated VFX and animation training programme for Scotland; and working with inward investment productions to "ensure lasting benefits from transient projects by embedding training at all levels".

Bectu's submission suggested that some training opportunities can lack strategic direction and not reflect skills gaps. It highlighted its own work, saying—

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

Pact highlighted the Pact Indie Scheme in Scotland which has been running since 2017. It explained that in this scheme, "participants undertake a paid eight-month placement with an independent production company, providing them with the opportunity to develop their talents in a thriving business environment".

Professor Higgins highlighted the screen education that takes place in universities and colleges in Scotland. He suggested that the BBC could do more in ensuring that there are opportunities for graduates of these courses. Professor Higgins recommended:

"BBC Scotland formally adopts a sector leadership role through the establishment of new mechanism to support sharing opportunities, training

and work experience with the six identified universities actively delivering practice-based education in the sector.”

Professor Higgins highlighted concerns over the axing of River City, which he said “functioned as a skills and progression pipeline”. He suggested that the BBC could provide graduate bursaries and paid internships in Scotland as well as supporting the presentation of student’s work.

Dr Lisa Kelly’s submission highlighted her concern over the level and quality of safety training in the sector. She suggested: embedding safety training in skills development schemes and formal screen education; investing in “immersive simulations and actor-led scenarios”; and ensuring that public funding is tied to productions having a “demonstrate robust safety culture and protocols”.

As noted above, Angus Dixon’s submission suggested that the key issue is not a lack of skills but a lack of opportunities. He said, “you can offer as much training as you like but it’s pointless if the jobs aren’t there.” The submission continued:

“The money being spent on training would arguably be better used to put into production budgets to allow to hire more staff or pay better wages to those who are working. Or fund development of how those in traditional TV might move into expanding areas like digital content creation.”

GUMG’s submission had more of a focus on education and skills development for journalism and journalists. GUMG suggested that there should be a focus on “automation resilient” soft skills such as critical thinking, verification, storytelling, and inclusive leadership. GUMG also suggested that there needs to be diversity initiatives and better data on skills needs in the sector.

BBC

Charter and the future of the BBC in Scotland

The [UK Government published a Green Paper on the BBC Charter renewal in December 2025](#). The future of the BBC in Scotland and the UK is a key theme in the submissions the Committee received.

The BBC’s submission said—

“We would like a Charter agreement which secures a universal public service BBC for a generation, delivering for all of us, reaching the broadest possible audiences through services and content which represent and resonate with the lives of all the nations and communities of the UK. To achieve this, we believe the Charter must deliver on three key goals:

- Independent: Safeguard the BBC’s independence in the interests of the public
- Sustainable: Ensure the BBC is sustainable as a universal public service for the long term

- Responsive: Enable the BBC to meet changing audience needs with speed and agility”

As noted above, Screen Scotland’s submission discussed how the BBC (and other PSBs) should be regulated to support Scottish producers, it said, “the majority of the programmes the PSBs commission under their Scottish production quotas should be commissioned from production businesses formed and operated in Scotland.” Screen Scotland also said that it will argue for “the relocation of complete genres commissioning teams from London to Scotland under the new Charter”.

GUMG made six recommendations in relation to the future of the BBC. These were that the BBC:

- Represent Scottish diversity more fully (geography, class, interests).
- Move to a more sustainable and possibly hybrid funding model for PSM.
- Develop a more participatory news agenda-setting.
- Strengthen independence from government and ensure BBC Scotland has real autonomy from London.
- Be more responsive to “a changing set of informational needs” and utilising new forms of expertise providing relatable content.
- Provide authoritative journalism.

Professor Robert Beveridge’s submission made 21 recommendations, the majority of which related to the BBC. Some of Professor Beveridge’s comments were focused on structural and governance issues, which are explored later in this paper. Professor Beveridge highlighted Gaelic broadcasting and said that this should have equal respect and equal funding relative to Welsh-language broadcasting. PACT’s submission also highlighted the role of the BBC to support and promote the UK’s minority languages.

Professor Beveridge suggested that the BBC should have a specific purpose in representing and reflecting the cultures of Scotland both for the people of Scotland and the rest of the UK and more widely.

As noted in the previous section, Professor Higgins suggested that BBC Scotland should have a greater role in developing skills and opportunities in the sector and should work more closely in partnership with a range of stakeholders. He also said:

“Whilst recognising the challenging environment that all linear broadcasting operates within, with a loss of viewers to streamers and online content, we welcome the proposed plans to place greater emphasis on the opportunities offered by the BBC iPlayer. In this context, we would encourage BBC Scotland commissioners to embrace a more creative and inclusive approach to programming. The current BBC Scotland channel relies heavily on a number of formats within its schedule, however, with a monthly audience share of 0.12 per cent, we would suggest there is scope to experiment more boldly with its schedule.”

Professor Higgins suggested some ways in which commissioning for BBC Scotland could be bolder, and support Scottish producers:

- a Scottish feature documentary slot;
- a drama pilot season;
- regular short-film showcases; and
- more international current-affairs features.

Angus Dixon suggested, “closing the BBC Scotland channel and putting that money directly into programming through either better funding of existing programming on the opt-out slots of the UK wide channels, and/or putting those programmes straight onto the i-player.” Peter Strachan agreed with this suggestion. He also suggested that 5% of license fee income raised in Scotland “fund development of Scottish scripted and unscripted proposals” and that the “PSB ethos in the next BBC Charter to include the workforce that creates content and IP, supporting sustainable careers and healthy working conditions”.

A key theme across several submissions was that the BBC should be free of political interference.

Funding

Screen Scotland did not have a view on the funding mechanisms. It said that the BBC should remain universal to access. Screen Scotland also called for greater transparency on how the BBC’s commercial income is used to support the delivery of its public service obligations in Scotland. In terms of the overall level of funding, Screen Scotland said—

“The level of funding allocated to programmes by the BBC is directly connected to the BBC’s income and in real terms this has fallen significantly over the last two charter periods. This inhibits delivery of the BBC’s public service purposes, and it undermines the UK’s competitiveness in the global creative economy.”

GUMG said that new models should be explored. It said:

“The license fee based on the principle of universality has been undermined in the digital era in which, as above, people engage with BBC content via social media and apps without realising that they need a TV licence. This is only going to get worse as the moves to online content via platforms increases. There is a need to rethink the current model and here lessons can be learned from comparable small territories which implement more hybrid systems of funding to meet the needs of the current climate – for example, Denmark supports its media through taxation for direct subsidies, indirect subsidies, and investment in public service media.”

Professor Beveridge said that he favoured the “continuation of the Licence Fee as the primary means of funding what is a cultural health service”; said that it remains

the “least worst option”. He suggested that a “UK-wide independent body to assess and determine the Television Licence Fee” should be established. Professor Beveridge also said that the UK Government should fund the World Service and the exemption for those 75 and over in receipt of pension credit.

The NUJ stated that the funding model must support universal access and the funding “must be sufficient to deliver quality public service broadcasting throughout the nations and regions”. NUJ also argued against greater use of the commercial arms of the BBC. In relation to the licence fee, NUJ said—

“The NUJ supports the license fee model and opposes decriminalisation of nonpayment, which remains an effective deterrent against evasion. There must be meaningful, sustained increases to the licence fee that ends salami slicing cuts, protects against political interference, and prioritises quality local, regional, national and international news provision. The BBC charter is the only one in the UK that requires regular renewal. The NUJ believes a safer, fairer funding arrangement could be adopted.”

Bectu suggested that the licence fee settlements of recent years have “severely and negatively affected the BBC’s programme making and commissioning capacity across the UK”. It said—

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

MG Alba noted that its funding is a mix of funding from the Scottish Government and the BBC. It’s submission stated—

“This funding was frozen for 10 years which resulted in a real terms reduction of nearly 50% for Gaelic television broadcasting during that period and there is no transparent mechanism to address the funding deficit. This deficit equates to a shortfall of £10M, which has led to a reduction of almost 30% in the number of hours of new programming since 2015. The reduction in new programmes has had a huge impact on audience figures, particularly among younger viewers.

“This critical funding situation is at odds with the clear and transparent financial support offered to the Welsh and Irish language television services, which have both received £millions of additional funding since 2020.”

Governance

A theme of the submissions was around the governance and accountability of the BBC in Scotland. Some respondents argued that the BBC should be more autonomous.

Professor Beveridge said that there should be more accountability to all the parliaments of the UK. He also suggested a both a UK-wide BBC board as well as “an appropriate federal structure to establish unitary boards in each of the nations”. Professor Beveridge said that the BBC board should “be comprised of members who are able to reflect and represent a diversity of views and interests in and across civic society” and a majority should represent the licence fee payers. As part of a more federated structure, Professor Beveridge suggested that BBC Scotland should have full autonomy over BBC One Scotland scheduling. Professor Beveridge also suggested that a channel, such as BBC2 or BBC4 should be headquartered in Scotland.

Screen Scotland echoed some, but not all, of these suggestions. It called for “representatives from each home nation on the main board and strong/diverse/informed nations-based subcommittees/boards in each home nation” as well as a more “defined parliamentary oversight role for the parliaments in Holyrood, Cardiff and Stormont would help ensure the BBC delivered its public service role across the whole of the UK.”

The NUJ similarly recommended governance reform, suggesting that 25% of BBC Board positions be held by workers, and that political appointments should be avoided. It said, “to change the culture of an institution, workers must have a say on its most important oversight and decision-making body.”

Serving the audiences

GUMG argued that there need to be a rebuilding of trust. It said—

“News has to change: to include a greater diversity of voices, a need to counter the agenda of politicians, and to move to more accessible forms of language and presentation of news. It is not enough to simply direct people back to mainstream news for ‘truth’ or ‘accurate information’. Audiences must believe news is serving their interests. Our research shows however that audiences still turn to broadcast news in times of crisis – for example, millions tuning into the BBC during the pandemic and there is much to be learned from the ways in which both mainstream audiences and those most disconnected were reached during this time.”

The BBC wrote to the Committee following its appearance at Committee. This explained that the BBC had entered into a “new strategic partnership with YouTube”. It said that this in response to “a rapidly changing digital environment” and “the BBC’s strategy recognises that people expect content to be available where they already are, rather than coming exclusively to dedicated BBC services.”. It continued:

“The partnership includes: investment in content to showcase the best of BBC storytelling and journalism for under 25s; collaboration to highlight shared cultural moments and a training commitment to content creators. The joint training and skills programme, to be delivered by the National Film and Television School across BBC hubs, including Glasgow, will upskill mid-career media professionals to produce high-quality digital-first content.”

The letter continued—

“Being part of the broader ecosystem allows the BBC to provide accurate information and trusted context where audiences are already searching, viewing and discussing. The serendipity of discovery is a core part of how people now consume content online. If trusted, authoritative BBC content is not available within that environment, other forms of content - some unreliable - fill the space.”

In a separate submission, the BBC noted results from a public engagement exercise in 2025. The submission reported a range of results of this work from Scottish audiences, including:

- 91% said it’s important [for the BBC] to be independent from the government of the day
- 80% said it’s important to reflect people across the UK and different parts of the UK
- 74% said it’s important to be an asset for the UK around the world
- 81% said it’s important to provide a valuable public service
- 80% said it’s important to offer high-quality digital services
- 78% said it’s important to offer something for everyone

In terms of how the BBC is accessed in Scotland, the BBC said—

“[The BBC provides] video and audio content online, across linear and digital TV and radio, from BBC bases across Scotland delivering: news and current affairs; drama; factual and entertainment; sport; education; religion; music and culture, with services in English and Gaelic. [There has been] steady growth in BBC iPlayer for BBC Scotland content to over one million weekly active accounts accessing BBC Scotland content in 2024/25. BBC Radio nan Gàidheal has a weekly reach of 50.3% amongst the community with over 9 million streams of BBC ALBA iPlayer content in 2025.”

MG Alba’s submission said that “BBC ALBA is viewed through the regulatory prism of the BBC Operating Licence” rather than an important cultural asset. The submission suggested that BBC ALBA can be seen as a “niche interest” rather than “as a necessary PSB service that requires transparent and sustainable policy provision and investment”. It recommended that “The new BBC Charter should give parity of esteem to Welsh and Gaelic language services [and] recognise the unique status of BBC ALBA as a Gaelic language partnership service.”

MG Alba’s submission also said there is an issue with the discoverability of BBC Alba’s output. It recommended, “the new BBC Charter or Ofcom should ensure appropriate prominence for BBC ALBA in the digital domain and availability overseas.”

Changes to BBC Scotland radio late night schedules

Two of the submissions were specifically focused on recent changes to the late-night schedules of BBC Scotland radio.

Stephen McAll provided evidence that the amount of Scottish music and particularly new Scottish music played on the new schedules had reduced following changes to the schedule. He said that late-night shows historically provided “the first credible endorsement an artist can take to funders, promoters, festivals,” forming a crucial cultural pipeline. The Tenementals placed these changes within a broader history of Scottish music-making, noting that BBC Radio Scotland had been a rare national platform where Scottish musicians could reach new audiences.

STV and Ofcom

Several submissions raised concerns about STV’s financial position, its request to vary its Ofcom licenses and the implications for Scottish journalism.

This issue was of particular concern for the NUJ. Its submission discussed the proposed changes to the news output across the two STV licence areas which could lead to a loss of up to 60 jobs, of which 30 jobs in news. It also described the financial situation at STV and noted that “in July 2025, STV issued a profits warning, blaming a fall in advertising and a slump in studio productions, causing an immediate and severe collapse in the share price”. NUJ said—

“STV have described their restructuring plans as part of a plan a “pivot to digital”. We do not believe them. We believe the planned restructuring is forced by a financial crisis of their making, rather a well thought through strategy to engage with audiences. For example, the move to digital has been talked about in the newsroom for over a decade. Secondly, under the current plans three of the five digital team roles are to be made redundant.”

Some of the proposed changes will require authorisation from Ofcom. NUJ argued—

“There is significant danger in that by agreeing to these changes Ofcom create a dangerous precedent to allow other channel 3 licences to also reduce their news coverage. Channel 3 public sector media obligations represent a cost to commercial companies. Those companies will always seek to maximise profits, and where possible to reduce those costs. This is always a downwards ratchet: in years when STV and ITV face financial difficulties, they will seek to reduce their costs associated with news production, but in years when they make profits, those profits are returned to shareholders, executives and other areas – but rarely to increase their public service broadcasting provisions.”

Professor Beveridge’s submission also set out his opposition to the proposed changes by STV. He said, “OFCOM should be encouraged to pay more explicit attention to its duty under the Communications Act (2003) to secure the public interest in Communications matters.”

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Ned Sharratt, Researcher (Education and Culture), SPICe

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