



# BBC Charter Renewal – A Bectu Response

March 2026

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Bectu, a sector of Prospect, represents around 40,000 members in non-performing roles across the creative industries. Our members, around half of whom are freelancers, work in film, TV, theatre, live events, fashion, gaming and cinema.

Bectu is also the largest trade union in the BBC. We represent thousands of members across production, filming, technical, research and administration roles and our members are critical to delivering the UK's unrivalled public service broadcasting offer.

Our response reflects the substantial contribution of this world-leading, highly skilled and specialist workforce, but also the BBC's impact on the entire creative landscape. The BBC is the central infrastructure that supports the wider creative ecosystem in which our membership work.

## 1. Public Mission and Purpose

*Question 1. Do you agree or disagree that the BBC's current Mission and Public Purposes should remain the same?*

*Question 2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the BBC should have a specific Public Purpose to support economic growth?*

*Which option, if any, most closely represents your feelings on whether the BBC should continue to provide a wide range of content and services that represent all audiences in a way that brings communities together, supports social cohesion, and helps build a unifying national story throughout the next Charter period?*

*If you agree that the BBC should continue or do more to play this role, what options aiming to improve how the BBC reflects and represents all audiences do you support, if any?*

### The power of the BBC

In the upcoming BBC charter renewal, we believe that the power of the BBC, to inform, educate and entertain, must be reflected in how it is resourced, how its workforce is treated and in how it reflects the country.

For over a century, the BBC has been an essential part of the British national story and a globally renowned broadcaster. Its unique funding model and universal remit allows it to be a true public service broadcaster that commissions innovative content and invests in creative talent and public

service content across the country, reaching 94% of UK adults each month with 99% UK-made content<sup>1</sup>.

The BBC provides 10 TV channels, BBC iPlayer, 10 UK radio stations, over 40 national and local stations, BBC Sounds and one of the UK's most popular websites, all for just 43p a day<sup>2</sup>. The diplomatic power of the BBC, which broadcasts in more than 40 languages, is considered outstanding with an unrivalled global reach and internationally trusted presence.

The institution does a huge amount to reach and represent all audiences, but as the recent independent thematic review of portrayal and representation found, there is a need to ensure better representation across geography, class, and socioeconomic background. Audiences value programming which accurately and authentically reflects their lives, and this representation is essential to the BBC remaining relevant, distinctive and trusted across the UK. We support the review's findings for the need for more decision-making to happen closer to audiences, but we also argue that BBC staff, freelancers and their trade unions need to be better represented in decision-making.

## Reflecting and representing all audiences across the UK

The BBC's ability to truly reflect and represent all audiences across the UK is directly tied to its unique funding model and universal remit. The current licence fee model has allowed the BBC to generate the most diverse and wide-ranging output of any public service broadcaster, enabling the broadcaster to meet its duties set out in the Charter.

This not only produces authentically British, culturally specific and often risk-taking programmes that would be unlikely to survive in a purely commercial environment. It allows the BBC to produce shows like *Gardener's Question Time*, with two million listeners weekly, or *Songs of Praise*, reaching over one million viewers each week. It allows the BBC to take chances on shows like *Man Like Mobeen*, that represents British Muslim communities and regional working-class life, strengthening audience engagement and cultural industries in regions with historically lower media investment.

This model enables the BBC not to chase audiences, but to serve them, to set the cultural agenda rather than follow global viewing trends. This not only champions underrepresented voices and elevates stories that genuinely reflect UK life in all its diversity but often results in big successes domestically and abroad. This is evident in programmes like *Dreaming Whilst Black*, which began as a small web project before the BBC backed it for a full series, a decision made possible only because of its licence-fee-funded commitment to diverse British storytelling. The series generated around £4.3 million in international revenues<sup>3</sup>, proving that culturally specific, Black British stories resonate globally when given space to thrive.

We believe that the BBC's mission and public purposes should remain the same, with the welcome addition of a public purpose to support economic growth.

Already, the BBC's cultural influence extends beyond soft power to hard investment. The BBC contributed £4.9 billion to the UK economy in 2019/20, and its activity supported a total of 53,600 full time equivalent jobs in the UK economy – for every job created by the BBC, a further 1.7 jobs were created in the wider economy<sup>4</sup>.

Every £1 of the BBC's direct economic activity generates a total of £2.63 in the economy, and 50% of the BBC's economic impact is outside London, compared to a broadcasting sector average of 20%<sup>5</sup>. Its services and investment in the nations and regions have a multiplier effect

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/reports/annualreport>

<sup>2</sup> [Licence fee settlement: Letter from the Chairman and Director-General to Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Rt Hon Nadine Dorries MP - Media Centre](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/winners/international-programme-sales-dreaming-while-black/5190269.article>

<sup>4</sup> <https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/reports/reports/kpmg-economic-impact.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [2020-21.pdf \(bbc.co.uk\)](#) p.18

on local economies investing in skills and talent outside of the capital, boosting the UK's regional economies and creating content that reflects every community across the country.

The BBC has made this enormous contribution to the UK's culture and economy despite having been forced to make significant savings in recent years, totalling £564 million since 2022/23<sup>6</sup>. However, we have concerns about the ability of the BBC to deliver on its mission if it is forced to continue making such significant savings. In a further recent announcement, the BBC said that under its current funding settlement another 10% efficiency savings would be required over the next 3 years. When planning for short term efficiencies, the organisation must do so in such a way that protects the jobs, skills and knowledge which make it thrive in the long term. Sustainable and sufficient funding must meet the BBC's mission, if it is to be delivered.

If the BBC is delivering on its mission in full, it will continue to support economic growth and maintain the UK's position as a global leader in the audiovisual industries.

## 2. A Trusted Institution

### Workplace Standards and Pay

*To what extent do you agree or disagree that new requirements on the BBC should be introduced so that the BBC does more to improve workplace standards?*

*How, if at all, does the amount those working for the BBC are paid impact your view of the BBC?*

Given sustained public scrutiny following multiple controversies and the findings of the recent Workplace Culture review, new requirements to improve workplace standards are justified and necessary. These must not only apply to BBC staff, but across the supply chain, including to freelancers, contractors and independent production.

Embedding the review's actions as formal, audited obligations, aligning the whole supply chain with independent CIISA standards, and increasing transparency for staff, freelancers and the public will improve safety, fairness and accountability as well as supporting public trust in the institution. We suggest these should include the following:

- **Make the 2025 Culture Review actions mandatory and measurable.**  
Convert the six recommendations into binding obligations for all BBC divisions and commissioned productions, with time-bound milestones, independent audits of complaints handling, and annual public reporting on delivery and outcomes.
- **Mandate CIISA-aligned standards across the BBC's production ecosystem.**  
Require adherence to CIISA standards and independent reporting routes on all BBC-made and BBC-commissioned content (including indie suppliers and freelancers), enforced via contract clauses, spot checks and sanctions for noncompliance.
- **Strengthen protections and transparency for freelancers as well as staff.**  
Require antiretaliation guarantees, clear timelines and outcomes communication, and a published culture dashboard (complaints volume, time to resolution, outcomes, follow-up actions) to rebuild trust and ensure consistency.
- **Set behavioural expectations for senior on- and off-air talent with enforceable consequences.**  
Introduce a refreshed Code of Conduct applying equally to permanent staff, casuals and freelancers; require swift, documented consequences for breaches; and publish anonymised case metrics to evidence even-handed enforcement.
- **Build leadership and HR capability at scale.**  
Define priority leadership behaviours (speaking up, early intervention, fair access to

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/documents/bbc-annual-report-and-accounts-24-25.pdf>

opportunities) and require regular checks that managers and HR teams have been trained and assessed against these standards.

- **Embed collective bargaining and union oversight in culture and wellbeing reforms.** Ensure all policy changes arising from the Culture Review are subject to collective bargaining, drawing on the practical expertise of union representatives, with joint monitoring of impact on staff wellbeing, fairness and trust in the system.

Trust in the BBC is related to staff pay. Without sufficient resourcing, including fair remuneration of its highly skilled workforce, we do not believe that the BBC can deliver effectively on its mission and public purposes.

Bectu's BBC Stress Audit (2024), covering 441 members, found that 61% of respondents often work very intensively, and 77% reported having to neglect tasks due to excessive workload. The prospect of further redundancies is expected to increase staff stress and workload, especially as remaining employees are asked to take on more responsibilities without corresponding increases in pay or staffing. This has a direct impact on what the BBC can deliver, for example, the ability of staff to deliver on the BBC's principles of impartiality, and so a direct impact on trust in the BBC. This must be considered in any attempts to make any further efficiencies, including in the introduction of AI technologies, as prior to making any savings, there is a need to fill gaps that have been created through multiple waves of cuts.

Fairness and transparency in pay and career opportunities, including for freelancers, are essential for a healthy workplace and for building trust at every level of the organisation. Executive pay should reflect value for money without undermining the BBC's ability to deliver on its mission and public purpose.

## Public Accountability

***To what extent do you agree or disagree that the BBC is currently accountable to the public?***

***Which of the following options aiming to enhance the BBC's accountability, if any, do you support?***

- *Requiring the BBC to use consultative forums, such as citizens' assemblies, so that decision-making represents the public's views and voices*
- *Requiring the BBC to hear regional perspectives through new consultative frameworks or other structures, representing each of the UK's nations and/or regions*
- *Enhancing how the BBC conducts audience research to help inform decision making*
- *Strengthening requirements of the Board to ensure the BBC engages with the public in a meaningful way*
- *Changing the structure of the Board to enhance its effectiveness and accountability*
- *Changing the Board's appointment process, this could include reducing the government's role in board appointments to appointing the Chair only*
- *Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of board members, this could include setting out duties for the Chair*
- *Enhancing the role of the independent board members and their ability to hold the BBC to account*
- *Strengthening the external scrutiny of the BBC, this could include, for example, greater oversight by Ofcom or Parliament*

While the BBC retains important mechanisms that support public accountability, its ability to be fully and effectively accountable to the public is currently constrained. Several factors undermine how well the organisation can answer to the public it serves. These include political interference over governance and funding, a failure of the BBC's own governance structure to safeguard independence, and a decline in workplace standards that impact the BBC's ability to uphold its editorial standards.

Bectu has consistently raised concerns about the politicisation of BBC governance, particularly around board appointments and the overall leadership structure. We have argued that the BBC's

capacity to fulfil its mission depends on public confidence in its independence. This includes specific concerns regarding board members whose perceived political alignment risks undermining trust in the BBC's ability to operate free from external influence.

For example, we made it clear that former chair Richard Sharp had clearly failed to uphold his duty to protect the corporation's independence and his resignation was an unnecessarily long and delayed process that distracted from the BBC's remit, operations and duties.

We have also raised specific concerns about the continued presence of Robbie Gibb on the BBC Board, as his perceived political alignment and influence have been widely viewed by staff and external commentators as undermining the BBC's impartiality. His position has become emblematic of the wider risks that politically aligned appointments pose to public confidence in the BBC's independence, and Bectu has therefore called for his removal as part of necessary governance reform.

We have therefore called for governance reforms to ensure the Board is effective, diverse, and genuinely independent, and that its composition reflects public rather than political priorities.

Political influence also operates through funding decisions, which have in recent years eroded both the scope and stability of BBC operations. Sudden or politically motivated interventions in licence fee settlements have created operational uncertainty and placed pressure on staffing, commissioning, and local output. This instability directly weakens the BBC's capacity to deliver the high-quality public service content expected of it, and it undermines the conditions needed for accountability to the public rather than to government. Sustainable, long-term funding is essential to maintaining the BBC's editorial independence, its ability to plan strategically, and its capacity to fulfil its public purposes.

Furthermore, workforce pressures caused by years of cuts, restructures, and rising workloads also have implications for public accountability. When staff are stretched beyond capacity, this compromises the BBC's ability to uphold rigorous editorial standards and safeguard impartiality. Bectu has repeatedly highlighted the harmful impact of these workplace conditions, noting that they reduce the BBC's ability to serve audiences effectively and consistently. Editorial integrity and public trust cannot be sustained if the workforce responsible for delivering journalism and content is subject to chronic instability or inadequate resourcing.

Therefore, meaningful public accountability cannot be achieved without strengthening the BBC's engagement with its own workforce, and this must include formal, regular and transparent engagement with recognised trade unions, whose insight into workplace conditions, editorial pressures and organisational culture is essential to understanding how decisions affect staff and audiences alike.

Strengthening public accountability requires reforms that insulate the BBC from political pressure, restore stable funding, reinforce an independent and representative governance structure. While we would support a drive to empower direct and meaningful public engagement, we do not believe that this would increase trust in the BBC if the power structures that uphold the institution remain ineffective.

In this context, Bectu supports a range of measures proposed in the consultation to improve accountability. These include the introduction of new frameworks to ensure regional perspectives are meaningfully represented, and enhancements to the BBC's audience research so that decision making better reflects the experiences and expectations of the public.

We further support strengthening the Board's obligations to engage transparently with the public, reforming its structure to improve effectiveness, and reducing the government's role in Board appointments so that it appoints only the Chair. Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of Board members, particularly the Chair, and enhancing the authority of independent Board members are also essential steps toward improved accountability.

While we recognise the potential value of strengthened external scrutiny by Ofcom, this must be designed to protect, rather than weaken, the BBC's independence and must not create new pathways for political influence.

## Independence and Trust

### ***Why, if at all, does the BBC's independence matter to you?***

- It allows the BBC to be free from government or political influence in the content it releases*
- It allows the BBC to be impartial when reporting on elections, government policies, and political parties*
- It allows the BBC to hold government to account and/or be critical of government*
- It allows the BBC to be editorially independent and make the final call on what stories to cover and how to cover them*
- It allows the BBC to pursue its own agenda, without interference, so it can provide content that serves audiences across the UK*

### ***What measures to increase the BBC's independence from government, if any, should be prioritised to support greater trust in, and engagement with, the BBC?***

### ***The government is considering targeted changes to increase transparency in the BBC to enhance BBC accountability over the next Charter period. Which options, if any, do you support?***

- Improving the way the BBC communicates important information, so it is clear, concise and able to be understood by everyone*
- Requiring the BBC to communicate important information better to industry stakeholders, particularly to other UK broadcasters*
- Requiring the BBC to communicate more information about its complaints process, particularly to those who submit complaints*
- Requiring the BBC to communicate more information about the process for selecting which programmes should be made and broadcast*
- Requiring the BBC to communicate more information about its editorial decisions*
- Other, please specify [free text limited to 200 words]*

Independence is fundamental to the BBC's ability to uphold its mission inform, educate and entertain in the public interest, without interference. Editorial and operational independence enable the organisation to deliver accurate journalism, commission bold and diverse creative work, and serve audiences across the UK without fear or favour. When its autonomy is compromised, the BBC's credibility is weakened and its ability to pursue challenging or sensitive reporting is significantly undermined. Safeguarding independence is therefore not simply about protecting the institution itself, it is about protecting the democratic value of a well-informed public.

For these reasons, Bectu maintains that the upcoming Charter Review should reinforce mechanisms that shield the corporation from political interference, ensuring a stable, autonomous BBC.

Impartiality in outputs must be reflected in impartiality at the very top of the organisation. The organisation's governance and leadership structures should be designed to ensure that decisions about strategy, funding, content, and oversight remain firmly at arm's length from political actors. This includes the way board members are appointed, how they are held to account, and, where necessary, how they can be removed. Bectu has been explicit on this point in its calls for the removal of Robbie Gibb, and for the previous chair Richard Sharp to step down, stressing that staff cannot have confidence in the BBC's leadership while such politically contentious appointments remain in place.

Under the model introduced following the Clementi Review, the BBC Board is a unitary board of around 14 members, drawn from a mix of government led public appointments (including the Chair and the four Nations members) and BBC appointments (a majority by number). While this mixed model was intended to balance independence with accountability, in practice the government retains decisive influence over the most symbolically and substantively powerful nonexecutive roles, notably the Chair, via the Public Appointments process. This creates both the reality and the perception of political gatekeeping at the top of the organisation.

The appointment process itself is undermined by opacity. Although Cabinet Office rules govern the Public Appointments system, there is limited transparency around shortlisting, the weighting of political affiliations, and the degree of ministerial discretion at final selection. The public has no visibility of how impartiality is assessed or safeguarded in practice when ministers choose the Chair and Nations members. This lack of transparency heightens the risk that political considerations can shape the composition of the Board in ways that are incompatible with the BBC's independence.

The current removal regime itself compounds the risk to the BBC's independence, locking in the influence of controversial appointees for the duration of their terms, as demonstrated most clearly by the case of Robbie Gibb<sup>7</sup>. The statutory framework governing the dismissal of Board members appointed through the Public Appointments process is opaque and poorly defined, leaving no clear or workable mechanism for addressing situations where confidence or impartiality has collapsed. Although the Charter nominally limits removal to circumstances in which a member is "unfit, unwilling, or unable" to discharge their duties, this threshold is so ambiguously framed that it inhibits intervention when serious concerns arise about a Board member's influence or conduct.

The Culture Secretary has publicly stated that these rules prevented her from acting in relation to Robbie Gibb, despite significant and sustained concerns about impartiality and the impact of his continued presence on the Board. As a result, controversial appointees can effectively remain in place for the duration of their terms, regardless of the risk posed to governance, staff confidence, or the BBC's editorial independence. The absence of a clear, functional removal mechanism creates a structural vulnerability that allows political influence to be entrenched rather than checked.

Depoliticising key nonexecutive appointments, particularly the Chair and the Nations members, through an independent statutory appointments panel would help eliminate the current risks created by ministerial discretion, while increasing transparency through published shortlists, criteria and decision-making records. Such a panel must include workforce representation.

Strengthening board level accountability for impartiality, and ensuring that conflicts of interest, political activity and recusals are transparently managed and reported, would create a leadership environment that embodies the standards expected of the BBC's journalism. And a clearer and proportionate removal mechanism, would replace today's unworkable "unfit/unable" test with a fair route for dealing with sustained loss of confidence linked to impartiality or governance integrity.

Crucially, reform must also embed workforce confidence as a core governance criterion. As Bectu has consistently highlighted, staff trust in leadership impartiality is essential to sustaining editorial courage, maintaining morale, and upholding public confidence in the BBC's outputs<sup>8</sup>. We would like to see the appointments process strengthened by establishing an independent appointments panel, which includes worker voice. We also believe the board itself should include a position with experience that can fairly represent workers at the BBC, for example, as former trade union representative or officials, to protect the BBC from government interference and guarantee greater independence. Requiring the Board to report regularly on staff confidence, to engage with trade unions, and to demonstrate concrete actions taken in response, would ensure that governance structures reflect the lived realities of those delivering the BBC's mission.

Ultimately, protecting the independence of the BBC requires a stable, non-politicised funding model. Unpredictable or politically driven licence fee settlements undermine the BBC's ability to plan strategically and operate without fear of political retaliation.

Funding decisions taken behind closed doors have, in the past, resulted in significant real terms- cuts, nearly a 40% drop in inflation adjusted public funding for UK -facing- services since 2010<sup>9</sup>, as governments shifted responsibilities such as the World Service onto the BBC's budget. Similarly, the government's transfer of responsibility for funding the over-75s TV licence

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<sup>7</sup> [Bectu calls for removal of Robbie Gibb from BBC Board | Bectu](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Bectu calls for removal of Robbie Gibb from BBC Board | Bectu](#)

<sup>9</sup> [VLV-Report-into-BBC-public-funding-Revised-November-2024.pdf](#)

concession to the BBC, a welfare benefits the union argues should never have been offloaded, has further intensified these financial pressures. This creates material tensions that can be used, intentionally or otherwise, to influence editorial behaviour.

The current Charter structure compounds this vulnerability: unlike many statutory or constitutional frameworks for public service media internationally, the BBC Charter is not permanent, but instead renewed at ten-year intervals, creating recurring political flashpoints during which funding and remit become bargaining tools. For the BBC to be truly independent, the Charter should move to a permanent constitutional footing, subject to periodic review rather than renewal, insulating the corporation from cyclical political leverage.

Just as the BBC must be protected from political pressure, it must also be protected from commercial pressures that could erode its distinctiveness. The licence fee provides a stable base that enables the BBC to produce genres and UK rooted storytelling that commercial platforms tend to avoid. As global streaming services reshape viewing habits, intense competition for talent and rising production costs risk pushing the BBC towards a commercially driven commissioning environment and the 'Netflixisation' of content: homogenised formats, reduced risk-taking, and fewer culturally specific stories.

Indeed, the BBC already faces inflation in production costs, up to 35% in some genres<sup>10</sup>, driven by the streaming boom, exacerbating the pressure on its public service- commitments. Maintaining a universal, publicly funded model is therefore essential not only for independence, but for the preservation of a diverse cultural ecosystem. It is what allows the BBC to act as a central pillar of the UK's creative ecosystem, producing original, distinctive work and sustaining the creative industries in a way that fully commercial media cannot.

### 3. Delivering services for public good

#### BBC Use of AI for Public Good

***What, if anything, should the BBC focus on to ensure AI is used for the public good, and for the benefit of the wider creative industries? Please select all that apply.***

- Transparently explaining its own use of AI, for example, in the creation of content and services*
- Having new requirements (for example, transparency obligations), to set the ethical standards for AI's use in public service media organisations*
- Teaching audiences how to recognise where AI has been used, and to critically assess the reliability of information and content*
- Helping audiences to use AI themselves, for example, teaching them basic prompting skills*
- Find innovative uses of AI to drive efficiencies within the BBC and in the wider media sector*
- Act as a bridge between AI companies and smaller public service media who have less time and money to negotiate, helping to support wider collaboration*
- Other, please specify [free text limited to 200 words]*
- The new Charter should not introduce obligations around AI for the BBC*
- Unsure or no opinion*

Bectu strongly believes that the BBC's approach to artificial intelligence during the next Charter period will set the benchmark for the entire UK creative sector. As one of the largest and most influential public service media organisations, the BBC's choices around transparency, ethics, and worker protections will ripple across the wider industry. For this reason, the BBC must adopt

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<sup>10</sup> [VLV-Report-into-BBC-public-funding-Revised-November-2024.pdf](#)

a leadership role that upholds public value and protects those most exposed to the risks of unregulated AI adoption.

Transparency is essential for trust, accountability and workforce protection. Under the Charter principles of openness and accountability, the BBC must clearly explain when and how AI is used in the creation or delivery of its content: what systems are involved, what training data models rely upon, and where technology has generated, assisted or altered material. The BBC has a duty to help audiences understand where AI appears in media, how to recognise AI generated or manipulated content, and how to assess its reliability.

AI can help efficiencies, but this cannot be done in a way that jeopardises the creative workforce, the benefits must flow to workers as well as employers. Research conducted with Queen Mary University and the Institute for the Future of Work shows that generative AI is already disproportionately impacting backstage departments such as lighting, construction, props, costume, and hair & make-up<sup>11</sup>. These workers, including freelancers, often lack copyright protections or image rights, leaving them vulnerable to displacement, deskilling, and the erosion of work opportunities. Innovation must be accompanied by job security guarantees, retraining opportunities, and fair distribution of the gains created by AI.

The BBC must help set ethical standards for AI in public service media, particularly regarding training data, attribution and consent. Unlicensed use of creative works by AI developers is already a major threat to creators and the broader creative workforce. The BBC has a responsibility to ensure all AI systems used in its work are human centred, responsible, and give full remuneration and credit to the source content on which they are built.

The BBC must therefore set a gold standard for transparency, ethical practice, and worker protection, including full disclosure of where AI is used, what training data underpins it, and how creative labour is credited and remunerated. Moreover, its application of any AI technologies for efficiency gains must look to support staff where cuts have already created gaps in what they are able to provide, rather than adding strains to the workforce through job losses or work intensification. Only by doing so can the BBC ensure AI strengthens, rather than undermines, the creative industries workforce it depends upon.

## Visibility of BBC Programming

***What kind of programming, if any, do you think the BBC should make more visible on its platforms? (Please select all that apply)***

- *News and current affairs programming*
- *Arts, religious and international affairs programming (sometimes referred to as 'underserved' genres)*
- *Children's and educational programming*
- *Programming showing different voices and perspectives from across the UK*
- *Locally relevant programming*
- *Other, please specify [free text limited to 200 words]*
- *The new Charter should not require the BBC to make specific types of programmes more visible*
- *Unsure or no opinion*

Visibility must be an active policy priority that strengthens the BBC's core public-service mission, providing trusted news, original UK stories, and content reflecting the diversity of the whole nation.

Visibility rules should prioritise content that delivers unique public value, not content that happens to perform well within commercial or algorithmic logics. Ofcom has repeatedly warned that global platforms use hyper personalised recommendation systems that disadvantage genres such as UK-originated children's content, news, arts- and regional programming, precisely the areas

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ifow.org/publications/executive-summary-creative-industries>

where commercial markets routinely underdeliver<sup>12</sup>. Ofcom have also highlighted how algorithmic feeds on platforms such as YouTube shape what audiences see, often making it harder for them to encounter public service- content and increasing exposure to misinformation<sup>13</sup>.

The BBC's platforms, and third-party environments where BBC content is distributed, should therefore champion distinctive UK output, especially in genres where the BBC fills gaps left by the market. This requires policy frameworks that actively counterbalance commercial incentives that deprioritise UK originated or lower volume genres.

## Use of Third- Party Platforms

***To what extent do you agree or disagree that the BBC should make greater use of third-party platforms to share its content?***

***Reflecting on your response above, please explain why you agree or disagree that the BBC should make greater use of third-party platforms to share its content.***

While we recognise that third party platforms can help the BBC reach audiences, particularly younger or harder to reach groups, we have significant concerns about overreliance on commercial platforms whose algorithms, incentives and operating models may conflict with the BBC's public service mission. Public service content must remain easily discoverable, and the BBC's direct relationship with audiences should not be compromised by increased reliance on external platforms.

We are concerned that increased use of third-party platforms could weaken the BBC's ability to uphold its editorial standards. These platforms prioritise engagement above accuracy or impartiality, and their algorithmic systems may distort the prominence or context of BBC content in ways that the corporation cannot meaningfully control. There is a real risk that trusted and balanced journalism becomes lost within feeds dominated by sensationalised material, undermining the BBC's core purpose of informing the public with accuracy and independence.

We are also concerned that third-party distribution could dilute the BBC's direct connection with licence fee payers. When content primarily reaches audiences through commercial intermediaries, it becomes harder for the public to recognise it as publicly funded, impartial and held to rigorous editorial standards. Over time, this risks eroding public understanding of and support for the BBC's role as a universal public service broadcaster. Maintaining strong audience pathways back to BBC owned platforms must therefore remain a priority if the BBC is to sustain trust and accountability.

In addition, Bectu members have raised questions about the resourcing and workforce impact of increasing use across third party platforms. Content tailored for third party platforms typically requires different formats, faster production cycles and smaller teams. Moreover, they are not held to the uphold the same editorial guidelines. If resources are diverted to meet these demands, there is a danger that the quality, depth and distinctiveness of BBC output may suffer, along with the jobs and skills that underpin it.

Already, we have heard from members who are being encouraged to produce news and factual shows where the aim has rapidly shifted towards creating short clips for people's phones. Moreover, the BBC's recent deal with YouTube was not communicated to staff or their Trade Union representatives until it was publicly announced.

Workers and trade unions must be involved in any conversations about third party platform use. Any shift towards platform specific production must not come at the expense of the BBC's capacity to deliver high quality, UK made public service content, and the nature of jobs for workers delivering on this.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/public-service-broadcasting/public-service-media-review>

<sup>13</sup> [Transmission Critical The future of Public Service Media](#)

For these reasons, we believe that use of third-party platforms should remain supplementary and strategically targeted, not a replacement for strong, well-resourced BBC digital services. We suggest that there must be protections for the BBC's premium content in any changes to how the BBC operates across third party platforms. Where the BBC does engage externally, this should be under a clear framework that safeguards impartiality, protects editorial context, and ensures audiences are consistently directed back to BBC controlled environments.

## Improving the Value of BBC News and Current Affairs

***What, if anything, do you believe would improve the value and relevance of BBC news and current affairs to you? This includes all BBC news and current affairs content, including its TV, radio and online news services, and local, national and international news outputs.***

- *A renewed focus on accuracy and impartiality*
- *More clearly marking when content is news versus where it is opinion*
- *Robust and transparent editorial guidelines applied consistently*
- *Greater explanation of the editorial and journalistic decisions taken when reporting the news*
- *Greater transparency when mistakes and errors are made*
- *More effort to be made in taking into account the public's views in its news coverage*
- *Reporting more news stories which are local to you*
- *Reporting more international news stories*
- *Highlighting stories which are not reported by other outlets*
- *Other, please specify [free text limited to 200 words]*
- *No changes are necessary*
- *Unsure or no opinion*

***Question 17. Thinking about the next Charter period, what role, if any, do you think the BBC should have in ensuring UK citizens can recognise and access trusted and accurate information?***

The single most important improvement to the value and relevance of BBC News is stable funding and sufficient staffing. Repeated rounds of cuts have reduced specialist capacity and squeezed the time needed for rigorous verification, investigative depth and editorial challenge, exactly what underpins trusted, accurate and impartial journalism.

Repeated restructures, the loss of news jobs and a closure of high-analysis formats represent a worrying trend that diminishes the breadth and depth of reporting audiences expect from a public service broadcaster. This hits not only jobs but directly narrows the range of in-depth content the BBC can provide.

In order to improve the value and relevance of news through consistent editorial standards, transparent decision making and visible corrections, the BBC must have the editorial time and human capacity to do these labour-intensive tasks well. Where teams are hollowed out, it becomes harder to maintain impartiality at pace, to explain complex judgments, and to cover both local and international stories that are otherwise overlooked. Reinvestment in the BBC's news services is therefore the surest route to strengthening accuracy, impartiality and relevance across TV, radio and online services.

Moreover, the BBC does not develop everything it broadcasts and cannot overreach its control over independent production companies. There needs to be an honest discussion about the organisation's capacity to check every piece of content that it puts out and be clear about where responsibility for this lies.

Bectu has raised serious concerns about largescale outsourcing and offshoring proposals, including Project Ada, warning that ceding critical functions to third-party vendors risks diluting editorial oversight, undermining accountability, and misaligning incentives away from public value.

To help citizens recognise reliable information and navigate misinformation credibly, the BBC must keep stewardship of its platforms, data and algorithms aligned with public service standards, not commercial priorities.

## Importance of the BBC's International Output

*The BBC's international output showcases the UK, its culture and its values to a global audience. This includes the BBC World Service, which seeks to provide access to trusted news around the world in an increasingly challenging international environment. To what extent do you agree it is important that the BBC continues to perform these roles internationally?*

As global news ecosystems become more polarised and vulnerable to disinformation, the BBC's independent, fact-checked journalism provides an anchor of reliability for audiences who may have limited access to free or credible media. Maintaining this global presence is not simply a cultural asset but a strategic necessity. The BBC's international output is one of the most effective and trusted vehicles through which the UK communicates its democratic values, cultural diversity and commitment to impartiality<sup>14</sup>.

This credibility allows the UK to sustain meaningful engagement with audiences during moments of crisis, whether political unrest, conflict, or humanitarian emergencies, ensuring people worldwide have access to accurate information when it matters most. The BBC's international services also play a unique role in countering hostile information operations, supporting global security objectives through the soft power generated by trust and reliability.

And the BBC's portrayal of the UK on the world stage extends beyond news. Its cultural programming, documentary output and storytelling introduce global audiences to the UK's creative sector, heritage and contemporary perspectives. In a recent study of 19 of the G20 nations, 23% of 18–34-year-olds think the UK is in the top three most attractive countries in the world as a source of arts and culture<sup>15</sup>, where the BBC is an anchor for the sector's success. At a time when cultural diplomacy is increasingly mediated through digital platforms, the BBC remains one of the few international broadcasters with the scale, reputation and editorial standards to shape global understanding of the UK in a positive and nuanced way.

It is vitally important that the BBC continues to deliver these international functions. But doing so depends on stable, predictable investment that recognises the BBC's role as a pillar of the UK's soft power infrastructure.

Previous Government driven funding squeezes on the World service have resulted in service closures, job losses and instability for staff. These cuts not only harm workers but damage the UK's reputation internationally and limit the BBC's ability to provide essential, independent news at moments of crisis. Bectu has been clear that the BBC World Service is a vital part of the UK's global soft power architecture and must receive secure, long- term funding directly from government.

## 4. Driving growth across the UK

### Valuing the BBC as a UK-wide Organisation

*What, if anything, do you value about the BBC being UK-wide? (Please select all that apply)*

- *Bringing people together from different communities across the UK, including its nations and regions*

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<sup>14</sup> [https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10209358/1/IGP\\_BBC\\_World\\_Service\\_DIGITAL.pdf](https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10209358/1/IGP_BBC_World_Service_DIGITAL.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> [https://creativelandtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CLT\\_UAL\\_EA\\_ReportSummary.pdf](https://creativelandtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CLT_UAL_EA_ReportSummary.pdf)

- *Representing people from across the UK*
- *Telling local stories to a national audience*
- *Providing local news and information*
- *Money spent in local areas*
- *Stimulating local creative clusters (e.g. MediaCity in Greater Manchester, BBC's new headquarters in the West Midlands), including through supporting the independent production sector.*
- *Jobs and skills development for local people*
- *Other, please specify [free text limited to 200 words]*
- *None of the above*
- *Unsure*

A UK wide BBC is essential to the principle of universality: its ability to serve everyone, in every nation and region, with the same high quality, impartial, and distinctly British public service content. Universality depends on the BBC operating as a genuinely national institution, commissioning across the Nations and regions, investing in local creative economies, and ensuring that audiences in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and every part of England not only see themselves represented, but can access the same trusted, non-commercial news, culture and information.

The BBC plays an essential role in delivering trusted local news and information, providing one of the most reliable sources of up-to-date reporting across towns, cities and regions. Accurate, easily accessible local news remains vital for local democracy, helping communities stay informed and supporting resilience against misinformation. The BBC delivers high quality, impartial local coverage across radio, TV and online, even as audiences increasingly rely on digital platforms for news.

The BBC's UK-wide presence is fundamental to its ability to unite audiences across nations and regions, providing a rare shared civic space that brings people together across diverse communities and identities. It delivers meaningful representation by commissioning content that reflects the full breadth of UK life, ensuring voices from Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the English regions are heard nationally. This includes telling local stories at scale, from culturally specific drama to minority-language services, including S4C-linked provision.

The BBC also plays an essential economic role across the UK, with investment in nations and regions delivering sustained local growth, job creation and skills development. The BBC's distributed commissioning model delivers measurable local multipliers by anchoring production spend skills and SMEs in nations and regions.

Research on the BBC's impact in Salford<sup>16</sup> shows significant job and firm growth concentrated near the BBC hub, where employment in creative and digital sectors grew by 142% following BBC relocation, cementing the role of anchor institutions in creative cluster - development. Independent analysis for the West Midlands forecasts £282m GVA, hundreds of jobs and over 200 firms linked to the BBC's Digbeth move, accelerating the area's emergence as a national production quarter<sup>17</sup>. In Cardiff, independent analysis cited in internal evidence shows the Cardiff BBC Wales HQ alone generated £1.1bn in GVA and 1,900 jobs over 10 years, demonstrating the multiplier effects of regional spend<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> [Multipliers from a Major Public Sector Relocation: The BBC Moves to Salford](#)

<sup>17</sup> [BBC's investment in the West Midlands to bring £282 million and hundreds of jobs](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Economic Impact of the New BBC Wales Broadcasting Centre in Central Square, Cardiff - DocsLib](#)

Importantly, London remains the most economically significant BBC hub, driving national GVA, sustaining thousands of high value skilled jobs, supporting dense supply chains, and anchoring one of the world's strongest creative clusters. High skill jobs in investigative journalism, national radio, digital engineering, design, and global news production help sustain London's position as a world leading media employment market. The BBC's R&D labs, product teams, AI ethics work, and emerging media research are disproportionately London based, contributing to UK-wide creative innovation. And London based independent producers, VFX firms, postproduction houses, studios, and tech providers benefit from BBC commissions and contracts.

## BBC Spending, Activities and Decision Making Across Nations and Regions

**Question 20. (1) To what extent do you agree or disagree that the BBC should be required to spread more of its spending, activities, and decision-making across nations and regions of the UK?**

**Question 20. (2) Which option(s), if any, would you support for spreading the BBC's economic impact and role supporting the production sector across the UK nations and regions? (Please select all that apply).**

- *Requiring the BBC to develop long-term strategies for regional creative sector development*
- *Further quotas or obligations for producing content outside London and the M25*
- *New quota targets for basing staff involved in commissioning content across the UK nations and regions*
- *Governance changes to give regional or local leads for commissioning content more control over their budget and decision-making*
- *Changing the rules so location is factored into decision-making around commissioning content from independent production companies*
- *Other: please specify*

Bectu has consistently highlighted that the BBC's role as essential national infrastructure depends on a genuinely UK-wide footprint. This distributed presence underpins regional creative clusters and ensures that production capacity, workforce development, and the wider cultural ecosystem remain vibrant and sustainable across the whole UK.

The BBC has made notable progress on moving production spend for television outside London, Under the Across the UK programme, the BBC had a target of moving 60% of network TV expenditure outside London by December 2027. By March 2023, it had already reached 58%, showing strong performance in TV commissioning relocations<sup>19</sup>.

But progress is uneven across genres and not yet matched by improvements in measurable outcomes such as skills, job creation and local economic growth. While the BBC aimed for 80% of apprentices to be based outside London, by March 2023 the figure was only 60%, suggesting that where spend activity is shifting, skills pipelines are not yet following, limiting the long term- resilience of regional creative sectors. And although TV spend has risen substantially outside London, audio production has lagged significantly, and since March 2020, the BBC has moved only 1 percentage point of its audio production expenditure outside London, reaching 41%, far short of its 50% by 2028 target<sup>20</sup>.

Longterm strategies covering skills, SMEs, training, and local industry development are essential for ensuring that regional production drives real economic impact, not just compliance with quotas. While the BBC's Across the UK programme has shifted spending, it lacks clear outcome

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<sup>19</sup> [The BBC's implementation of 'Across the UK'](#)

<sup>20</sup> [The BBC's implementation of 'Across the UK' \(Summary\)](#)

driven plans and robust evaluation frameworks, so measurement of the programme's success overly relies on input measures such as spend moved outside London.

Meaningful distribution across the regions and nations must ensure that any relocations translate into net new regional employment rather than roles simply being moved from London. London remains a global hub for the creative industries, and the BBC must ensure that distribution of spend, production and decision-making does not jeopardise the BBC's role in providing high-value skilled jobs, supporting dense supply chains, and anchoring one of the world's strongest creative clusters.

As the recent Traitors controversy demonstrated<sup>21</sup>, quotas as currently designed are not working effectively. Key decisions remained in London, leaving Scotland with very little genuine economic benefit. Ofcom's 'two of- -three' rule allows productions to qualify as regional even when most of the spend and crew are not actually local. This loophole allows the BBC to hit targets on paper while undermining local industry development in practice. As such, we do not believe that further quotas for production beyond the M25 would be effective.

Instead of simply requiring a 'substantive base', the commissioning process must weight local spend, local staffing (by grade), supplier usage, training commitments, and whether decision making sits in the region.

A more equitable spread of decision-making would strengthen regional industries, deliver meaningful representation for audiences, and reinforce the BBC's universal mission. The evidence on the BBC's relocation to Salford shows the strongest, most durable economic effects when decision -making authority is moved alongside production. The research<sup>22</sup> demonstrates that Salford saw local creative industry job creation because commissioning, editorial responsibility, and teams were co---located, not just because filming happened there.

Empowering regional commissioners with real budget authority would strengthen accountability, ensure that regional representation is authentic, deepen local industry ecosystems, and avoid London led productions parachuted into nations/regions with minimal local benefit. However, decisions about relocation require long-term strategies that look beyond the remit of the organisation. The BBC does not act alone, but requires the support of local partners (e.g., councils, development agencies, training bodies) to sustain long-term collaboration.

If the BBC is to fulfil its mission as a truly universal public service broadcaster, it must move beyond headline-level quota compliance and adopt a more transparent, outcomes-driven model for regional investment and governance. Bectu firmly believes that sustainable creative growth across the UK requires deeper structural change, rooted in transparent measures of local economic benefit, skills development, commissioning authority, and long-term partnership with regional institutions.

To secure a resilient, UK wide creative economy, the BBC must embed these principles across all genres and nations, ensuring that its future strategy strengthens, not simply redistributes, the foundations of public service broadcasting for the decades ahead.

## The BBC's role in the wider Creative Industries

***Question 21. What, if anything, do you think the BBC could do to fill skills gaps in the creative sector? Please provide any relevant evidence, where possible.***

***Question 22. If you represent an organisation that has worked with the BBC in the past, please share your reflections and provide evidence on your experience of how your partnership has worked and how it could be improved. You may wish to consider how you aligned vision and goals for the partnership, trust, communication, transparency, decision-making, or other aspects of partnership working.***

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<sup>21</sup> [The Traitors: BBC Scotland writes to committee about regional production - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Multipliers from a Major Public Sector Relocation: The BBC Moves to Salford](#)

**Question 23. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation with an interest in R&D (e.g. a production company, university, a technology hardware company), how would you like to see the BBC supporting innovation? Please provide relevant evidence, where possible. In your answer, you may wish to consider any specific areas where you think it should focus its leadership; what point of the R&D lifecycle is the BBC's support most valuable; and how would you like the BBC to partner with organisations like yours in R&D.**

**Question 24. If you represent an organisation in the creative industries, please share your reflections on your experience of the current market impact regulation process and how it could be improved. Please provide relevant evidence, where possible.**

The BBC acts as one of the UK's most significant incubators of creative talent, placing the UK as a global leader, with one of the most highly skilled and versatile workforces in the industry, who create some of the most renowned programmes in the world, commissioned and streamed by our public service broadcasters. This world class reputation in audio, TV and film production plays an important role in promoting Global Britain abroad, demonstrating a thriving and confident creative industries sector in the UK, and contributes towards growth across the regions and nations.

The BBC is already one of the UK's most significant engines for skills development and makes an incredible social contribution to the UK's creative industries, with a long-standing commitment to skills, training and talent development. In 2024/25, the BBC spent £11.76 million on training which benefits not only BBC staff, but freelancers and the wider sector as a whole<sup>23</sup>, and we would welcome a sustained focus on training and skills development in the next charter.

The BBC has long functioned as a cornerstone of the UK's creative skills pipeline, but the current environment demands an even sharper focus on closing skills gaps while actively nurturing and retaining talent. The UK's creative and screen sectors continue to face shortages in technical, editorial, production and digital roles at mid and senior levels. Against this backdrop, the BBC's training mission must balance two aims: building new capacity where gaps are most acute and maintaining the high calibre talent that underpins the organisation's distinctiveness and public value. The BBC's scale, reach and infrastructure mean it is uniquely positioned to support both, acting not only as an employer, but as a systemwide talent incubator whose training investment influences the entire UK creative economy.

This requires focusing skills development on the significant proportion of the UK's creative workforce who operate on a freelance or project-based mode, as well as in house staff. For every staff role the BBC trains internally, there are many more freelancers whose skills, professionalism and judgement directly shape the BBC's output. Focusing training solely on employees' risks leaving freelancers, who often work across BBC productions, without access to the same standards, tools or development pathways. A modern BBC talent strategy therefore needs to better integrate freelancers: offering access to core training modules, safety and compliance learning, editorial standards refreshers, and skills development in emerging areas like AI assisted production. This levels the playing field, reinforces BBC values across every contributor, and strengthens the wider creative labour market that the BBC depends on.

Further, in setting targets for training and development, this must be about the wider skills pipeline and not a compliance tick-box exercise. The BBC must reaffirm that training is a proactive tool for strengthening editorial judgement, safeguarding standards, and enabling staff and freelancers to adapt to technological and regulatory change rather than asking "Did they do the training?" when failures occur. This is especially urgent in relation to the adoption of AI tools. Staff and freelancers must be supported not only to comply with policy, but to understand the ethical, creative and operational implications of AI in production, verification, content generation and audience interactions.

And while we commend the fantastic work the BBC does in developing entry-routes to the creative industries, including its commitment to hiring hundreds of apprentices each year, we

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/documents/bbc-annual-report-and-accounts-24-25.pdf>

would urge caution in a skills strategy that centres on entry level skills without strengthening the skills pipeline and addressing the precarity that is too often the norm for creative careers. The recent screen industry slowdown has exemplified this problem, where reduced production volume, delayed commissions and compressed job opportunities limit progression routes for early career entrants. Relying too heavily on entry level schemes risks creating a bottleneck: bringing people in without enabling them to move up. The BBC therefore needs complementary investment in midcareer retraining, specialist upskilling, craft and technical pathways, and leadership development. Sustaining a world leading creative workforce requires more than feeding the pipeline; it requires ensuring people can build long-term, high-quality careers within it.

In this regard, we strongly support the green paper's proposals to work in partnership with its third-party suppliers, education providers, industry bodies and other public service media providers to help address skills gaps across the sector. This must include working with Trade Unions to identify genuine skill gaps and supporting workers after career breaks, supporting job sharing and upskilling the next generation of workers. The BBC already plays a vital role in cross-industry schemes such as the BFI's Screen Sector Skills Task Force, and the BBC's partnerships with ScreenSkills, the National Film and Television School and the Local News Partnerships have a huge impact across the whole industry.

While enhanced partnership opportunities between public service media providers may offer clear benefits, Bectu would expect robust safeguards to ensure such arrangements strengthen the BBC's public-service mission, protect the jobs and skills of both staff and freelancers, and preserve accountability for editorial and creative standards. As such, any evolution of the competition regulatory framework must be designed to support collaboration without compromising the BBC's unique contribution to the UK's creative economy or the security, development and progression of the people whose skills underpin it.

## 5. Sustainable and Fair Funding

### Purpose and Use of the Licence Fee

***Question 25. To what extent do you agree that the licence fee should continue to fund a wide range of services and output that aim to inform, educate and entertain audiences?***

***Question 26. To what extent do you agree that the BBC should use the funding it receives through the licence fee to deliver a broad range of benefits to the UK? This could include objectives such as investing in the nations and regions to drive growth across the UK and developing skills that support the creative economy.***

A sustainable, fair and independent funding model is fundamental to the BBC's ability to deliver its public purposes and provide universal access to high quality, non-commercial content. With over 90% of UK adults and 80% of young adults using the BBC weekly, and almost the entire population accessing it monthly, the BBC remains- one of the most widely used public services in the UK<sup>24</sup>.

The licence fee is the only funding mechanism capable of maintaining this universality. Alternative models such as subscription or advertising would fundamentally undermine the BBC's civic mission, reducing reach, compromising impartiality, and pushing content towards what is profitable rather than what is socially valuable. Stable, inflation linked licence fee funding is essential for sustaining the BBC's educational services, its local and regional provision, children's content, trusted news, and the cultural output that underpins the UK's creative economy.

The objectives of any future BBC funding settlement must centre on universality, stability, and reinvestment across the UK. A properly funded BBC should continue to drive economic growth by investing in the nations and regions, supporting local production hubs, and creating high quality jobs both in and outside of London. Longterm, inflation linked funding is vital for the BBC's role as

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<sup>24</sup> <https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/reports/reports/the-bbc-across-the-uk.pdf>

an incubator of British talent, enabling predictable commissioning cycles, skills development, and opportunities for the freelance workforce on which the sector depends.

Sustained funding is also essential for the BBC's educational mission, from children's programming to digital learning resources that support schools and learners of all ages. Years of political uncertainty around the licence fee have undermined planning, precipitated cuts to local services, and increased insecurity for workers. To protect the BBC's independence and future, any discussion of alternative models must be transparent, evidence based, and insulated from political pressure, potentially through an independent review body or long-term funding settlement that ensures stability for staff and delivers for audiences nationwide.

## Alternative or Supplementary Funding Models

***To what extent do you agree or disagree that BBC content or services should carry advertising, bearing in mind how this could provide a new income stream for the BBC, how it might impact the audience experience and the impact on other broadcasters?***

***Would you be willing to pay for a BBC top-up subscription service focused on premium and entertainment content, in addition to your licence fee, assuming it was a similar price to other popular video-on-demand subscription services?***

Bectu does not support the introduction of advertising on BBC content or services. Despite many attempts to undermine the licence fee, proponents of alternative funding models have failed to demonstrate how the BBC would fulfil its unique and essential role whilst safeguarding its impartiality and universality.

The BBC's ability to serve the whole population equally, regardless of income, geography or demographic background, depends on its freedom from commercial pressures. Introducing advertising would erode the BBC's universality, shifting it closer to the model of commercial broadcasters and diminishing the sense of the BBC as a shared public good. It would also undermine the editorial independence and distinctiveness that viewers and listeners have long valued.

Advertising is also not a reliable or sustainable source of income. The advertising market is increasingly volatile, with revenues fluctuating sharply in response to economic trends. At a time when the wider broadcasting sector is already struggling with declining advertising income, bringing the BBC into this market would add competition for a shrinking pool rather than strengthen overall investment in UK content. This would place additional strain on commercial broadcasters and the production sector at large, intensifying existing pressures rather than alleviating them.

Introducing advertising would also diminish the audience experience. The BBC's freedom from commercial interruption is one of the qualities that differentiates it from global streaming platforms and commercial channels. Audiences trust the BBC because it is not driven by the need to maximise revenue or tailor output to advertisers' interests. Advertising would weaken that sense of independence and would compromise the clarity and consistency of the viewing experience.

Bectu also does not support the introduction of a top up subscription service in addition to the licence fee. The licence fee remains the most secure, fair and sustainable foundation for BBC funding, and it enables the BBC to plan for the long term, invest in a wide range of genres, and maintain a stable workforce. A subscription model, whether applied to a small portion of content or a premium tier, introduces instability into the funding base and would increase the financial uncertainty that already affects staffing, commissioning and the wider creative economy.

A top up subscription would undermine the principle of universality. The BBC's job is not to compete with the likes of Netflix or Amazon. The BBC's role is to provide content that is available to everyone, reflecting and serving all communities. Introducing paywalls or premium tiers risks deepening inequality in access to culture and information, particularly for lower income households for whom even a modest subscription could present a barrier. Over time, this would

create a two-tier system in which only some audiences can access certain BBC programming, weakening the BBC's role as a unifying national institution.

Such a model would also shift the BBC towards a more commercial mindset, placing pressure on the organisation to prioritise revenue generating premium content over its broader public service obligations. This change would erode the founding principles of the BBC and jeopardise its ability to serve diverse audiences with impartial news, educational material, and content that represents the full spectrum of UK life.

## Fairness and Support for Households

***To what extent do you agree that the scope of the licence fee should be reformed to support the BBC's long-term sustainability, which could involve requiring more households to pay but with each paying less?***

***To what extent do you agree or disagree that new concessions for households facing significant financial pressures should be introduced?***

Bectu believes the overriding priority for the licence fee is to ensure stable, predictable, long-term funding that allows the BBC to maintain its public service remit, support its workforce, and invest confidently in UK content. Any reform to the scope of the licence fee must therefore be judged on whether it protects or undermines this core stability. We would not support reforms that shift the BBC closer to market driven or commercial frameworks, or that risk underfunding the services relied upon across the UK. Bectu would also be concerned about changes that introduce administrative complexity, political uncertainty, or revenue volatility.

However, ensuring that the BBC remains a universal public service is critical. If broadening the base of contributors, with individuals paying less, strengthens universality and fairness without eroding long-term stability, independence, or the BBC's ability to plan, then such proposals could be explored. But this cannot come at the expense of the BBC's editorial independence or its capacity to deliver trusted, UK made content and to support the UK's highly talented workforce that uphold the creative industries.

Concessions that protect low-income households may appear to serve the BBC's universality, but where they lead to service cuts, they undermine the BBC's ability to deliver for all audiences. These must be treated as welfare measures and funded by government, not the BBC.

Our experience during the over-75s concession demonstrates the consequences of shifting welfare responsibilities onto the broadcaster. This led the BBC should an unfunded annual cost of £745 million, around 18% of the BBC's service budget, leading to cuts, reduced local provision, and pressure on public service programming.

Decisions on social policy should not be delegated to an organisation that is supposed to remain independent of government. We believe that targeted concessions may serve the BBC and its audiences, but they must be funded by government, so they do not undermine universality, investment, workforce stability, or the BBC's ability to fulfil its public service mission.

## Compliance and Technology

***To what extent do you agree or disagree that technology should be used to support compliance, for example by requiring households using BBC iPlayer to enter details from their TV licence?***

Rising evasion, now estimated at 12.5% and costing more than £1.1bn, poses a clear risk to the BBC's financial sustainability, and modernising collection systems is essential to ensure fairness for those who already pay. Approaches such as linking BBC iPlayer use to a TV licence account could form part of a more up to date and efficient framework, provided they are designed in a way that is simple, proportionate, and user friendly. In this sense, technology can support a futureproof system that reduces drift toward evasion without creating unnecessary barriers to access.

However, Bectu's broader view is that compliance cannot be driven by technology alone. Evasion is strongly linked to wider issues of public disengagement, declining visibility of the BBC's value, and the political instability that has surrounded the licence fee. Bectu has consistently argued that rebuilding trust through better communication, stronger representation of diverse audiences, and reducing the politicisation of the BBC's funding is just as important as changes to enforcement. People are more likely to pay when they understand the value delivered and feel included in a genuinely universal service. For that reason, technology should be one tool in ensuring a stable, fair, and publicly supported funding model.

## Additional Views on the BBC's Funding Model

*Do you have any other views on the BBC's funding model that you wish to share? In your response, you may wish to explain why you agree or disagree with the potential changes above or suggest a different funding model.*

### **BBC World Service**

Bectu has been clear that the BBC World Service is a vital part of the UK's global soft power architecture and must receive secure, long-term funding from government. Its trusted, impartial journalism projects British values globally and reaches communities with little access to free media. Its vast global reach, built over nearly a century, gives the UK an international presence unmatched by any other British institution, making the BBC central to how the UK is perceived internationally.

This influence is strategically significant, as audiences who rely on the World Service tend to view the UK more favourably, contributing directly to Britain's diplomatic, cultural and security interests. The World Service strengthens the UK's reputation for fairness, accuracy and independence at a time of rising global disinformation<sup>25</sup>. However, funding cuts and service reductions threaten this asset just when its value is greatest, underscoring the need for secure, long-term investment to maintain- the UK's global influence.

The scale of influence that the World service holds must be matched with tangible financial support to ensure the BBC can continue delivering trusted journalism worldwide. Previous Government driven funding squeezes on the World service have resulted in service closures, job losses and instability for staff. These cuts not only harm workers but damage the UK's reputation internationally and limit the BBC's ability to provide essential, independent news at moments of crisis.

### **BBC Studios**

As demonstrated by the BBC's expansion of Bluey into a global lifestyle brand, generating a record £2.16bn in BBC Studios commercial revenue last year<sup>26</sup>, as well as the success of BritBox International which has reported a 20% year-on-year revenue growth, Bectu recognises that BBC Studios can play a vital role in strengthening the Corporation's finances.

BBC Studios must be given enough flexibility to take financial risks, such as the acquisition of BritBox, while ensuring short term risks do not undermine the BBC's mission in the long run. Any expansion must be carefully managed to ensure that commercial growth does not compromise the BBC's public -service remit, workforce stability, or its wider contribution to the UK creative ecosystem.

While financially successful, this kind of commercialisation can incentivise the BBC to prioritise content with international appeal, high retail or franchise value at the expense of distinctive, experimental, or culturally important programming that would never deliver similar commercial returns. And commercial restructuring associated with an expansion of BBC Studios could lead to job losses, offshoring, or erosion of terms and conditions if profit pressures intensify. If more of

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<sup>25</sup> [https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10209358/1/IGP\\_BBC\\_World\\_Service\\_DIGITAL.pdf](https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10209358/1/IGP_BBC_World_Service_DIGITAL.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/jul/21/bbc-targets-adults-in-the-latest-adventure-for-its-top-dog-bluey>

the BBC's output is funnelled into commercially driven pipelines, with reliance on global brand exploitation rather than secure, inhouse public service production, UK based creative workers may face greater precarity. This, in turn, risks displacing investment in local storytelling, skills pipelines, and innovation that do not generate equivalent commercial returns but are essential to a healthy public service broadcasting landscape.

### **Minority language broadcasting**

Minority language broadcasting, including S4C and MG Alba, is essential to Public Service broadcasting and the BBC's mission. All nations and regions require secure, inflation-linked public funding, strong independence protections, and commissioning structures capable of sustaining local creative economies and linguistic communities.

The current funding model for S4C, where the vast majority of its budget is routed through the BBC licence fee, undermines the channel's autonomy and exposes Welsh-language broadcasting to political and institutional interference. The 2010 shift of 90% of S4C's budget to the BBC, followed by the 2022 decision to move the remaining government funding into the licence fee and require the BBC to absorb an additional £7.5m per year, proved its long-standing warnings correct: these changes have entrenched uncertainty, weakened accountability, and left S4C dependent on BBC internal pressures rather than a secure statutory settlement.

Bectu therefore calls for a new, properly protected funding system, one that treats Welsh-language broadcasting as a core cultural obligation and ensures that the BBC's obligation to provide ten hours of Welsh-language programming per week is securely and sustainably funded.

Although the Scottish Government announced an increase of £1.8 million for Gaelic broadcasting in 2025-26, bringing MG Alba's annual funding to £14.8 million, this uplift still sits within a system lacking the statutory protections afforded to Welsh language broadcasting. Gaelic media generates significant economic returns and supports hundreds of jobs across Scotland, particularly in island communities, yet MG Alba continues to operate without a guaranteed PSB framework in law, leaving it exposed to annual budgetary pressures and without secure prominence or a clearly defined long-term funding mechanism.