



British Broadcasting Corporation
Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA

From the Director-General

10 March 2025

Clare Adamson MSP
Convener of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

by email: ceeac.committee@parliament.scot

Dear Ms Adamson,

Thank you for your letter dated 7 February 2025 and for the opportunity to appear before the Committee on 23 January 2025 to speak to the BBC's Annual Report 2023/24 alongside Hayley Valentine, Director, BBC Scotland and Rhona Burns, Finance Director, BBC Financial Planning and Insight.

You have requested more information on a number of areas and I have responded to each of those below.

Coverage of Scottish Parliament proceedings on BBC Scotland

The BBC's mission is to act in the public interest, serving all audiences through the provision of impartial, high-quality and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain. Providing impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them is key to the BBC's public service mission.

In delivering content which fulfils our mission we respond to changing audience needs and habits. We track audience behaviour carefully and shape our offer to make content available in ways audiences want to consume it and ensure we are delivering value for the licence fee payer.

We provide extensive political coverage of Scottish politics across online, TV and radio in specialist programmes and in our general news content. Our offer includes, but is not restricted to:

- *Politics Scotland* broadcast Wednesday and Thursday on BBC One Scotland with the wide audience reach and share of that channel; Ofcom Media Nations Report for Scotland (2024) reported that BBC One is the most used news source for people in Scotland.
- News programmes and bulletins including BBC One Scotland's *Reporting Scotland* throughout the day and BBC Radio Scotland's *Good Morning Scotland*, *Lunchtime Live*, *Drivetime* and regular bulletins and we provide content for *Today* and *Yesterday in Parliament* for Radio 4 including a weekly feature on First Minister's Questions.

- News online coverage of the Scottish Parliament and expanded BBC News live pages for First Minister's Questions and major parliamentary events and statements, including the Scottish Budget.
- The BBC Parliament channel shows numerous debates from the Scottish Parliament chamber as well as ministerial questions and answer sessions, alongside also screening First Minister's Questions. This coverage is also available on TV, on the BBC Parliament website and via the BBC iPlayer. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/live/bbcparliament>
- Scottish Parliament coverage on the BBC iPlayer has been extended and is now available for 12 months.
- More broadly, current political issues and Scottish politicians feature on: *Debate Night* on the BBC Scotland channel; *The Sunday Show* (30 mins) on BBC One Scotland and broadcast simultaneously on BBC Radio Scotland which then continues as a two-hour radio programme.
- BBC coverage of the Scottish Parliament and political news is also provided in Gaelic through BBC ALBA's Gaelic language news programme *An Là* broadcast seven days a week, through radio bulletins and programmes on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal and online.

Our political coverage has evolved and will continue to evolve in response to audience feedback, changing consumption patterns and against a backdrop of challenging financial circumstances. The BBC's strategy to provide Value for All means refocusing resources towards offering audiences a greater range of services and content through our digital platforms including BBC iPlayer, BBC Sounds and online. As part of that strategy we are investing more in BBC News live pages online and we have launched a new visualised podcast *Scotcast* available on BBC Radio Scotland, the BBC Scotland channel, BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds.

Live streaming of Committees and Chamber debates is available on the Scottish Parliament's website on Scottish Parliament TV. It would not be cost neutral for the BBC to duplicate this coverage and we must continue to deliver best value for the licence fee payer. Furthermore, the BBC Scotland channel is not licensed to broadcast at all during the morning except in exceptional circumstances. In regard to broadcasts in the afternoon, in the BBC Scotland channel's Public Interest Test approved by our regulator, Ofcom, it was stated "The channel's 'core' programme content would be shown between 7pm and 12 midnight" with programming shown between 12noon and 7pm limited to 150 hours a year. The channel, therefore, can broadcast fewer than three hours per week of daytime content and the BBC is not expecting to have any further discussions with Ofcom about changes to the regulatory position of the channel for the remainder of the BBC Charter period.

Details of BBC Network spend in Scotland

Of the £114 million BBC Network spend reported in the 2023/24 BBC Annual Report and Accounts, £105m was on network Television, £6m on network Radio and £3m on Online.

The Radio and Online spend is calculated as actual BBC spend in Scotland. The network Television figure is calculated using [Ofcom's regional production criteria](#), consistent with

previous years. Ofcom reporting is based on calendar year with 9% of spend reported for 2023 against a target of 8%; the BBC appeared before the Committee in relation to the BBC's Annual Report and Accounts for 2023/24 which runs from April 2023 to March 2024, spend in the financial year represents c.12% of eligible network spend.

Under the terms of engagement with the independent production sector the BBC is not privy to detailed production budgets, and therefore the Ofcom framework provides the appropriate methodology on which to allocate spend within a Nation or Region, recognising the complexity of television production where multiple filming and employment locations are often required. This approach is mirrored by other PSBs in their equivalent reports.

Based on network programmes transmitted in FY2023/24, we can confirm that: c.85% of network productions met two or more criteria in Scotland; c.85% met the talent spend criteria; and c.65% met the production spend criteria. As such we are confident that the majority of network production spend reported as Scotland is spent in Scotland, noting that many programmes qualifying against other Nations and Regions across the UK will have also incurred spend in Scotland.

As we outlined at the Committee we are committed to building the production ecology in Scotland and ensuring all BBC commissions are positively contributing to the sector. We will also continue to increase transparency in this area, following on from the additional analysis we published in the [BBC Commissioning Supply Report 2023/24](#). In this Report, as part of our commitment to support talent development and strengthen production Across the UK, we stated our ambition to grow the volume of productions that deliver at least two of the three Ofcom criteria and reduce the volume of productions that qualify on base alone. We will be outlining further action on this in the coming weeks and will keep the Committee informed of any announcements.

Free-to-air sport/Scotland men's national football team

We are delighted to be able to confirm that the BBC has secured live television rights for Scotland men's international football matches. The BBC has agreed an exclusive deal to broadcast all Scotland men's international football matches in the run-up to the FIFA Men's World Cup 2026.

We know how important live international football is to our audience. The deal, agreed with UEFA, will include all 14 live Scotland matches, across all the European Qualifiers for the FIFA Men's World Cup 2026. Matches will be shown on BBC One Scotland and BBC iPlayer – with key fixtures also being broadcast across the UK – and will add to existing live international coverage on BBC Scotland and the BBC Sport app. The BBC's broadcast agreement also includes Wales and Northern Ireland men's international matches, the first time the broadcaster has secured live rights for all three of the UK's devolved nations.

The BBC is a longstanding supporter of free-to-air sport, however, the financial position of the BBC inevitably puts constraints on our purchasing power. There has been a near doubling of the cost of acquiring UK territory sports rights in the last decade; at the same time the BBC's core funding has reduced by 30% since 2010.

However, the BBC continues to take major sporting events to the widest possible audience. This new deal adds to the BBC's extensive football coverage in Scotland of the SPFL, Scottish FA Cup and Scottish Championship across television, radio and online. BBC Scotland provides regular live coverage of the Scottish Championship on the BBC Scotland channel, and recently secured an increase to the number of matches shown and the publication of weekly lower league highlights on the sport website. BBC Scotland and BBC ALBA have made a long-term investment supporting women's football which has helped secure increased prominence for women's football in Scotland at club and international level. The BBC supports coverage of national matches outside major tournament football with audio commentary and a live text service, which is also extended to almost all club football in Scotland. In 2024 the BBC, across BBC One Scotland, BBC Scotland channel and BBC ALBA, broadcast 410 hours of Scottish football related content, as well providing online updates, radio coverage and highlights direct to iPlayer.

The BBC supports the guiding principle of the Listed Events regime in endeavouring to make top class sport freely available to all audiences. For example, we currently hold cross-platform broadcast rights to the Men's and Women's European Football Championship Finals, the Men's FIFA World Cup Finals and the Men's Scottish FA Cup Final. However, we also recognise that there is currently no protection for on-demand (clip-based) coverage of these events and would urge the UK Government to conclude and publish the findings of its digital rights review. We strongly believe that the UK Government should recommend that on-demand rights are brought within scope of the Listed Events regime in recognition of how audiences now engage with sporting action.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Davie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tim Davie
Director-General