



BBC Royal Charter Review:

Bectu Submission to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee Inquiry

April 2026

About Bectu

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.

Summary

- The BBC remains a cornerstone of the UK's cultural, democratic and creative life, reaching almost the entire population with trusted, UK made content. The BBC's core purposes should remain unchanged for the next ten years, as critical national infrastructure and foundational for the creative industries.
- The BBC's role is increasingly vital in a fragmented, platform dominated environment, providing trusted news, shared civic space and representation of the whole UK.
- Universality, linked to the licence fee model, underpins the BBC's ability to reflect all audiences, champion underrepresented voices and set the cultural agenda domestically and internationally.
- The central question is not how much the BBC costs, but how to fund the kind of BBC the UK wants and needs. Funding should be judged against public value outcomes, not short-term cost savings. It has to be stable, sufficient, inflation-linked and insulated from short-term political intervention.
- Therefore, the licence fee remains the only model that sustains universality, independence and public trust. Alternative models (advertising or subscription) would narrow access, distort commissioning priorities and undermine impartiality. Reforming the license fee should ensure it is able to deliver on its public service remit. Commercial pressures risk driving "Netflixisation": homogenisation, reduced risk-taking and fewer culturally specific stories.
- The BBC cannot thrive as a narrowed institution competing on commercial terms. Commercial growth, for example through BBC Studios, should support the BBC's public service remit and not drive commissioning decisions, workforce precarity or offshoring.

- The BBC has already delivered significant savings; the scope for further efficiencies is limited. Further cost-cutting risks eroding skills, institutional knowledge and editorial quality. Any efficiencies must be directly linked to reinvestment in public service capacity, workforce conditions and long-term skills.
- Public trust depends on editorial independence, workforce conditions and transparent governance. Politicised funding decisions and Board appointments have undermined confidence in BBC independence. Governance reform should reduce political influence, strengthen accountability and embed workforce voice.
- Long-term stability, universality and independence are essential if the BBC is to serve audiences, democracy and the creative workforce over the next decade. A permanent Charter would provide stability, independence and better value for licence fee payers.

1. Purpose

The purpose of the BBC given developments in technology and choice, and the fragmentation of audiences

In the context of developments in technology and choice, and the fragmentation of audiences, the BBC has never been more important, not as a competitor to global streamers or third-party platforms, but as a universal public service that provides trusted information, shared civic space and distinctive UK-made content free at the point of use for all audiences.

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 content¹.

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 day². 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 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. 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, such as programmes like *Dreaming Whilst Black*, which began as a small web project before the BBC backed it for a full series, then generated around £4.3 million in international revenues³.

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

² [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](#)

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

As the media landscape continues to fragment, the BBC's universal public service purpose remains essential to sustaining trust, democratic engagement and cultural representation across the UK, while it remains the central infrastructure for the UK's world leading creative industries.

What will the BBC's core activities look like in ten years' time, and what will that mean for the size and scope of the BBC

In ten years' time, the fundamentals of the BBC's role will remain the same, to inform, educate and entertain. Providing impartial news, distinctive UK-made programming, cultural and educational content, and a shared civic space, but how these activities are delivered, governed and resourced will necessarily evolve in a more fragmented, digital and platform shaped media environment.

Digital services will become even more central, but this should not narrow the BBC's remit or push it towards purely commercial logics. The BBC's future activity must prioritise discoverability of public service content, on BBC platforms first, while carefully and strategically engaging with third party platforms in ways that protect editorial context, workforce conditions and public accountability. Overreliance on external platforms would weaken the BBC's direct relationship with audiences and risks undermining its public service mission.

The BBC's role as national infrastructure for the creative economy will remain a core activity. This includes commissioning across the nations and regions, sustaining skills pipelines, investing in training for staff and freelancers, and supporting a wider ecosystem of SMEs, independent producers and creative workers. In ten years' time, the BBC should still act as a system shaping institution that anchors regional creative clusters, supports high skill employment, and incubates talent across the UK, rather than retreating to a narrower or more centralised model.

The BBC will also play a more explicit leadership role in setting ethical and operational standards, particularly around the use of AI. Its core activities should include transparency about how AI is used in content creation and service delivery; safeguarding creative labour through clear standards on training data, attribution and consent; and ensuring that efficiency gains support, rather than displace, the workforce. This leadership function will be central to maintaining trust and public value across the wider media landscape.

In ten years' time, we should not see a smaller or hollowed out BBC, but one whose size and scope must remain broad enough to deliver universality, resilience and independence in a shifting media landscape. A significant contraction of the BBC's workforce, services or commissioning capacity would undermine its ability to fulfil these roles, hollow out public service journalism and weaken the wider creative economy.

We have significant concerns about the ability of the BBC to deliver on its mission if it is forced to continue making significant savings. The BBC has been forced to make significant savings in recent years, totalling £564 million since 2022/23⁴.

The recent announcement that the BBC must make another 10% efficiency savings over the next 3 years, with the potential loss of 2,000 highly skilled roles, further jeopardises the future of the organisation.

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.

The size and scope of the BBC must allow it to thrive for the next decade as a strong, independent public service broadcaster equipped to serve audiences and the creative workforce well into the future. The BBC will not succeed with a narrower remit competing on commercial terms.

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/documents/bbc-annual-report-and-accounts-24-25.pdf>

How should this be reflected in the BBC public purposes

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 economy⁵.

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%⁶. Its services and investment in the nations and regions have a multiplier effect 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.

2. Funding

Whether the funding options set out in the Green Paper are ambitious enough for the challenges that the BBC is facing now, and is likely to face in the future

It is right not to ask how the BBC is funded and to what figure, but how to fund the kind of BBC we want and need.

Funding should flow from a clear articulation of the BBC's role as a universal public service broadcaster, cultural institution and pillar of the UK's creative economy, rather than being treated as a periodic cost-containment exercise.

Over the next ten years, the BBC will be expected to operate in a far more complex and demanding environment: a fragmented media landscape dominated by global platforms; rising production costs; increased threats to trusted information; accelerating technological change; and continued pressure to reflect and serve all audiences across the UK. Meeting these expectations requires a funding model that is stable, sufficient and insulated from short-term political intervention, enabling long-term planning, investment and accountability.

A central requirement of any ten-year funding approach must be predictability. Short-term or politically driven settlements undermine the BBC's ability to plan commissioning cycles, sustain skills pipelines, invest in innovation and retain specialist staff. Repeated periods of uncertainty have already led to restructures, job losses and a hollowing-out of capacity. Over the next decade, funding must allow the BBC to move away from reactive savings and towards strategic investment in its core public service functions.

Funding must also be assessed against outcomes, not simply cost. A properly funded BBC delivers value far beyond its own services: supporting regional economies, anchoring high-skill employment, sustaining the freelance workforce, developing talent, and contributing directly to economic growth and soft power. Any model that constrains the BBC's ability to perform these roles risks weakening the wider creative industries and the public value they generate.

Crucially, the funding settlement must enable the BBC to maintain universality. Models that rely more heavily on commercial income, advertising or subscription risk narrowing access, distorting commissioning priorities and eroding public trust. Universal access to trusted news, education, children's content and UK-made cultural output are non-negotiable to the principle of universality.

Meeting future funding needs also means recognising the relationship between funding and workforce sustainability. The BBC's public purposes depend on a highly skilled workforce operating under fair, safe and sustainable conditions. Chronic underfunding and constant cuts become excessive workloads, loss of expertise, weakened editorial resilience and declining trust.

⁵ <https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/reports/reports/kpmg-economic-impact.pdf>

⁶ [2020-21.pdf \(bbc.co.uk\)](#) p.18

Funding over the next decade must therefore support fair pay, training, progression and secure career pathways for both staff and freelancers, rather than assuming further efficiencies can be absorbed indefinitely.

Arguments in favour of the licence fee being kept as the best way to fund the BBC

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 UK⁷. Any revised funding mechanism must ensure that more households contribute to the BBC's funding, matching users.

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. While we would be open to a review of the license fee and how it is administered, a 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 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.

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 2010⁸, 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 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.

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.

⁷ <https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/reports/reports/the-bbc-across-the-uk.pdf>

⁸ [VLV-Report-into-BBC-public-funding-Revised-November-2024.pdf](#)

Indeed, the BBC already faces inflation in production costs, up to 35% in some genres⁹, 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.

Bectu does not support the introduction of advertising on BBC content or services. 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.

Ideas for reforming the licence fee to provide a more sustainable income, address evasion and avoidance, and how the level of the licence fee is set

We are open to potential reforms to the license fee, including broadening the base of liability while lowering individual payments, provided this strengthens universality and fairness without introducing complexity or eroding public support. Any such reforms must avoid regressive impacts and ensure that concessions for low-income households are treated as welfare policy and funded by government, not absorbed by the BBC.

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

Arguments in favour of funding the BBC using a different model, including those not being considered in the Government consultation paper, and lessons from other countries which have moved from a licence fee to an alternative form of funding for their public service broadcaster

Some countries, such as Germany, Finland and Sweden, have replaced the licence fee with household levies or income linked contributions, which retain universality while modernising collection. Where these models have succeeded, it has been because they preserved key principles of independence, predictability and broad contribution, rather than introducing market logics.

We maintain that the BBC is the envy of the world precisely because of the strength of its current model and the scale of what it delivers. Few public broadcasters combine the BBC's reach, breadth of services, editorial ambition and cultural impact, domestically and internationally. The BBC's licence fee model continues to provide a direct and visible link between the public and the broadcaster, supporting an independent institution capable of commissioning distinctive UK made content, sustaining a worldclass creative workforce, and providing trusted news at scale in an increasingly fragmented media environment.

Any reform to the BBC's funding must start from protecting what already works: universality, independence, predictability and public value at scale. The risk is not that the BBC fails to modernise, but that it is pushed towards models that would diminish the very qualities that make it internationally admired.

Optimising the BBC's commercial activities (a) in the UK, and (b) globally

As demonstrated by the BBC Studios' expansion of Bluey, generating a record £2.16bn in commercial revenue last year¹⁰, 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 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.

Optimising the iPlayer, BBC Archive and creating Intellectual Property

The BBC Archive is a uniquely valuable national asset. The Archive should be treated as part of the BBC's public service mission, not simply as dormant content to be exploited commercially. Any optimisation should focus on greater accessibility for audiences, educators and creators, while ensuring rigorous rights management, fair remuneration and respect for contributors' work.

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/jul/21/bbc-targets-adults-in-the-latest-adventure-for-its-top-dog-bluey>

BBC iPlayer should continue to function as the BBC's primary gateway for audiences, anchoring the public's relationship with BBC content in a digital environment increasingly shaped by global platforms. Optimisation should focus on discoverability of public service content, prominence for trusted news, UK-made programming, children's and educational content, and ensuring iPlayer serves all audiences rather than replicating commercial recommendation logics.

The potential for further efficiency savings and reinvestment

The scope for further efficiency savings within the BBC must be approached with caution. The BBC has already delivered significant savings over recent years, totalling £564 million since 2022/23, alongside repeated restructures, job losses and reduced capacity across key functions. Evidence from Bectu members shows that these reductions have resulted in intensified workloads, loss of specialist expertise and increasing stress, with direct consequences for editorial standards, workplace culture and public trust.

Further efficiency measures that focus primarily on headcount reduction, outsourcing or short-term cost cutting risk undermining the BBC's ability to deliver its public purposes. There is limited scope for savings that do not erode the skilled workforce, institutional knowledge and editorial resilience on which trusted public service output depends. In this context, "efficiency" should not be equated with doing more with fewer people where staffing levels are already stretched beyond sustainable limits.

Where efficiencies are pursued, they must be clearly linked to reinvestment, not extraction. Any savings generated should be transparently reinvested to strengthen the BBC's core public service functions, including restoring capacity in news and current affairs, improving workplace standards, supporting fair pay and career progression, and investing in long-term skills development for both staff and freelancers. Reinvestment should prioritise areas where cuts have created gaps that directly affect quality, safety, and accountability.

Technological change, including the adoption of AI, may offer opportunities to improve workflows or reduce duplication, but this must not be used as a substitute for human judgement, editorial oversight or skilled creative labour. Efficiency gains from technology must flow back into the organisation in the form of time, training and support for workers, rather than being treated as a justification for further reductions in jobs or pay. Meaningful efficiency requires workforce and trade union engagement, and transparency to ensure changes genuinely improve how work is done.

Ultimately, the BBC's long-term sustainability depends less on finding new efficiency savings and more on securing stable, sufficient funding that allows it to plan, invest and operate confidently. A BBC that is permanently cost-cutting cannot deliver universal public value, maintain trust, or fulfil its role as a cornerstone of the UK's creative economy. Any discussion of efficiency must therefore be embedded within a broader commitment to reinvestment, workforce capability and public accountability.

Funding of the 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 disinformation¹¹. 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.

3. Trust and relevance

How the BBC can be made more valued and trusted by audiences across the UK, in particular by those who do not see value in the licence fee

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.

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.

¹¹ https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10209358/1/IGP_BBC_World_Service_DIGITAL.pdf

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.

Improving the BBC's engagement and consultation processes with audiences, in particular where there is less engagement with the BBC

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.

Attracting young audiences

While we understand the importance of attracting young audiences, their existing engagement with the BBC should not be underestimated. 80% of young adults using the BBC weekly¹² and between 2024-25, BBC children's content was streamed 2.2 billion times on BBC iPlayer, and along with Bitesize reached over half of all 0-15s in the country every week, around 6 million children. iPlayer has seen a 30% growth in viewing hours of their children's content over two years, with a total of 411m viewer hours in 24/25.

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.

¹² <https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/reports/reports/the-bbc-across-the-uk.pdf>

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.

4. Across the UK

The balance of its activities, including decision making, throughout the UK

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.

Long-term 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 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 demonstrated¹³, 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

¹³ [The Traitors: BBC Scotland writes to committee about regional production - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

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 demonstrates that Salford saw local creative industry job creation because commissioning, editorial responsibility, and teams were collocated, 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 provision of services in minority languages

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.

Creating a workforce that is representative of the UK

Creating a workforce that is representative of the UK is essential to the BBC's ability to fulfil its public service mission, maintain trust with audiences, and deliver content that genuinely reflects the lives and experiences of people across the country. Representation is not only a matter of fairness within the organisation, but a core condition for editorial integrity, authenticity and public accountability.

The BBC's workforce must reflect the diversity of the UK in terms of geography, socioeconomic background, ethnicity, disability, gender, age and other lived experiences. This is particularly important given the BBC's unique role as a national institution with a universal remit. Audiences are more likely to trust and engage with content when the people making editorial, creative and strategic decisions bring a broad range of perspectives and experiences, and when those perspectives are embedded across all levels of the organisation rather than concentrated in junior roles.

Achieving a representative workforce requires more than entry-level diversity initiatives. While pathways into the BBC are important, genuine representation depends on addressing structural barriers to progression, retention and job security, particularly for freelancers, disabled workers, those from working-class backgrounds, and people based outside London. Persistent precarity, unpaid or insecure early-career routes, long working hours and limited access to training disproportionately exclude groups who cannot afford to absorb these risks, narrowing the pool of voices shaping BBC output.

A representative workforce also depends on the BBC maintaining a genuinely UK-wide presence. Decision-making authority, commissioning power and senior roles must be meaningfully distributed across the nations and regions, rather than remaining concentrated in London. This strengthens local creative economies, supports inclusive growth, and ensures that regional voices shape content from the outset rather than being added as an afterthought.

Finally, future workforce strategies must take account of technological change, including the adoption of AI. Without careful governance, automation and efficiency pressures risk reinforcing existing inequalities by deskilling roles and narrowing entry and advancement points.

5. Future of Public Service Media

Areas of media policy and regulation that should be considered in parallel to BBC Charter Review, including:

i) The relationships between the BBC and (a) wider UK Public Service Media, and (b) international media, such as the streamers and video sharing platforms;

The BBC does not operate in isolation. Decisions taken through Charter Review will interact directly with wider media regulation, industrial policy and technological change.

The relationship between the BBC and the rest of the UK Public Service Media (PSM) system should be considered strategically rather than competitively. The BBC is a cornerstone of the wider PSB ecology, sustaining shared standards in commissioning, training, editorial integrity and public value. Policy should support collaboration where it enhances public value, such as through skills development, while safeguarding each organisation's distinct remit and independence.

At the same time, the BBC operates in a media environment dominated by global streamers and video sharing platforms with very different incentives, scale and regulatory obligations. These platforms exert increasing influence over audience discovery, advertising markets, production costs and labour conditions, but are not held to equivalent public service obligations. The next charter must therefore be considered alongside platform regulation, prominence rules and competition policy to ensure a level playing field, protect the visibility of UK public service content, and prevent the BBC being pushed into commercial behaviours that undermine its mission.

ii) The priorities in the Government's Creative Industries Sector Plan and Ofcom's Transmission Critical report;

Public service media plays a foundational role in the UK's creative economy. The BBC is not simply a broadcaster, but anchors skills pipelines, regional creative clusters, high-skill employment and innovation that maintain the creative industries as a priority growth area.

Charter Review must therefore align with industrial policy objectives on skills, growth and resilience. This includes recognising the BBC's role in training both staff and freelancers, investing in skills development, supporting SMEs and independent producers, and sustaining production activity across the nations and regions.

Crucially, as Ofcom makes clear in its Transmission Critical report, the BBC's future depends on funding and regulatory frameworks that enable long-term planning and investment in workforce capacity, not short-term efficiency drives that erode skills, public value and the resilience of the wider sector.

iii) The transition from traditional TV distribution (DTT) to TV via the internet (IPTV); and

The BBC should continue to play a central role in ensuring that public service content remains free at the point of use, widely accessible, and easily discoverable, regardless of platform or distribution technology.

DDT is a key piece of public service broadcasting and currently has a broader reach than IPTV. Any transition must ensure PSBs are protected by strong Prominence on streaming platforms.

iv) The challenges and opportunities of Artificial Intelligence

The BBC is uniquely placed to set sector wide benchmarks for ethical, transparent and human centred use of AI in media. However, this leadership role can only be realised if wider policy frameworks support fair remuneration, consent based use of creative works, protection against deskilling and displacement, and meaningful workforce participation in deployment decisions.

Without parallel action on AI governance, there is a risk that efficiency pressures drive adoption in ways that undermine skills, jobs and trust, both within the BBC and across the wider creative industries.

6. An independent and accountable BBC

The balance between using Charter Review to increase the BBC's independence and at the same time obligating the BBC to do more and specific activities

Charter Review should be used first and foremost to strengthen the BBC's independence from political and short-term intervention. While it is legitimate to expect the BBC to deliver clearly defined public purposes, these should be framed at the level of outcomes rather than prescribing specific activities or outputs.

Overly detailed obligations risk narrowing editorial judgement, distorting commissioning priorities and undermining trust. Any additional requirements placed on the BBC must therefore demonstrably support its public service mission, be compatible with editorial independence, and be matched by stable, long-term funding that enables delivery without increasing workforce precarity.

The effectiveness of the current Governance arrangements for the BBC including the processes for appointments to the Board

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 Gibb¹⁴. 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 outputs¹⁵. 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.

We would like to see the appointments process strengthened through ensuring worker voice. We believe that an independent panel, which includes worker voice in the form of at least two members with experience of representing workers at the BBC, for example, as former trade union representative or officials, to protect the BBC from government interference and guarantee greater independence.

The difference a permanent Charter would make to the average licence fee payer

A permanent charter would make a significant difference to what licence fee payers get in return, and how secure that value is over time.

¹⁴ [Bectu calls for removal of Robbie Gibb from BBC Board | Bectu](#)

¹⁵ [Bectu calls for removal of Robbie Gibb from BBC Board | Bectu](#)

A permanent Charter would provide stability. At present, the BBC's funding, remit and governance are reopened every ten years, creating repeated periods of political uncertainty. These moments often lead to short-term funding deals, sudden obligations, or last-minute settlements that drive cuts and disruption.

Service reductions, loss of local provision, and less predictable quality all have a direct impact on the license payer. A permanent Charter would allow the BBC to plan and invest in services that audiences rely on. Long-term certainty allows the BBC to invest properly in skills, technology and infrastructure for a BBC that serves everyone, everywhere.

If the Charter is made permanent, what part of the arrangement between the Government and the BBC should still be subject to periodic review

The BBC's independence from political interference, its universal remit, and its status as a public service broadcaster acting in the public interest should not be reopened on a periodic basis. These are foundational principles that a permanent Charter should secure precisely in order to remove them from recurring political negotiation.

However, periodic review is essential to ensure that public service obligations continue to operate effectively in a changing digital ecosystem, alongside regulated platforms and global intermediaries. In this context, review should also focus on whether funding remains sufficient to meet the BBC's public purposes, reflects inflation and cost pressures, and supports long-term investment.

These reviews should be designed to support predictability and value rather than opportunities to question to remit and role of the BBC and avoid repeating the instability and politicisation that has characterised successive Charter renewal cycles.

The effectiveness of mechanisms for holding the BBC to account, including by the public, Parliament, Ofcom, and the devolved administrations

Accountability mechanisms must strengthen public confidence without compromising independence. While Parliament, Ofcom and the devolved administrations play vital roles in oversight, accountability breaks down when it is used to exert political pressure through funding settlements, appointments or overly prescriptive intervention. The most effective accountability frameworks are transparent, outcomes-focused and rooted in public value, with clear safeguards that protect editorial independence and reflect the experiences of the workforce delivering the BBC's mission.

7. Trusted news and the BBC

Providing accurate and impartial news and current affairs, with high editorial standards

The BBC's role countering misinformation and disinformation

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.

Supporting local news reporting

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 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.