

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
Thursday 23 January 2025
3rd Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

BBC Annual Report

1. The BBC presents its annual report and accounts to the Scottish Parliament, and the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee takes evidence on this from BBC Scotland each year – the last time being on [18 January 2024](#).
2. The BBC's most recent report and accounts (for 2023/24) were published in [July 2024](#). Ofcom is the BBC's regulator and its annual report was published in [November 2024](#) and also covers 2023/24.
3. Today's witnesses are—
 - Tim Davie, Director-General, BBC
 - Hayley Valentine, Director, BBC Scotland
 - Rhona Burns, Finance Director, BBC Financial Planning & Insight
4. The Committee will also be hearing from Ofcom at a future meeting, and is expected to have a consultative role in the forthcoming process of reviewing the BBC charter.
5. There is a SPICe briefing at **Annexe A**.

Clerks to the Committee
January 2025

The logo for SPICe is a purple rounded rectangle with a gradient. The text 'SPICe' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font.

The Information Centre
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

BBC Annual Report and Accounts

23 January 2025

Background

Following the Smith Commission, a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) was agreed between the BBC, the UK Government's Department of Media, Culture and Sport, the Scottish Government and (through a [motion agreed on 23 June 2015](#)) the Scottish Parliament.

The MoU committed the BBC to lay annual reports and accounts in the Scottish Parliament and to submit evidence and/or appear before Committees of the Scottish Parliament on matters relating to Scotland in the same way it does for Committees of the UK Parliament. This arrangement was subsequently incorporated into the BBC's Charter. The Committee [last took evidence regarding the BBC's annual report in January 2024](#).

The [BBC's most recent annual report and accounts](#) cover the year 2023/24 and were published in July 2024.

Ofcom regulate the activities of the BBC. It also produces an annual report on the BBC following the publication of the BBC's annual reports. The most recent was [published in November 2024 and also referred to 2023/24 financial year](#).

BBC Charter

Royal Charter

The BBC's mission is set out in the [Royal Charter](#) and 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." The current charter began

on 1 January 2017 and ends on 31 December 2027. The Charter sets out the BBC's five purposes. These are:

- To provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them
- To support learning for people of all ages
- To show the most creative, highest quality and distinctive output and services
- To reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom's nations and regions and, in doing so, support the creative economy across the United Kingdom
- To reflect the United Kingdom, its culture and values to the world

The BBC reports on these purposes and some of the indicators used in the annual report relate to these purposes directly.

In January 2024 the UK Department for Culture Media & Sport published the [BBC Mid-Term Review](#). It made 39 recommendations for the BBC and Ofcom to update the [Framework Agreement that sits alongside the Charter](#). The changes included:

- Requiring Ofcom to regulate the BBC's online public service material
- Changes to the oversight of the BBC complaints process
- New powers to Ofcom to use different types of assessment in relation to the BBC

Charter Review

The mid-term review also looked ahead to the full review of the Charter in 2027. It states that the full review will include:

“an opportunity to assess the BBC's progress on its 'Across the UK' strategy, published in March 2021, including looking at how successfully the BBC has delivered on plans to move power and decision-making away from London and into the nations and regions.” (p.100)

On 17 December 2024, Stephanie Peacock, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), [said the UK Government intends to launch the Charter review during 2025. This would involve, among other things, a consultation exercise and engagement with the devolved governments:](#)

“the Government will launch a charter review with the aim of addressing some of the challenges we are discussing today and delivering a renewed charter by the end of 2027 that will support the BBC not just to survive but to thrive long into the future...It will be an opportunity to consider what the BBC is for, how it delivers for audiences and how it should be funded, governed and regulated against a rapidly changing media environment. The charter review

will also look to uphold the BBC's independence and ensure that it maintains the public's trust...

"Charter review is a well-established process, and our next step will be to publish the terms of reference... setting out the objectives we wish to achieve. We will ensure that we take all relevant views into account as part of the review... Once we have consulted widely, considered the views of stakeholders and assessed the evidence, we will outline our policy direction for the next BBC charter in a White Paper in 2026.

"There will also be an opportunity to place a draft charter before both Houses before the current charter expires in 2027. The devolved Governments will be a key part of the conversation."

The Scottish Parliament, along with the Scottish Government, has a formal consultative role in the process of reviewing the BBC charter. The [Smith Commission](#) requires that the following happens:

- DCMS consult the Scottish Government on the draft terms of reference for the Charter Review in advance of their publication (1st half 2025)
- DCMS consult the Scottish Government throughout the process of reviewing the Charter
- The Scottish Government lay the draft Charter and Framework Agreement before the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Parliament can do a 'take note' debate on the content (2027)
- DCMS consult the Scottish Government before recommending to His Majesty in Council that the draft Charter is granted (2027)

The brackets provide potential timings based on the UK Government statement discussed above. The statement also provides the following draft timeline for the process:

- 2025 - Terms of reference published before the summer
- 2025 - Public consultation launched in the summer
- 2026 – White Paper published
- 2027 – draft Charter laid in UK and SG parliaments before being granted later that year

During the last Charter renewal process, the Education and Culture Committee (which had the culture remit in Session 4) conducted an [inquiry on BBC charter renewal](#) from December 2015-February 2016. After the election in 2016, the then Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee continued this work with an inquiry on the [Draft Royal Charter for the Continuance of the BBC](#).

The Draft Royal Charter and Framework Agreement was debated in the Scottish Parliament on [6 October 2016](#).

License fee

The BBC is currently funded through a licence fee that was conceived at a time when watching or listening to programmes was only possible at the time of broadcast. Viewing habits and the technology used by media companies are now very different than when the fee was originally set up, and the license fee model has been open to challenge as a result. The options for a new model are various, and explored in detail in a [House of Commons Library briefing on the topic](#).

On 29 November 2024, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport Lisa Nandy made [a statement to the UK Parliament expressing the current Labour government's position on the license fee](#). She stated that:

“As we address these vital issues about the future form of the BBC, we must also ensure that there is a sustainable funding model that is fair for those who pay for it. The Government are keeping an open mind about the future of the licence fee, but we are clear that the BBC’s funding and its operation are inseparable...

“the Government will be taking forward this issue as part of the charter review process, since what the BBC does and its future role are fundamentally influenced by how it is funded. We firmly believe that the unique obligations placed on the BBC demand continued, sustainable public funding to support its vital work. We will work closely with the BBC, and engage with other broadcasters, stakeholders across the creative industries as well as the British public to inform our thinking.”

BBC Strategy

Annual plan and changes to Scottish news

The annual report looks back to the previous financial year. The BBC also produces an [Annual Plan](#) which sets out the challenges and plans for the current year and beyond.

The strategic priorities for the current year are broadly similar to those for the previous year:

- Pursue truth with no agenda by reporting fearlessly and fairly
- Back the best British storytelling by investing in homegrown talent and creativity
- Bring people together by connecting everyone to unmissable content
- Transforming the BBC

The Annual Plan also sets out the following change in the scheduling of the BBC Scotland channel (p.48):

“We are proposing to amend the schedule of the BBC Scotland channel to reflect audience behaviour and to provide value for money for Scottish licence fee payers. This will involve a reduction of the quota for news programming in peak viewing time set out in the Operating Licence. We have already announced this proposal and will engage with stakeholders and Ofcom.”

The proposed changes set out in the Annual Plan were [approved by Ofcom in August 2024](#). The Ofcom statement notes that:

“The BBC must be transparent about how it is delivering for audiences in Scotland, and we will hold it to account. We expect the BBC to monitor the impact of the changes it has proposed and be ready to continue to adapt as necessary to meet audience needs. We will also monitor performance and will report on it in our Annual Report on the BBC next year.”

The main impact of the change was to replace the hour-long news programme ‘The Nine’, with a thirty minute programme at 19:00. It was [announced on 9 December 2024 that this will be called Reporting Scotland: News at Seven](#). There will also be a new current affairs podcast called Scotcast. Both programmes have a start date in January 2025. It should be noted that this change, and Ofcom’s monitoring of it, will be reflected in next year’s annual reports.

The BBC Across the UK

In March 2021, the BBC published [The BBC Across the UK](#). This set the BBC’s plans to move more of its services and output away from London and the South East. It said—

“Our ‘Across the UK’ plan will transform the BBC by making a decisive shift in its footprint. Over the next six years we will recreate the BBC as a genuinely UK-wide organisation with a much stronger presence across the length and breadth of the country. This shift will move the creative and journalistic centre of the BBC away from London to a much more distributed model that moves not just people, but power and decision-making to the UK’s Nations and regions. ... Taken together, these proposals mean the BBC will cumulatively spend at least an extra £700m outside London by 2027/28, generating an additional economic benefit to those parts of the UK of around £850m.”

In Scotland, the BBC has made a range of commitments to improve representation and investment, and to develop new talent.

- The BBC will increase its operations in Glasgow, physically expanding its BBC Studios bases as well as moving the Technology reporting team there.
- The BBC will double the number of nations’ co-commissions, including those from Scotland, which appear on UK-wide channels.

- Over the next three years more than a hundred drama and comedy titles will reflect the lives and communities of audiences outside London, of which at least 20 will portray Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.
- As well as renewing its partnership with Screen Scotland (see the section below), the BBC has committed to modernising the BBC/MG ALBA partnership and developing BBC ALBA and BBC Radio nan Gàidheal services to increase their digital impact.

Relationship with Screen Scotland

An [MoU between Screen Scotland and the BBC was agreed](#) in February 2019 which set out how together they intended “to build a sustainable television industry in Scotland and to improve the on-air representation and portrayal of Scotland and its people”. This was [renewed in December 2021](#), and the news release at the time stated—

“The renewed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), will see the BBC and Screen Scotland jointly invest £3million to support the production of new TV drama, entertainment, scripted comedy, documentary and factual formats on the BBC’s network television services from Scotland and to develop the skills and talent required to devise, develop and produce those new shows.”

In May 2024 BBC Comedy, BBC Scotland and Screen Scotland [announced a range of co-ventures designed to support the comedy sector in Scotland](#).

This followed an announcement in November 2023 of a commitment to [co-funding the development and production of a new factual entertainment and history series format from Scotland](#). The outcomes from these agreements take time to come to fruition are not directly reported on in the annual report. This means that it is not always possible to directly trace the impact of the MoU between the BBC and Screen Scotland on the sector in Scotland.

Changing landscape

The market conditions for broadcasters have changed significantly in the past several years. Technological change has led to more digital platforms including the rise of subscription video on demand, smart speakers, podcasts and so on. This means that there is increased competition for audiences.

In March 2024 the BBC published ‘[A BBC for the future](#),’ setting out it intends to answer:

“What is the BBC’s role today, and in the future? More than 100 years on from its foundation, what can it do for the UK to respond to the most pressing needs of our democracy, our creative economy and our society?”

It sets out three priorities for the future of the organisation:

- Pursue truth with no agenda by reporting fearlessly and fairly

- Back the best British storytelling by investing in homegrown talent and creativity
- Bring people together by connecting everyone to unmissable content.

Some of the possible impacts of this future planning in relation to Scotland, as set out in the report, are:

- tailoring the BBC iPlayer homepage later this year to provide greater prominence for stories that resonate most in the devolved nations
- reshaping the news output in Scotland (discussed above)
- making more content across the UK, with over 60% of network TV and 50% of radio and music spend outside London, and around 20% of TV spend in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In [November 2024](#) BBC Chair, Samir Shah CBE gave an address on the future of the BBC, and public sector broadcasters more generally. He identified three areas to support the public service broadcasting. These were:

- Greater prominence of PSBs on Smart TVs
- Changes to Regulation to allow PSBs “to move with greater agility, flexibility, and pace”
- A tax system and the policy environment that “supports training and skills for the whole sector, in every part of the UK”

Activity and performance of the BBC in 2023/24

The [BBC's most recent annual report and accounts](#) cover the year 2023/24 and were published in July 2024.

Overall income and expenditure

The accounts for the BBC show that the total income for the group in 2023/24 was almost £5.4bn. Of this, £3.6bn was licence fee income and £1.7bn was from other income, such as from its commercial activities, primarily BBC Studios. This reflects a 2% decline in licence fees compared to 2022/23 and a decrease in commercial income of around £0.2bn. The accounts state that this is due to “a challenging trade environment and the phasing of revenues for multi-year deals recognised in 2022/23.” Operating costs were around £5.6bn and there was an operating deficit of £263m in 2023/24, compared to a deficit of £193m in 2022/23. (p53)

The value of licence fee income in Scotland fell by 2.3% to £297m in 2023/24. The BBC's annual report sets out the spend relating to programmes produced in Scotland. These are reproduced below along with the corresponding figures for the previous 2 years. (p160)

Expenditure by service in Scotland

	(£m)		
Network Spend	21/22	22/23	23/24
Television	68	81	105
Radio	3	3	3
Online	4	4	6
Total network spend	75	88	114
Scotland content			
BBC One	34	37	32
BBC ALBA	9	10	10
BBC Scotland	37	35	40
BBC Radio Scotland	24	25	23
BBC Radio nan Gàidhael	4	4	4
Online	10	10	16
Total Scotland spend	118	121	125
National Orchestra	5	6	6
Development	8	10	12
Distribution	35	37	39
Total	241	262	296

Source: BBC Annual Report and Accounts

The table above is in three sections: the network spend, which is the money on UK-wide content or shows; the local spend on shows which are specific to Scotland; and other spend, including the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

Overall, the spend in Scotland increased by £55m between 21/22 and 23/24.

Network spend and output of shows on UK-wide BBC TV channels produced in Scotland is subject to a quota of 8% of the total. In 2023/24 the figure for spend on Network TV programmes produced in Scotland was 9.0% (p33). This quota has been met in each of the past 5 years with the exception of 2020/21.

2019/20	9.1%
2020/21	6.5%
2021/22	8.6%
2022/23	8.4%
2023/24	9.0%

The BBC also present a breakdown at a UK level of how licence fee income is spent. (p56) The table below sets this out for BBC content in percentage terms.

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Television	40%
Radio	12%
Online	6%
World Service	8%
Other services (inc. orchestras)	3%

The spend in Scotland in 2023-24 was almost equal to the value of the licence fee collected in Scotland in that year. The table below sets out the spend as a percentage of the licence fee collected in each nation. (p156-168)

Spend as % of Fee income	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
England	69%	72%	70%
Scotland	77%	86%	99%
Wales	99%	111%	105%
Northern Ireland	97%	111%	116%
Total GB & NI	72%	76%	75%

Across these years, England has the lowest percentage of licence fee income identified as being spent in that country and this is also lower than the total spend on content for GB and NI. All the other nations' percentages are higher than the average for the whole of GB and NI, with Wales and Northern Ireland above Scotland.

It is also worth noting that spend allocated to one nation might include activity in another. For example, the Six Nations is allocated in England (Salford), but clearly includes activity and spend in Scotland.

[Ofcom sets out the rules](#) for how a programme's geographic allocation is determined. These rules are complex, but in brief, since 2021 three criteria are used to determine the nation/region allocation:

- Substantive base - The production company must have a substantive business and production base in the UK outside the M25. The production in question must be managed from that substantive base.
- Production spend - At least 70% of the production spend must be spent in the UK outside the M25.
- Off-screen talent - At least 50% of the production talent (i.e. not on-screen talent) by cost must have their usual place of employment in the UK outside the M25.

Generally, which nation or region a production is allocated to, is determined if at least two out of three criteria apply. The [detailed guidance](#) explains how these criteria interact and how geographic location is determined.

The application of these rules by the BBC was questioned during the one-off session of Westminster's [Scottish Affairs Committee](#), when the new Director of BBC Scotland, Hayley Valentine, appeared before the Committee on January 9 2025. There has since been a lot of media attention on the issue.

In answer to a question regarding increasing the number of new productions in Scotland during the [evidence session in 2021](#), Steve Carson, then director of BBC Scotland, told the Committee that:

“the BBC’s overall spend in Scotland is a mixture of what we call network spend on our network channels, stations and services, and spend that is directly controlled by BBC Scotland, which we use to provide our own services and special programming, including news on the BBC One Scotland channel, our contributions to iPlayer and our digital services, Radio Scotland, Radio nan Gàidheal, and our partnership with MG Alba on the BBC Alba channel.”

The question of commissioning authority, and how many commissioning decisions are made by staff based in Scotland, was discussed by the BBC and a previous iteration of the Committee in [October 2020](#). Steve Carson explained that at that time “£125 million, including overheads, sits entirely within BBC Scotland and within the decision-making ability of the head of commissioning.”

To further complicate matters, returns from the BBC’s commercial activities are becoming more important in the funding of the service and it is unclear to what extent the activities and profits of those businesses support different nations’ creative industries.

The Annual Report also provides data on the average headcount of individuals based in Scotland across all services including support functions. In 2023/24, the figure was 1,276, up slightly from 1,236 in the previous year. (p161) The BBC also provides data on the overall group employment. (p62) On average the BBC group headcount was 21,795 and therefore the percentage of the workforce in Scotland was 5.9%.¹

Audience

The BBC also reports on its audience in terms of reach and the impressions of the BBC.

Across the UK, the BBC annual report states that—

¹ The figures for the full group include BBC Studios and other commercial businesses. It is not clear if the figures quoted for Scotland include or exclude the commercial arms of the BBC.

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- On average 85% of UK adults and 71% of young adults (16-34), and 69% of under 16s used a BBC service on average per week. (p46)

The performance in the young adult and under 16 categories are below 2023/24 targets (75% and 70% respectively.) The UK adult total of 85% is at the bottom end of the target range of 85-90%.

The BBC also reports the reach and impressions of the BBC in each nation. (p.154-166) In order to provide a snapshot of trends over this session, the reported data in the 2019/20 annual report has been used to provide the information in brackets.

2023/24 (change on 2019/20 (% pts))	E	S	W	NI
BBC is effective at informing, educating and entertaining people in the UK/them	67% (-4%)	64% (0%)	64% (-2%)	61% (-1%)
BBC is effective at providing content/services that set a high standard for quality	62% (-7%)	64% (+3%)	63% (-11%)	58% (-2%)
BBC is effective at reflecting people like them	52% (-5%)	45% (-6%)	48% (-8%)	48% (-4%)
Pan-BBC reach	85%	84%	90%	86%
BBC Television reach	65% (-13%)	63% (-16%)	67% (-11%)	68% (-11%)
BBC Radio reach	56% (-6%)	52% (-1%)	64% (-5%)	55% (-3%)
BBC Online reach	60% (+7%)	60% (+2%)	64% (+4%)	62% (+17%)

The UK-wide audience data is broken down by gender, as well as socio-economic and diversity groups. The full table can be found on page 147 of the report however the figures include:

- The BBC reaches 88% of those who are defined as white, but only 70% of the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group.
- Reach for the ABC1 socio-economic group is 86% compared to 84% for the C2DE group.
- Reach for male users was 86% and 85% for female users.
- BBC audience reach for disabled people is at 86%.

Reach is also recorded in the report for specific Scottish channels. The figures show the percentage of the Scottish population who use the service on average per week. For the Gaelic programming, the figures reflect the percentage of the Scottish Gaelic speaking population over the age of 16. (p159)

BBC Scotland	13%
Radio Scotland	18%
BBC Alba	46%
Radio nan Gàidheal	52%

A key part of the BBC's long-term strategy is the development of its online services. 2023-24 saw the continued growth in the use of iPlayer with 8.1 billion streaming requests, up 10% on last year. (p.28) The use of BBC Sounds also increased with 2.4 billion plays of radio, music and podcasts on Sounds, compared to 1.64 billion last year. (p.47)

Independent producers

All public service broadcasters must commission at least 25% of qualifying hours from independent producers who meet certain criteria. The criteria for qualifying as an "independent producer" include not being more than 25% owned by a broadcaster operating in the UK or 50% owned by two or more UK broadcasters.

Overall, the [BBC continues to exceed this target](#), with 39% of its productions commissioned from qualifying independent companies. In 23/24, the BBC worked with 326 indie TV producers, and 199 indie radio producers.

Under the [current framework agreement](#), by the end of 2027, the BBC must ensure competition between BBC producers and external producers (whether qualifying as independent producers or not) for much of its output. This includes—

- 100% of relevant TV programmes
- 60% of total relevant radio broadcasting time
- 100% of relevant online material

Among other things, "relevant" here excludes news and news-related current affairs programmes.

Across the BBC, in 2023/24 77% of relevant TV hours met this criteria. (p.4) The level of contested hours in Scotland-specific output was not set out in the Commissioning Supply Report.

Ofcom report on the BBC 2023/24

Ofcom is responsible for holding the BBC to account on behalf of audiences for delivering its remit. It publishes an annual report on the BBC detailing its

performance against the regulatory conditions. The most recent report was published in [November 2024](#) and referred to 2023/24 financial year.

The BBC's [most recent operating licence](#) was published on 2 March 2023 and came into effect on 1 April 2023. It was last updated on 6 August 2024 to incorporate changes to BBC Scotland news provision (discussed above). It sets out the regulatory conditions that the BBC must comply with, as well as how Ofcom intends to hold the BBC to account for delivering this remit.

Quotas are a key feature of the operating licence, and there are over 70 of them in total. These are used by Ofcom to ensure that the BBC delivers a minimum volume of certain content. There are also several requirements detailed in the licence including: criteria for the BBC's online services; the need for services to cover a broad range of content; and an expectation that niche areas are covered even if they attract smaller audiences.

Some of the quotas and requirements specific to programming in Scotland include:

In relation to each of BBC iPlayer, BBC Sounds, the BBC Website, BBC One Scotland, BBC Scotland, BBC Alba, BBC Radio Scotland and BBC Radio nan Gàidheal, the BBC must provide content of interest and relevance to audiences in Scotland, including a broad range of content which reflects Scotland's culture.

BBC Scotland must show original productions for a minimum of 75% of programming hours.

In Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, programming should include indigenous language content and a broad range of genres.

The BBC must ensure that in each calendar year at least 8% of the hours of network programmes made in the United Kingdom are made in Scotland and at least 8% of the expenditure of the BBC on network programmes made in the United Kingdom is linked to programme production at different production centres in Scotland.

More information on the operating licence can be found in the [SPICe blog on the topic](#).

Overall findings

The Ofcom report on the BBC for 2023/24 found that –

“the BBC has continued to deliver its remit this year. We base our assessment on a wide range of evidence, including the extensive consumer research and stakeholder engagement Ofcom conducts throughout the year.”

The main findings of the report were that –

- The BBC continues to face challenges in reaching younger audiences, though it is still widely used and valued overall.

- The BBC plays a significant role in delivering high-quality news and current affairs that audiences can trust.
- The BBC is developing its services to better reach all audiences, but it has not explained its overarching strategy for reaching DE audiences.
- The BBC has met its requirements for protecting fair and effective competition and complying with content standards in BBC programming.

The report also briefly discusses the potential implications of the [Media Act 2024](#), noting that –

“Alongside our implementation of the various cross-industry measures of the Act, we are feeding into discussions between Government and the BBC about any necessary changes to the BBC’s Framework Agreement to reflect this.”

Review work will also take place over the next couple of years to enable Ofcom to assess “the overall extent to which the BBC is fulfilling its Mission and promoting the Public Purposes.” This work is aimed to feed into the Charter review process.

Findings relating to Scotland

The report takes a specific look at how the BBC performed across the nations, including in Scotland. It states that in 2023/24 the BBC met all of its Operating Licence conditions that relate to Scotland.

Ofcom found that in 2023/24 “audience reach remains high in each of the nations” and that “BBC is meeting its commitments for diverse commissioning.” It also noted that changes made by the BBC have “made its local and nations and regions content more easily discoverable on its online services.” The report, however, states that:

“there remains more to do to better represent disabled people and those from a working class background off-screen / off-air. We are still expecting an updated workforce diversity and inclusion plan for the coming years.”

The report highlights the success of BBC Radio 1’s Big Weekend in Dundee and the associated outreach events for local young people as an indicator that the BBC “delivered programming that helps bring communities together across the nations and regions.”

Ofcom highlight the fact that their analysis shows that audience satisfaction with how well the BBC reflects, represents and serves the diverse communities of all the nations is lower than that of its other public purposes.

The report also stated that while spending on first-run UK programmes for the nations and regions was stable year-on-year, output continued to fall, with a 4% drop since the previous year. In Scotland, however, spend was slightly up with £66.2m spent on content in 2023 compared to £64.6m in 2022. Output was also up in Scotland, with 1,263 programming hours in 2023 compared with 1,209 hours in 2022.

It also found that while spending across the board was stable, spend on first-run originated news and current affairs fell by 3% and 19% respectively.

Media Nations

Ofcom's Media Nations report examines key trends in the media sector and sets out how audiences are served in Scotland, from a cross-platform perspective. [The report for 2024 was published in July this year.](#)

The key findings in the report on Scotland include:

- Audiences in Scotland spent 56 minutes a day watching video-sharing platforms, such as YouTube – more than any other UK Nation
- Scotland had the highest level of interest in news about their nation – 88% were 'very interested' or 'quite interested'
- The most watched programme in Scotland was Happy Valley
- The reach of podcasts has more than doubled in Scotland in the past six years – up from 9.4% in 2018 to 19.9% in 2024

The report stated that:

“across Scotland, the studio space available to host productions has continued to grow over the past year. [Plans were revealed in April 2024](#) for the construction of the new Stirling Studios, intended to bring significant investment and job opportunities to the Stirling and Forth Valley area.”

Of the Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) channels, the BBC One remained the most popular in Scotland and BBC iPlayer is the most popular PSB on-demand service.

Scottish viewers were also most likely to use BBC One as a general news source(46%), followed by Facebook (40%) and Scotland's Channel 3 providers STV and ITV1 (36%). The report also notes that:

“There continues to be a significant amount of interest in news about Scotland. Just under half of all people aged 16+ in Scotland who follow news claim to be 'very interested' in news about Scotland (47%) – this is higher than the equivalent figures for other UK nations and rises to 88% for those who are either 'very' or 'quite' interested.”

Laura Haley
SPICe Research
20 January 2024

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to specific questions or areas of interest to committees and are not intended to offer comprehensive coverage of a subject area.

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