

Scottish Affairs Committee

[Oral evidence: Work of the BBC in Scotland, HC 443](#)

Monday 26 January 2026

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Patricia Ferguson (Chair); Maureen Burke; Lillian Jones; Mr Angus MacDonald; Douglas McAllister; Susan Murray; Elaine Stewart; Kirsteen Sullivan.

Questions 149-201

Witnesses

[I](#): Luke McCullough, Corporate Affairs Director, Nations, BBC; Louise Thornton, Head of Multiplatform Commissioning, BBC Scotland; and Hayley Valentine, Director, BBC Scotland.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Luke McCullough, Corporate Affairs Director, Nations, BBC; Louise Thornton, Head of Multiplatform Commissioning, BBC Scotland; and Hayley Valentine, Director, BBC Scotland.

Chair: Good morning and welcome to the Scottish Affairs Committee. We are very pleased to see representatives of BBC Scotland again. It has been a busy year for you, I am sure. It certainly seems to have been, so we look forward to discussing all that with you. To begin, though, can you introduce yourselves and briefly say what you do?

Hayley Valentine: Hi. Nice to see you. Thank you for inviting us. I am Hayley Valentine, director of BBC Scotland.

Louise Thornton: Hi. I am Louise Thornton, head of commissioning for BBC Scotland.

Luke McCullough: I am Luke McCullough, corporate affairs director for nations at the BBC.

Q149 **Chair:** It has been a busy first year for you, Hayley, so could you update us on any progress you think you have made during your first year towards the key priorities of BBC Scotland? Are there any areas you feel still need some improvements?

Hayley Valentine: I have been in the job for about 14 months. We were just saying that it has flown by, but it has also felt like a long year. There is a lot that we have achieved and, clearly, a lot still to achieve.

My reflection on the year is that it has made me realise, probably more than at any other point in my career, how vital the BBC is to our audiences and how much we need to work for its successful future. At the moment, we are obviously talking extensively in the BBC and with our stakeholders and you about charter renewal, and it has made those things really front of mind.

We know that our audience wants trusted, impartial news in a world where that is increasingly hard to recognise. The work we are doing in news has been about making sure that audiences, wherever and whenever they want to consume their news, are able to do so. As we maintain and hopefully grow our linear services, we are working really hard to make sure all our content is also available on our range of digital services, for audiences that are increasingly going there for their news.

We want to tell distinctive Scottish stories. We know that our audiences want to see themselves represented and reflected in our storytelling. We might talk a bit more about our drama strategy as we go on, but this is not just in drama; it is also in comedy and in our factual commissioning. Louise can talk a bit more about that. We have looked really hard at how we do this. We have announced a new drama strategy, which we are



hoping will develop across this year and next. In challenging times, we know that the costs of drama, particularly, are rising and we know that our competitors have very deep pockets, but what we can do—in the work we have announced over the last year and are now developing—is represent audiences across the whole of Scotland in a way our competitors probably don't.

The other area we are really focused on, which we know our audience wants—all this is led by our audience data, and what they tell us—is representing the big cultural moments in Scottish life in a way nobody else does. Whether that is the SSO, sport, Burns Night or Bitesize, and across English and Gaelic, we are investing in developing those big moments where we can bring the nation together across that shared purpose and exclusive identity. We are looking at ways we can do that, but we also know that our audience wants a kind of warmth and engagement, particularly in our live services, and a relationship with the BBC in Scotland. We might talk about some of the radio changes that I have made, and the purpose and strategy of those have been about improving and developing that.

Let's not pretend we are doing this in anything other than a challenging environment. The financial environment is challenging. You will all know that the BBC's budget has gone down in real terms over the last 10 years by a third, and we are working against, as I said, competitors who have pretty deep pockets. The media landscape has changed dramatically as well. We are working in a media landscape that is changing probably faster than it ever has in my career. My job is to make sure that we are keeping up with that, and that our audiences are receiving the content they want in the places they want it.

Going back to the charter point, what we need to focus on is the ability to keep delivering that impartial news, that distinctive culture and that representative storytelling, and we need a sustainable financial settlement to do that. But we also need the ability to flex faster than we can at the moment when things change, and we need to think about prominence so that when people come to find us, they are able to do so, in order that we have a more secure future.

Q150 Chair: Thank you; that is really interesting. This question may be more for Louise than for you, Hayley, but I will leave it to you to judge that. I am conscious that when you switch on your television and go to some of the digital platforms, you increasingly see BBC productions that either have been made for those outlets or have been taken up by those outlets after being broadcast on the BBC. Is that a deliberate strategy, or is it just a commercial thing that happens because they see something, like it and want to buy it?

Louise Thornton: Yes, there are a couple of parts to that question. One is BBC Studios, which as you know is our commercial arm. They make programmes for other broadcasters, beyond the BBC, so you may see programmes made by BBC Studios but appearing on Netflix or Discovery, and they will be badged "BBC Studios".

The other part is that when we commission programmes, we take a licence, but ultimately the production company could then sell the programme on, beyond the BBC. Increasingly, we are doing deals with other broadcasters and partners. We call it windowing: we might take a certain position on when we want to show a programme that you may then see appearing on HBO, Hulu or Disney. So yes, you can see in the market that it's changing; we are all working in partnership, and lots of content is appearing in lots of different places.

Chair: It is always interesting when you see something you really enjoyed on the BBC popping up on Netflix, Prime or wherever.

Q151 **Elaine Stewart:** Hayley, this is for you. We saw spend reduced by £27 million in 2024-25. Can you give us an idea why that is the case?

Hayley Valentine: The spend is divided into two parts. What you will see from those figures is that the network spend in Scotland is slightly down; at the same time, the Scottish spend is slightly up. These things fluctuate from year to year. The spend, as it is recorded, is based on when programmes are Tx-ed, not when they're made. What happens increasingly—Louise talked about partnerships—is that, for the big programmes that we invest the bulk of our money in, where we are working alongside other partners, the money is often spent in one financial year, but the programme may be Tx-ed in another.

These things fluctuate back and forwards; a lot of it is about that. If you look at the Scottish spend going up, part of that is because last year we got inward investment. We were successful in getting inward investment for big moments like the election and the Euros—big things on BBC Scotland. This year we obviously have another election and the world cup. There will be some money spent on those.

The network spend sounds like a decent amount of money, and clearly it is, but there is something around the fact that in one year we might make two series of a programme but only Tx one of them, so the previous year's figures might have had those two figures in them, this year has none and next year might have two. It is a moving market. We might plan when we commission something, although Louise does not have complete control over when we commission things, because we have all these added partners. We might commission something alongside network and alongside a third party and aim to broadcast it in March, but for various reasons it slips into April and goes into a different financial year. This is not around an active reduction in the amount of money that network plans to spend with us; it is just the way that things fall.

Q152 **Elaine Stewart:** This is my ignorance, but what is Tx-ed?

Hayley Valentine: Sorry, transmission. We make the programme, and spend most of the money in the year that we make it—we invest in it, pay the actors and so on—but it goes out three months later than we might expect it to. Sorry, tell me if I am doing media-speak—I don't mean to.



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Luke McCullough: One really good example of that is that a couple of years ago we made two series of “Shetland”, which is one of the most expensive dramas we make in Scotland. They were filmed back to back across the spring and the summer, when the light allows us to film in both Shetland and Glasgow, but only one of those series hit the accounts in that year because we only broadcast one of them. The entire spend on the other series appeared in the accounts the next year, when that series went out.

Chair: That is useful to understand. It will give us a different perspective, sometimes, when we are watching.

Q153 **Maureen Burke:** The BBC recently announced a £50 million increase in commissioning spending in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. That was reallocated from within an existing budget. Which areas in the budget have been reduced to accommodate that increase?

Hayley Valentine: This is the buying model, which is around the way in which we spend our money in Scotland and those other nations on that representative and portrayal content I talked about. Basically, we have the amount of money we have just been talking about to spend in Scotland, and we are ringfencing more of that money to spend on that portrayal content.

The way the budget works is that network will commission content that they entirely pay for in Scotland, such as something like “Shetland”, which is clearly portrayal content and portrays part of the country beautifully. There are then co-commissions—Louise can perhaps talk about a couple more examples of those—where we have a bit of Scotland money and a bit of network money. Obviously, Louise also has her own budget and can commission her own things as well.

Increasingly, particularly with that middle pot of money—the co-commission pot—we are trying to work with our network colleagues to make sure that that money is spent on content that represents Scotland. A bigger proportion of that total will be spent on titles that we think are of and about the people of Scotland, and they will see themselves reflected more in our content. Louise, do you want to talk about a couple of examples that bring that to life a little better?

Louise Thornton: This is really good news for Scotland. What it means for my team is that we will have commissioners in Scotland who are commissioning network shows. We are already doing that in the co-commissioning framework, but this will increase the amount of programmes that really do portray Scotland authentically.

If we look at the drama strategy, for example, we want to make sure that when we commission dramas they are funded properly—because drama is so expensive—and that we can be really ambitious. We just announced that we have a new legal drama starting in September this year called “Counsels”. That is part of that overall buying model to allow us to plan forward with network. In our factual strategy, if you look at successful brands that we have returning, such as “Murder Trial” or “Highland Cops”,



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those are the types of shows we want to commission more of. We want to work as one commissioning team, so that we reduce duplication. We do not want to commission a show in Scotland that is quite similar to a show somewhere else in the BBC. We would rather put the money in and plan a big show together, in a certain territory or around a certain piece of access.

What that really means is more shows we are co-investing in, better planning for when those titles transmit and how we plan them on iPlayer, much better dialogue within the commissioning team, because commissioners and my team will be working as one team. I will still be managing my team, but they will be going to what we call slate meetings—where we plan our programmes—within entertainment, comedy and factual. That is already happening really successfully within comedy and drama, and we can see the output of that with things like “Counsels”, “Grams” and “The Young Team” being announced, and “Only Child” coming back for a second series. We want to ensure that, across all genres, we have that very joined-up way of working, with this additional portrayal funding.

Q154 Maureen Burke: I think that has covered my follow-up questions, because the last thing I was going to ask was how much of the increased spending will go to Scotland.

Hayley Valentine: Just to be clear on one of the questions we have answered for the industry, our priority is of course to make programmes of and about Scotland, but if you have a production company in Scotland and you want to make a programme that is not about Scotland, or does not have that portrayal, you can still do that. There is still an existing network budget, so you can go to network commissioners in, for example, history or science and say, “I have a great programme idea,” and they will still have the funding for that.

Equally, on the other side of that, if there is a programme that we think is particularly impactful for Scottish audiences, but that may not, in the eyes of UK-wide commissioners, instinctively feel as though it will travel, Louise still has the ability to commission that programme for Scotland. The truth is that almost everything we do for Scotland ends up going on network, because it is so good. However, there is still flex on either side of this model; it does not stop anybody from making anything from within Scotland.

Maureen Burke: Thank you.

Q155 Chair: I think I am right in saying that one of the Northern Irish dramas—the cop drama “Blue Lights”, which is very good—was made by BBC Scotland. Am I right in thinking that?

Louise Thornton: No, it is not.

Chair: I do not know where I got that from, Louise. I just wondered how that had worked, but if it did not happen that way, then that is fine.

Hayley Valentine: It is a network commission as well; it is similar to “Shetland”. What happens with these programmes made around Scotland, such as “Shetland” or “Granite Harbour”, is that they over-index massively in the place where they are made, and then they also over-index in Scotland, but they also do really good business for the network. The same happened with “Blue Lights”. It was a huge success across the whole of the UK, but it over-indexes in Northern Ireland. It is a really good portrayal show for them.

Louise Thornton: Just to add that shows like “Blue Lights”, “Only Child” or “Shetland” are really good examples of what this new model is trying to deliver. Perhaps you read about that in that announcement, as an example of a show that really works.

Q156 **Susan Murray:** Phase 2 of the BBC's “Across the UK” strategy ended last year. How would you judge your performance against your commitments, and how has the strategy affected the BBC's operations in Scotland?

Hayley Valentine: There are a number of things on that. We are making increasing numbers of programmes in Scotland, and it feels like a very positive time to be part of the sector here—the drama strategy, the announcements we are making, the increased funding and the increased attention from the whole of the BBC on portrayal. That is true across the whole country, but we are definitely benefiting from that.

Obviously, I am head of the BBC in Scotland, but lots of people working for different departments in Scotland do not work directly for me. For example, we now have an increased number of network news departments sitting in Glasgow. We have the BBC News technology department working from Glasgow, with our technology editor, Zoe, based in Scotland. The network audio unit, which produces programmes across all the channels—Radio 4, Radio 3 and Radio 2—is based in Scotland. You will have heard Kirsty Wark doing “Front Row” from Scotland. A big part of our iPlayer news team also sits in Glasgow, and I mentor one of the younger people who works on that programme. We have a huge number of programmes coming out of Scotland that might previously have come out of London, so it feels like a really vibrant time.

I think there is probably more to be done. We have moved a lot of money outside the M25, and one of our asks for the charter is that I would like more commissioning power and more senior leaders to be outside the M25. I would welcome them to Scotland at any time. That will make a big difference, and I think that is definitely the direction of travel.

Luke McCullough: I think there is both an economic and a cultural piece. The purpose of Across the UK was twofold. It was literally to shift money and jobs, and you can see in the numbers the hundreds of millions of pounds of spend that have moved from being spent in London to now being spent both in the devolved nations and in the regions of England.

Then there is the cultural piece that comes with it. We are not doing it for economics alone; we are doing it because it makes sense to represent our



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audiences, as both Hayley and Louise were saying earlier. The Across the UK work is ongoing. We are undertaking a very large project in Birmingham, which will move the BBC from its current place to new studios and facilities in the Digbeth area of Birmingham. That will co-locate with other creative producers in the west midlands to help both grow the economy and grow the creative power of the BBC beyond London.

Hayley Valentine: The fundamental change—I may have talked about this last year—is that, as a young person coming into the industry, you should now feel that you can have a long and varied career without having to go down south. You may want to go down south, and that is absolutely fine, but as you know, I started in journalism in the '90s, and to work for network news I had to move to London because that is where network news was entirely based. That is no longer the case. There is more breadth of offer: people can feel like they can put down roots here, bring up their kids here and buy a house here. They do not have to think that, to progress, they have to go to London. That feels fundamentally different to me.

Q157 **Susan Murray:** Is that benefiting Scottish talent and Scottish viewers, or are we attracting people into the area rather than developing people in Scotland?

Hayley Valentine: I think both happen when you move a department from being based in London to being based somewhere else. For example, the technology team has mostly Scottish people working on it. Some of them were based here to start with—I know quite a lot of them quite well. Some of them—for example, people who worked with me on “The Nine”—were then able to go into a network news job and stay in Scotland. One or two I worked with in London wanted to come back to Scotland and were looking for the opportunity to do that, and they were then able to do so. As I say, there was somebody who worked with me in news in London; he has now come to Glasgow, been able to set up his life in Scotland and actually been promoted since he arrived here.

It is a mix, and I do not think either is right or wrong. Attracting people to come to Scotland, to work and to have the lifestyle that we all know that we can enjoy here is a good thing, but primarily we are developing talent in Scotland and allowing people who maybe start their career at a junior level here to stay here for longer—and forever.

Q158 **Susan Murray:** What focus and impact do you think the final phase of the strategy will have?

Hayley Valentine: There is a lot of conversation around charter, and some of this will be based on what the settlement looks like and where we head, so there is a little bit of uncertainty around this. We do need your help with it; we need your help for the sustainable settlement to allow this to happen.

As I say, my priority would be, given we have moved a lot of money, that—the phrase is a slight cliché—people need to breathe the air. The best people to tell the stories of Scotland open their curtains in Scotland

every morning. That is how you understand the unique nature of our identity. Particularly with the across-Scotland piece, we need people who understand that it is not one homogeneous place, and that there are very different priorities across different parts of the country.

I would say that where we need to go next is moving people—commissioners and senior leaders—where the power is. But to be absolutely clear, I would welcome any big BBC department coming and working here. I think that we can make it work. We have great facilities, great people and great talent; the more they move here, it is an upward spiral.

Q159 **Susan Murray:** So basically you are saying that we develop Scotland because it is a good business case.

Hayley Valentine: It is a good business case, and it is a great place to live. People will have great careers here.

Q160 **Lillian Jones:** There has been criticism of the BBC that Scottish network TV productions do not always translate into spending and jobs in Scotland. What steps are you taking to address this criticism?

Hayley Valentine: The vast majority of the commissions at network level for programmes in Scotland hit Ofcom criteria, not ours. There are three Ofcom criteria. Luke, do you want to tell me what they are? You are really good at this.

Luke McCullough: Fair enough, I think that is right. Ofcom has a range of criteria that the public broadcasters need to ensure they report against. For anything to be classed as an out-of-London production, first off, a production must hit two of three criteria: the production company must have a substantive base outside London, or 70% of its production budget spent outside London, or 50% of the talent budget spent outside London. Neither of those last two include the on-screen talent; it is about the people who make the programmes and where they live.

Once something has qualified as out-of-London—it has met two of those three criteria—we then need to allocate which nation or region of the UK that production belongs to. Generally speaking, you can only allocate a production to a nation or region if two of those three criteria are met in that nation or region.

We know from evidence that Ofcom has given to the Scottish Parliament that around 90% of our titles in Scotland qualify on at least two of those criteria by having their base here, or spending 70% of their budget here, or having 50% of the production talent here. Rarely—in around 10% of cases—not all three criteria are met. You may well ask how that can qualify at all, if two out of the three criteria must be met. Two out of the three criteria must be met out-of-London, and if they do not qualify as out-of-London, it cannot qualify as Scottish, but there are some productions where talent from all around the UK will work on it. You might have people who live in the north-west of England, Northumberland, Scotland and Northern Ireland all coming together to work on a



production. In those cases, Ofcom says that where you cannot allocate the production spend to one nation or region of the UK because you are using talent from all around these islands. On that occasion, the substantive base trumps everything else, so where you are using talent from all around the United Kingdom to make a thing because they are, hopefully, the best people for the job, you then allocate that spend to whichever nation or region it is that has the base. However, you cannot do that unless two out of the three out-of-London criteria are met in the first place. We allocate in line with those Ofcom rules.

Where it sometimes gets a little puzzling is that we very much focus on the percentage of Scottish people working on a production over everything else. It slightly troubles me that we get into a situation where Scottish freelancers are told that they cannot go and work in the north-east of England, Northern Ireland or the north-west. If we say that you must live in Scotland to work on a Scottish production, are we going to say the same when people from Scotland want to go and work in other parts of the UK? However, as I say, the vast bulk of titles that we commission qualify on two of the three criteria already.

Hayley Valentine: To be clear, on that framework, we announced that we will work very much in the spirit of the rules, not necessarily the letter. Those conversations were going on in the BBC before I started, but they were elevated in the first three or four months of last year. There has been some criticism that we work to the letter of those rules, but we really do not. The vast majority of our products qualify on those spend criteria and they are the ones that we feel are meaningful in terms of putting money into the economy.

We have said that from now on, projects that qualify on base only will be an exception as opposed to the rule. I am not saying that there are not certain products where we would think of the wider benefit to Scotland. You might have a specific programme in mind, and if the wider benefit to Scotland is huge and there is a strong case to say yes, but in the initial setting up of the programme it might not be able to qualify on the other criteria, then that would be an example. We are not saying never, but we are looking very hard at it. There will be very few of those titles in the future, and it will absolutely be exceptional that titles qualify that are not spending significant amounts of their money in Scotland.

Q161 Lillian Jones: What are the timescales for delivering your ambition that all network programming counted as Scottish will qualify on the basis of meeting at least two of the Ofcom criteria?

Hayley Valentine: That is where we are now. We have said that there are titles that should not be on the Scottish list and do not meet our spirit-of-the-rules criteria. It is ongoing.

Q162 Lillian Jones: You have said that you will increase your reporting and transparency of progress against your ambition. When should we expect that data to be published?

Hayley Valentine: Annually. We will keep publishing the details of how we make programmes and how they qualify. The percentages are in the commissioning supply review, so we will keep publishing those.

Luke McCullough: Every summer we publish a list, not just of the amount we spent, but of titles and how they qualified as outside of London. As Hayley said, that is the commissioning supply review, and we can share a copy of that with the Committee.

Lillian Jones: Thank you very much.

Q163 **Elaine Stewart:** I am sure that you have touched on this one a wee bit, but how will you ensure that BBC commissioners deliver the commitment not to typically commission new network productions in Scotland unless local budgets and talent requirements are met?

Hayley Valentine: I think I have probably answered that: we are absolutely committed to having people spend money in Scotland, and to developing talent and people's careers in Scotland. Those two spend criteria are more meaningful in that regard.

That does not mean that having a substantive base is not a thing—we want to see companies doing this across the piece—but there is a real mixed economy. With increased consolidation, there are lots of good reasons why companies may have a base or parent company elsewhere. For example, our legal drama "Counsels", which Louise mentioned and which we are very excited about, set up a base in Scotland and had been trying to develop Scottish ideas and work for a while before they got this great commission.

We want people to come here: maybe initially they have development executives and such setting up that company, and only when they get the commission can they bring in a multitude of people. That is how drama works. We are committed to that.

Luke McCullough: We expect "Counsels" to qualify on all three of the criteria when we put that out. I think "typically" was in the question: typically, we already meet two of the three criteria on 90% of our titles, so typically, we are there already. It is about how we can go beyond what the regulator requires and deliver even more of that investment in Scotland.

Q164 **Elaine Stewart:** You have probably touched on this as well, but how do you encourage production companies to increase their investment in Scotland?

Hayley Valentine: The truth is that most, if not all, production companies we talk to—hopefully Louise can back me up on this—do not need encouragement; this is what they want to do. People who want to make programmes in Scotland, want to make them with Scottish production staff. "Shetland" is end-to-end made in Scotland: they have what they need here. They are absolutely committed to doing that, and are now on series 10, which has just gone out. That is a lot of money and a lot of



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people developing their careers in Shetland and on the mainland as well. We do not particularly need to encourage them.

There are areas with potential gaps in the market in Scotland where people do not have the expertise, and we work closely with production companies in those cases to increase that expertise. There may be the raw talent in Scotland—there is a great base of creative talent here—but they may not have the specific skills for the programme a particular production company wants to make. We then work closely with the BBC here, our network colleagues and Screen Scotland to develop skills and train people to increase the number of Scottish people working on programmes. That gives us the long-term benefit of having a bunch of people trained in a specific genre that they might not have been to start with.

Luke McCullough: We also know that the economic impact goes beyond the criteria that Ofcom set down. A production like “The Traitors” does not meet all three of the criteria in Scotland, but we ran an economic study on it last year—I know it is not quite in Mr MacDonald’s constituency, but it is very close to it—and we think that the impact of its first three series, plus the celebrity edition, plus the American version of “The Traitors”, which the production company also makes in the highlands, is in excess of £20 million GVA to the highlands economy. That is not nothing. For a production that does not meet the criteria, it still generates a lot of growth and economic activity in a part of Scotland that has not seen an awful lot of high-end TV productions. There is a wider impact beyond the criteria, and I was pleased that we could share that information last year.

Hayley Valentine: I think we had so far had this whole conversation without mentioning “The Traitors”, but you have just done it. The other thing about “The Traitors”, when we are talking about exceptions, is that the story of “The Traitors” has improved year on year on that raw talent versus training and development, and now Scottish people pull in big numbers and are in quite senior roles on “The Traitors”. It is a story of massive growth and development for the Scottish sector.

We talked earlier about exceptions, and I do not think anyone in this room would argue against saying yes to “The Traitors” in Scotland on that exception. It is a huge hit that we have right here. It does amazing business for the highlands and the reputation that we have worldwide; companies are looking into Scotland and saying, they can make this level of programme. It is the biggest hit on British television at the moment, and we make the international version and the celebrity version in the highlands. It is a huge growth story.

To that exception thing, if someone had said to me, “Would you make the exception for ‘The Traitors’ on the condition that the numbers grow, the skill set grows and the ability of Scottish people to move up through the ranks of that programme, which they’re clearly doing now, grows?”, I would have said, “Yes, absolutely.”

Louise Thornton: If I could just add to that, it is also about us having an ambitious commissioning strategy and being able to communicate that

with the industry. If the industry knows that you are ambitious for programmes, you want to commission big hits and you have the money to do so, it will invest and it will develop towards that.

To Hayley's point about what we are doing about skills development, we are actively looking at the success of "The Traitors" and thinking, "This is brilliant, because we've got people in the country who can make these types of shows now." We are actively working with Screen Scotland and TRC at the moment on an entertainment skills development scheme. We have six companies in Scotland working through this programme, and I am funding that along with the head of entertainment, Kalpna, who also funds "The Traitors". The ambition there is, "Can we find the next big hit from Scotland, and can we grow it from here?" We really are trying to communicate well with the industry so that it can feel that sense of ambition and growth as well.

Q165 Elaine Stewart: Can I just say that I love "The Traitors", and I loved the celebrity one because I just love Alan Carr? It was great to see a Scottish boy win the other night.

Hayley Valentine: There is something about what I said at the beginning about bringing people together. Nine and a half million people watched it live on Friday night. In a world where we think that society has separated and we are all sitting on different screens watching things of our choices, to bring that number together—including, I think, 800,000 in Scotland—to watch that national moment, feels like that world is very much alive and kicking.

Q166 Elaine Stewart: On the back of that, do you think the greater reporting requirements for Scotland will put producers off from coming forward to provide production in Scotland?

Hayley Valentine: I do not think so. It is important to be flexible. There is a lot of nuance in this. I understand it, but some of the reporting in the papers is fairly black and white on what we do and, as you have heard from Luke, it is a complex picture.

I have said, over and over again, publicly, that Scotland is open for business. Come here, and we will help you make it work. If you come here to develop an idea like "Counsels" and really invest in Scottish ideas, we will help you make that work. If you come here and you cannot meet the criteria the first time around, there is a little bit of flex, if we think it is worth it for broader reasons, to make that work. If you are a small Scottish company, we will help you grow; we will help with training.

There has been a danger over the last year that the debate around "The Traitors" could have put people off coming here. I have said before that I think there is a public risk around saying, "We don't want this big, massive success here because it's not doing that one thing that we want you to do." We need to really get our heads up and have a broad mind about what Scottish success looks like. Hopefully, everything that we have said in the BBC has helped with that.

Elaine Stewart: Great. Thanks, that is good to hear.

Chair: Speaking of “The Traitors”—Kirsteen Sullivan.

Mr MacDonald: Who is a traitor.

Chair: No aspersions.

Q167 **Kirsteen Sullivan:** I will ignore that comment. This caused great excitement in my household. I cannot think of many programmes that have actually brought myself and my daughter together in recent years, but this was definitely one of them. You are aware of some of the criticisms that there have been around “The Traitors” previously and the perception of low levels of Scottish-based staff. I wondered if you could provide the number of Scotland-based production staff who worked on series 4 of “The Traitors” and the seniority of those roles.

Hayley Valentine: Absolutely. The last time I talked about this I think we had just finished series 3. It was this summer, and we had about 60 Scottish staff working on the programme. For series 4 we had over 70 Scottish staff working on the programme, so it is going up year on year—series on series, in fact. What it is doing, as I said, is providing that career progression. Some of the criticism has been that it is only runners, but there are clearly not 70 runners on the programme. We now have shooting producer directors, directors, casting assistant producers and production managers; we have relatively senior roles on the programme who are Scottish, and some really lovely stories about people who might have started as researchers who are now moving through the system, partly supported by that training that we talked about. Screen Scotland, the BBC and Studio Lambert are all invested in that training, and we are bringing more people through the system.

Q168 **Kirsteen Sullivan:** Why do you think there have been low levels of Scottish-based staff working on the production historically? Were the opportunities just not there previously?

Hayley Valentine: There are a couple of things. This is historical, as you say; it is not the case anymore. When the programme started, Scotland had not made this genre for a long time. I think “Castaway” 20 or so years ago was probably the last time that we had made this specific sort of genre. I have talked to Kalpna, who Louise referenced earlier, about the specific skills that are required to make this kind of programme. This is not just a general entertainment programme; it is a very specific sort of reality programme that requires specific skills.

I said to the Committee last year that we are not short of talent in Scotland, and I think this has absolutely proved that. What we did not have was the ready-made skillset. What is really impressive about this is that we have developed that skillset through the four series that we have made, and the American series, and there is a real opportunity here to make it possible for a big number of Scottish people to have on their CVs that they have worked on this format.



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Look how successful it is: there will be companies all over the world thinking, "What is the next 'Traitors'? What is the next reality format?" I do not know if it is the same 60 or 70; there is a real mix in this industry, although what we really want is to be able to go back and make more and more series. But if another programme idea a bit like this comes along, from wherever in the world, I imagine people sitting in their offices and saying, "Scotland can do this. Scotland has now got the skillset." It didn't to start with, and the truth is that it really does now.

Q169 Kirsteen Sullivan: It is very positive to hear that there is a breadth of roles now. You mentioned that there are over 70 Scottish staff. What is the total number of staff?

Hayley Valentine: I don't know the total number of staff altogether. It has not—

Kirsteen Sullivan: Okay, because that is quite important for getting a sense of what proportion it is of the total.

Hayley Valentine: Yes. I am sorry, I don't have that figure. It is not meeting the 50% criterion for what we call talent—the staff on it—so you can do the maths: it is clearly more than double that altogether. But 70 is a big number, and the truth is that, with something like "The Traitors", even if it does not meet that criterion, it is still spending a huge amount of money, not just directly on the staff that work on the programme and its production, but in the wider industry. The figure in our own economic report was that more than 750 people have worked in an industry that has been supported by the fact that "The Traitors" is there. There is a much broader thing, but I am sorry, I don't have the total number.

Q170 Kirsteen Sullivan: Is that something you would be able to provide to the Committee? I think we would be fairly interested in hearing that.

Hayley Valentine: I will look. I think we could ask—

Luke McCullough: We can ask our production company, but the slight difficulty is that they can tell us how many people based in Scotland are working on site, because they are required to report that against the Ofcom criteria, but they own the intellectual property for "The Traitors" in the UK, and they will have other roles to do with the marketing of other things that the "Traitors" brand is attached to, which they employ. They employ these staff in the highlands when they are there filming; we don't. They also employ people to do other things connected with the "Traitors" brand that are not connected with the BBC. We can ask a question, but the answer might not be as clearcut as you might hope.

Q171 Kirsteen Sullivan: Okay. Do you have a pathway or a runway to get to meeting the 50% criterion?

Hayley Valentine: As you know, we are developing and training staff all the time. It may not get there. We hope it does, but it may not. As I say, the overall numbers, and the broader sense of what it is doing for Scotland, mean that I would continue to make an exception for "The



Traitors”, but we are working really hard with the production company to improve that skillset.

Luke McCullough: It is probably worth remembering that the 50% of production talent is a spend figure, not a number of people figure. You could, for example, spend a lot of money on a post-production service in, I don’t know, Carlisle or Newcastle, and if they do all the cutting and editing, that could be quite a chunk of your production budget. It might be two people doing it, but it could run for weeks pulling the edits together. “Shetland”, for example, uses a company here in Glasgow called Blazing Griffin to do its editing and post-production. That is one of the reasons all its production budget is spent in Scotland. “The Traitors” is using services from around the UK, as well as filming in the highlands.

Q172 **Kirsteen Sullivan:** I appreciate that it may be a bit more nuanced than just numbers of people, but I think that it is quite important to get clarity about some of the numbers, in order to ascertain whether you are approaching the 50% or not. However, I appreciate the point that you made about the training and development that has gone on. Can you tell me exactly what steps have been taken to further develop the ready-made skillset that was not previously there? What tangible steps have you taken?

Hayley Valentine: As I said, there is a training programme attached to the production of “The Traitors”. The BBC are involved, Screen Scotland are heavily involved—they have been financially supporting it; we spoke to them only at the end of last week about what that looks like going forward—and the production company itself is involved. The production company ran a session in our headquarters in Pacific Quay a couple of years ago to try to encourage Scottish people to come forward to talk about what the roles might be, and a big number of freelancers came to that event. Since then, we have brought people into the programme and have been training them up the steps. We have production directors and editors who have moved up the steps, and we have a casting assistant producer who was a former researcher, I think, as well as those researcher and runner roles. We are moving people through the system with the help of that structured training programme that we have attached to the production.

Q173 **Chair:** It seems to me that this series of “The Traitors” has done a particularly good job of showcasing Scotland, and the highlands in particular—more so, even, than other series, which also did it very well. I am sure that VisitScotland are very pleased about that. Do any discussions or conversations take place with an organisation like that to consider how best to have an opportunity to showcase a tourism product alongside an entertainment project?

Hayley Valentine: As part of our economic impact report, we talked to a wide range of tourism businesses, from Expedia through to Trainline through to whatever. The uptake numbers are astonishing: Expedia had something like a 190% rise in people searching for holidays to the highlands, and Google searches for holidays in castles are up

exponentially. As the series have gone on, the highlands have really leant into that; as I say, we are now supporting hundreds of jobs and providing, I think, £21 million of broader economic success for the highlands. It is a huge driver of broader economic support and tourism.

The other thing to say is that in this series in particular, the on-screen representation has been really good. We have had really good on-screen representation across the nations. That is one of the things that we lean into with our network colleagues across a number of big programmes: increasing on-screen representation in reality shows, dance shows—those kinds of formats—and making sure that we have Scottish voices on the programme.

Luke McCullough: There is certainly a massive impact of screen tourism across Scotland. Interestingly, the missions producer on “The Traitors” this year is one of the senior production staff who is Scotland-based; maybe that is also a tangential benefit of having someone who is Scotland-based. You can see news coverage coming out of some of the locations where the missions have taken place this year, further amplifying the impact of the series.

Screen Scotland does research every two to three years on the economic impact of the entire industry, which the Committee may well have seen. In the last iteration of that research, they found that screen tourism was now the second biggest part of the screen industry in Scotland. After the actual spend of the productions themselves—after the impact of making the thing in Scotland—they found that the next most economically lively part was the tourism impact, so it is a live and pertinent question.

Q174 **Mr MacDonald:** I couldn’t agree more with the comments the Chair just made. It is fantastic for getting out what the highlands has to offer. How many journalists do you have in Inverness and Stornoway? Are there more in other places in the highlands, excluding Aberdeen?

Hayley Valentine: Goodness. I don’t have the exact number to hand, but we have a big base in Inverness, as you know—excuse me; I’m going to sneeze.

Luke McCullough: I will pick up while Hayley recovers herself. Across the highlands and islands, we have sizeable bases in Inverness and Stornoway, and smaller bases in Portree, Shetland and Orkney. All five of those bases have journalists in them—in three of the five, in both English and Gaelic.

Inverness is quite a sizeable base for journalism for us, because not only are we doing English-language news for the highlands and islands, but it is the main base for our Gaelic-language news service and, indeed, our TV news programme in Gaelic, “An Là”, is broadcast from BBC Inverness. The TV studio is there, the gallery that goes along with that studio is there, and that whole production is live out of Inverness at 8 o’clock most evenings on BBC ALBA. You have a newsroom there that is led by an



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excellent journalist, Iona MacRitchie, and I know she would very much welcome you to come and have a look around—in the constituency.

Hayley Valentine: About a year ago, we moved to a position, particularly in Inverness, which is a really big base, where Iona looks after both Gaelic and English services, so the collaboration between the two in terms of how we produce stories and work together has changed. You might have seen recently our commitment to all our bases. We have 12 bases that have news journalists in them across Scotland, and we are absolutely committed to those, particularly to cover the whole of the country. The most recent example is how we covered the bad weather in the first week of the year. When everyone else was working from home and trying to work out how to manage with school closures, we had journalists across Aberdeenshire, the highlands, Shetland and Orkney—the places mostly affected—out there in really difficult conditions delivering for audiences in a way that, frankly, made me exceptionally proud.

Q175 **Mr MacDonald:** In rural Scotland—I am not including Inverness—we have an extraordinary demographic change. We have 71% more people over the age of 75 and half the number of kids under 15 than we had 15 years ago. I am very keen to get people aware of the problems we have in rural areas, apart from Inverness, so the more you guys can do to help is really important. You are a very important mouthpiece for rural Scotland.

I am going to guess that you have 20 journalists in the highlands, and I would say that your online offering—people using your BBC online product—is a key way of people seeing what is going on. Yesterday, you had two stories on the highlands and islands, on Friday you had five, and on Saturday you had four. For the number of journalists you have, your productivity is really low, if you don't mind me saying. I ran a newspaper for 10 years. I would expect there to be a lot of stories, because there is no limit to how many you can have. I am just putting that to you. I do not know what it is like in Dumfries and Galloway or in Aberdeen, but I suspect that you should spend a bit of time looking at that, because I think your coverage is very limited where people see you most.

Hayley Valentine: I will absolutely look at it. I am always keen to have that kind of feedback. We clearly have a lower number of stories over the weekend than we do during the week. The way that we make our stories now—I am sorry if you all know this already—is that we make content rather than stories for any platforms. We are looking at a story that may have five or six iterations, or possibly more: for television, for radio, for digital, for the website, for our social platforms and so on. In all our bases, we have pivoted towards making stories for as many platforms as possible. I will absolutely look at it.

I would say a couple of things. The figures show that when our audiences need us most—for something really big, like the snow—our productivity rate is huge. We are out there in those communities. We know, back to the nuance point, that in Aberdeenshire the story was different in rural areas than it was in the city centre, so getting out and making sure that we are covering the whole of the area is really important to us.



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At the moment, we are obviously focusing a lot on the elections coming up, and our audience team are looking at dynamic audience research that our journalists can access so that they know which stories matter to different parts of Scotland. We are very keen that we get out into the whole of Scotland. We know that people may be unhappy with the NHS; the reasons for that are vastly different in different parts of the country. We do not assume it is the same reason everywhere, so we are focusing in the election on issues and on what our audience is telling us.

You might have seen that we have a brand called “Your Voice”, which is about audiences—particularly older audiences and audiences in rural areas—getting in touch with us to make sure that their voice is heard. We have a huge success rate of stories that we perhaps would not have known about or covered because we need someone to tell us about things. If your audience—your constituents—want to come forward with stories, we will absolutely cover them. The dynamic research we are doing will be on a database that is accessible to our journalists so that they can find out not only what people care about, but why they care about it. Someone in Glasgow may have an issue with the NHS for a very different reason than someone in a rural part of a constituency. We are really keen to get under the skin of that.

Luke McCullough: Rural coverage extends beyond our news and current affairs output. We take our commitment to Scotland’s rural areas quite seriously, not least at the 14 bases that we have around the nation. I am thinking of output like “Landward”, which has been made in Aberdeen for half a century but gets the length and breadth of Scotland and showcases it not just to Scotland—it runs on BBC Two, so it is seen across the UK. I am thinking of “Out of Doors” or the “Scotland Outdoors” podcast network on Radio Scotland, commissions like “This Farming Life” or output like “Beechgrove Garden”, which is specifically to do with how we grow in Scotland as opposed to other parts of the UK.

We work with an advisory committee to connect those titles with parts of the rural community. That gets together several times a year to have ongoing discussions about how we continue to serve the rural parts of Scotland. But maybe there is a point around whether some of the stories on “Landward” cross into news and current affairs enough; we have done that sometimes, and that is perhaps something we need to look at more.

Q176 **Mr MacDonald:** When I ran a newspaper, it was a requirement of every journalist to make sure that they filed a story online. I am not sure that is the way with your team. I would just put that out there because I think it matters a great deal. We would welcome a little group of you coming to, say, Fort William or Portree to talk about the relevance of the BBC and get out there and meet people in the more rural areas, if you would be up for that.

Hayley Valentine: Definitely.

Mr MacDonald: Thank you.



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Q177 Kirsteen Sullivan: We have discussed incredible success of “The Traitors”, but there has also been a lot of angst with the cancellation of “River City”. At the same time, you have announced major investment in new Scottish dramas: you referenced “Counsels” earlier, and there are “Grams” and “The Young Team” as well. To what extent will those new dramas replace the sustained employment that “River City” provided for many years?

Hayley Valentine: As you say, we have announced that “River City” will come to an end this year. I will say again that we understand that people who are big fans of the show are disappointed, but this was an editorial decision based on declining audience figures for that show. Given the way the audience has moved, we really need to be in the market where we are making those high-impact six or eight-part shows where we have increased investment and they look and feel as high-end as our competitors in the streaming world.

“River City” ran—or still runs; we have not finished making it yet—on two 12-week blocks of the year. Most of the people involved in “River City” would do something else the rest of the time. It was sustainable, in that people would come back and work on it each season, but in between, as we know, because we have all seen them in other things and on the stage, people who worked on “River City” were not employed 12 months of the year. It is two 12-week blocks.

This is clearly a different model. “Counsels”, which is in production at the moment, films for four months of the year. We announced three dramas on the day, but it is not strictly three; we have announced more since then and we have others in production that Louise can talk about. In a straightforward way, if we are making three dramas and the first one in production is four months, once we get to the point where we are making all three—these things happen on different timescales; “River City” is still running and our money is still invested in “River City” at the moment—that would imply that there will be a drama in production for about 12 months of the year just from the ones that we announced at the same time that we announced that “River City” was coming to an end. We are clearly moving to a different model, and we have been very straightforward about that.

We think that this is a real opportunity for Scotland to elevate the number of high-impact dramas that it is making and give people the opportunity to work on those sorts of shows. We can talk a bit more about the training in a second, but in reality, a number of the cast and crew of “River City” are moving over and working on “Counsels”, so this is not a completely different model. We are very keen that, whenever possible, people will move into other dramas that we are making, both on screen and off. We are devoted to the training programme that went alongside “River City” on all of our productions. We are offering people those opportunities, which was a big part of what “River City” did.

Finally, and then I will hand to Louise on the detail of the new strategy, we have committed to that training, but the truth is that the world is not



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making soap operas in number anymore. The soap opera world is reducing. We are not the first people to cancel a soap opera. They are making these high-impact and high-end dramas, and having that on your CV is more valuable to you in the modern world than having "River City" on your CV will be going forward. If you get a role directing on "Counsels", which we are hoping will be a success not just in Scotland but much more broadly than that, across the whole of the UK and potentially beyond, we think that will be much more valuable to you in the future. So those opportunities will still be there.

Q178 Kirsteen Sullivan: Let me just ask about the training programme—I think that is where we are naturally going. One of the recognised successes of "River City" was its training programme, which has been described as "exemplary". How are we going to ensure that that is replicated, and what is going to happen to the individuals who are currently enrolled in the training programme for "River City", given that it is due to close in April 2026?

Louise Thornton: The "River City" training academy, which ran for two years, has been absolutely brilliant, but it is also not the sum total of the training that we do in scripted. To give you a picture of the scripted plan for the next year, "Dinosaur" is coming back for a second series, and then we have Richard Gadd's new drama "Half Man". All these have training at the heart. "Granite Harbour" is coming back for a third series, then we have the big finale for "River City", and then we launch "Counsels". You can see that is a huge moment for scripted content in Scotland; we are going to have a great year.

In terms of training, we work to the principle that every scripted title has training at the heart, and we work with third partners to do that. We work with ScreenSkills—every production works with ScreenSkills to have trainees. We are not saying that we are going to replicate what "River City" has done, for some of the reasons that Hayley has just described, but we do recognise the value of "River City"—it has given us brilliant talent in the industry. Longer term, we are working with our partners Screen Scotland and ScreenSkills to develop a framework that will sit industry-wide. That is absolutely something that we are developing at the moment.

I want to make the point that we have not stopped training people. Look at what "Granite Harbour" has been doing. We had over 10 trainees across camera, grip, sound, production, floor runner, costume and make-up. "Counsels" had seven ScreenSkills trainees in production, costume and AD. We had a Directors UK placement on "Half Man". These things are all still going on at considerable volume. We are training people for the future types of dramas that audiences want to consume, and we want to have those skills in Scotland.

Q179 Kirsteen Sullivan: I appreciate that point on the broader training that is available, but if you already have a scheme that has been proven to work and has been recognised as "exemplary", and allows a Scottish talent pipeline to develop, why wouldn't you look to replicate that?

Louise Thornton: We do not want to replicate it in exactly the same way, because we are not going to have “River City” anymore, so we need to be training—

Kirsteen Sullivan: But the model, you could—

Louise Thornton: Just to reassure you, we are speaking to Screen Scotland and ScreenSkills about having a broader framework across the industry. It will not be exactly the same as what we have done in “River City”, but we are looking at how we can build a framework that targets the kind of skill gaps that we need to make sure that we have people who can deliver the drama and comedy scripted in Scotland for these big programmes that we want to make.

Q180 **Kirsteen Sullivan:** So that will very much draw on the positive elements that have come out of the “River City” training programme and build it into the framework going forward.

Louise Thornton: Absolutely, because Screen Scotland has been involved in that as well. We are working together to make sure that that framework gives us something that is of benefit to Scotland. But I want to make the point that we have not stopped training people. We continue to do that in every single one of our programmes.

Q181 **Kirsteen Sullivan:** I understand that the training offering is much broader than just specific programmes.

Hayley Valentine: One of the differences, to bring it to life, is that “River City” is entirely a studio-based show. The training that people have got on that has been studio-based training. Increasingly, dramas have part of them made in a studio and part of them made on location. If you are a trainee on “Counsels”, you will get a broader range of training across various locations than just the studio training. Most soap operas are studio-based. That is not the direction of travel, so that is why there is a shift. But as I say, the volume and the commitment to training has not changed. It is the shape of the training that will change.

Q182 **Kirsteen Sullivan:** If I can just go back to the individuals who are currently enrolled in the “River City” training programme, what is going to happen to them?

Louise Thornton: We would hope that they would go on to work on other opportunities within the industry. We are already seeing it. Hayley has referenced “Counsels”. We are seeing people who have been through “River City” training now working on “Counsels”—not just on screen, but off screen as well. “Grams” and “Young Team” are not quite in production yet, but once they are off the ground, again there will be more opportunity there for people who have the skills to come through and work on those dramas. We have done some brilliant work on training in “River City”. It was not the only training that we have done. There will be opportunities because we are investing more in scripted in Scotland.

Luke McCullough: There was nobody who was expecting to be working on “River City” in, say, three years’ time who is now no longer expecting



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that. As Hayley said, River City's contracts were for 12 weeks—they are 12-week contracts. People are hired to come and do the thing while we make it, and then they go off and do something else. Then they may be hired for another 12 weeks when "River City" re-enters production. Everyone who has been promised their 12-week contract will have had their 12-week contract.

Hayley Valentine: The other thing that was part of the questioning at the time was about where people would get their first go. "River City" would be where you'd get your first job, but if you look at "Counsels" and the six leads, young lawyers in their first roles are often actors in their first roles. We have taken people straight from drama school and from other places to come in and be part of that cast. I don't know if you saw there was an interview with the creator of "Counsels" recently in *The Herald* where he talked about Glasgow being a character in the show. Again, "River City" shows a section of life in Glasgow, a slice of life that is a certain thing. On the new dramas that we are making, he talked about the fact that a legal drama does not have to be posh or exclusive. It can be rooted in normal life in Glasgow. We expect that representation to continue across all our shows, including the ones that you have mentioned and the ones that Louise has. It is very important to us that we reflect real Scotland.

Q183 **Chair:** Earlier on, Hayley, you talked about what public attitudes to the BBC were and you talked a bit about the charter review process. I know a survey was done to find out exactly what those attitudes were. How are those survey results guiding your decisions and your future planning?

Hayley Valentine: As you say, we did a piece of work last year on audiences and we were delighted at the number of people who came back. I think 60,000 in Scotland came back and told us what they thought. What they want is independence from, in a Scottish context, Governments and they want a full range of programming. Of course they want the "educate" and the "inform". Trusted news is exceptionally important to people. I think I have mentioned that it is increasingly difficult, particularly for younger audiences, to recognise what they should trust and where disinformation is. We are doing a lot of work on that.

I will come back to that in a second, but audiences also want the entertainment, the big programmes, the drama. They do not want us to withdraw from those services. The BBC has to feel like it is providing the full range of content for our audiences. That is where we are. We are not here just to provide a news service. As you know, we have the rights to the Scotland football matches, the really big moments that bring people together, but we are also investing in and competing in that world of high-end drama, because we know that that is what our audience wants from us. That is what they told us in the survey.

Just to return to the point around trust and trusted news, in Scotland we have just launched Verify, the BBC brand. The Scottish Budget was the first time we used the badge of Verify, both in terms of our live page and in terms of video content that went out on socials. We know it is important that people see that badge and they trust us. A couple of our journalists



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have trained with our colleagues at Verify and are now going to do that across the Scottish elections.

We have talked about "Your Voice". People want us to discuss the issues that they care about. That is another big BBC news brand that we are using in Scotland. We have done a range of stories, from bus fares to a retiring ballerina, and they have come to us because the audience has said, "Do you know about this story?" We did a great story last week about girls in a primary school who won a football cup; they got a little plastic one, and the blokes got a massive one. That story came to us through "Your Voice". We know that the audience want us to cover the issues that matter to them.

More broadly, we do a lot of work with education. Our Bitesize is bespoke to Scotland, because obviously we have a different curriculum. We are working with the Scottish Government on their new film and screen studies course to make sure that, as it develops, we have the resources for that on Bitesize. We know that misinformation and disinformation are a massive deal, to return to the point about how people can know what they can and cannot trust. We are working on Bitesize. The two brands are "Other Side of the Story" and "Solve the Story", and they are resources that we have for schools across the UK, including in Scotland. They are particularly designed for the 13-to-16 audience, and they can use those resources to develop their skills, understand and analyse the news, and work out what they can and cannot trust.

We know that all those things are important to our audiences, but we are not heading towards a position, and I really do not want us to, of market failure. We need to be in the market for those big pieces of content. One of the examples I always give is that we got the rights to the football. It was a great success in Scotland, but we also got big numbers and huge audiences from across the whole of the UK watching the Scottish football as the footballers developed towards getting into the world cup. The audiences that came to us for that are audiences that may not consume as much of the BBC in other ways as we would like. On iPlayer, I think we call them lapsed iPlayer users—people who may not have been to us for 12 weeks.

Of the people who came to us for the football, a quarter of them came back to us within two weeks for something else. It is my view that if viewers watch those big set pieces, whether it is drama like "Rebus" or "Granite Harbour" or our sporting content, they will come to us for other things, so we need to have that full raft of content across the piece, but we are absolutely focusing particularly on trustworthiness, misinformation and how we can guide our audiences through what is an increasingly difficult and complex world.

Q184 Chair: Were there gaps in what you were doing and what the audience said they wanted? If there were, how did you go about filling those?

Hayley Valentine: What they want is more, so this is a financial challenge, and I do not want to underplay that today. We are looking for a



sustainable financial settlement. I do not want to be coming here in two years talking about slicing up an increasingly small pie. They want more drama, they want more comedy, they want more factual content, they want more news, and they want more local. I think local is really important to audiences; in a world where people can get their news from a local Facebook page, looking at how we make sure that we are delivering news that matters to people in whatever part of the country is huge, but the truth is, what they want is more of what we are already doing.

Luke McCullough: Part of that, of course, is about the sustainable funding model and reform of that to make sure that it does continue in the long term. Your question included that point of difference of what the audience say they want and where they think we are performing. The biggest gap in Scotland was on independence from Governments. Here in Scotland, the audience wants the BBC to be independent of both the Governments. I think it is probably as much up to the UK Parliament when it scrutinises the new charter. We are at the Green Paper stage at the moment. Soon the UK Government will have a White Paper about the future of the BBC—I presume that will be about November or December—and eventually they will have a draft royal charter and agreement. I suppose I would play the question back to you: how do you ensure that the public broadcaster of the United Kingdom meets those audience expectations of being independent from Governments?

Q185 **Chair:** Presumably, these are points that the BBC more generally is putting forward in their discussions with Government.

Luke McCullough: The Green Paper has four main chapters, and I think they are all really key points for us to debate. It is worth saying that we really welcome the Green Paper and indeed the statement from the Secretary of State on behalf of the UK Government. She calls the BBC a really important national institution and compares it to the NHS in terms of its importance to society and its role in democracy. I think that whole idea of having a public service media provider is a really good place to start.

One of the four chapters of the Green Paper does indeed deal with the Government's model; there is a range of suggestions there, and the other three are really important questions. Some of it is about the ground that the Committee has covered this morning: what are the core public purposes of having a public media provider? The third one is about that contribution to growth and the economic impact of having a public media provider—again, I think we have had some really helpful exchanges on that this morning—and the fourth chapter from the Government talks about funding. I think the questions that we have naturally got on to are the ground that we are discussing at the moment.

We will formally respond to the Green Paper, but probably quite close to the end of the consultation, I would think, once we have had the chance to have discussions with all our stakeholders around the UK. But I would encourage, of course, all constituents of all Members—including those community groups and those who absolutely have a sort of crossover with the work of a public media provider—to engage with that Green Paper

while the consultation is open. For all the reasons that Hayley mentioned, it is such a vital time to discuss this.

Q186 Elaine Stewart: From a BBC Scotland perspective, what would a successful charter review look like, and how would that meet the needs and expectations voiced by Scottish audiences?

Hayley Valentine: Basically, I want to be able to provide distinctive content for Scotland. We have talked a little about that already this morning, but in terms of news for the next decade, I think it is two things, or perhaps three. We need to be serving all of our audiences, with distinctive local news, more local news and hyper-local news. We need to also carry on offering them, whether it is from Holyrood or from the rest of the UK, that broad analysis, leading them through an understanding of what the world is doing at the moment; it is a complex and tricky world to navigate.

The key thing is that we need to have the flexibility within news—within all of our content, but news in particular—to flex and pivot to new platforms. We might talk about YouTube in a moment, and we are on a lot of social media platforms already, but we do not have any crystal balls. I imagine that, in the next decade, there will be new ways of telling stories on new platforms, and we need to make sure that we can pivot to those.

On culture, we have talked a bit about that, but we support the Scottish symphony orchestra. I am delighted that we are able to do that; I am exceptionally proud of them, and we would want to be able to continue to do that. On culture across the piece, we delivered—I thought—an incredibly classy Burns night programme last night. That is something I think only we would do. Whether it is coverage of that, Celtic Connections, TRNSMT or Hogmanay, those programmes make Scotland feel different, with its own identity, and I want to be able to continue to do that.

Our language services are also important to us—the services in Gaelic as well as in English—and we need sustainable funding for those. We have also talked a bit about our education services, which are bespoke for our own educational system here. Then there is that storytelling that Louise talked about—about making sure that people feel represented, feel reflected, and feel respected by the content that we make.

None of that is a given. What we need in order to make that happen is sustainable funding and, more than that, the ability to pivot and change with the times quickly. Across all of that, our audiences tell us that they want distinctive Scottish services, and that is what I would say was a success out of the charter.

Q187 Kirsteen Sullivan: What risks or opportunities do you foresee for Scottish audiences and the Scottish creative industry in the Government proposals?

Hayley Valentine: Shall I start with the opportunities? We are moving into a world in which, as I said at the beginning, we are competing globally, and I think there are real opportunities for Scotland to shine in that regard. We talked a lot about “Traitors” earlier—rightly so; it is a



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huge success—and the more we can build those collaborative relationships, both within other parts of the BBC and much more broadly, the better. We are working at the moment with a wide range of third-party providers, from Sky New Zealand to HBO—a huge number of people—where we can use the collaborative model that Louise and her team are so good at to make sure that we are not just representing Scotland within Scotland but showcasing the best of Scottish stories and the best of Scottish talent to the whole world.

On the risks, clearly we are in really challenging times. We are talking about the future of the BBC per se. Not very much keeps me awake at night, but there is a concern that there is perhaps a passivity. That is actually not what we found—as I say, 60,000 people replied to the survey about what they care about and what they want from us. We clearly need a sustainable financial model in order to make that happen.

I am not here to manage decline. I read something recently about a producer who had made a series for the BBC a while ago and said we wouldn't do that anymore, but I just do not think that is the case. We are making high-end and impactful drama, comedy, factual, news and sport, and we need to continue to be able to do that. As I say, I am not here to cut up a smaller slice of the pie—that is not where I want us to get to—but we need to be in that competition.

It is not just about saying, "The BBC will always be here." I worry that there is passivity, or a sense that the BBC is very easy to knock—we are a big organisation and it is very to criticise us. We provide value for audiences in the UK, particularly in parts like Scotland that really crave distinctive representation, and that absolutely needs to continue. I am delighted when they do, but the streamers come and go. They come and make something like "Dept. Q", which is brilliant, and I am so glad that they do—I absolutely do not want to be the only game in town—but they do not make the volume of portrayal pieces that we do, and they are not committed in the same way we are. I think there is some jeopardy there.

Q188 Kirsteen Sullivan: We have touched a little bit on this, but to what extent do you think that the themes identified in the Government's paper align with the BBC's work in Scotland? Where do you see scope for areas that still have to be addressed?

Hayley Valentine: The one thing I would say, which I mentioned earlier, is that the Government paper is heartening in its sense of the BBC having to represent the UK better, and what the movement might look like to achieve that. That is absolutely aligned with where I am, in that I think there is more to be done on senior leadership and commissioning power, and I would welcome it.

Luke McCullough: I think we agree with a lot of the questions raised by the Government, around both the public purposes of the BBC and ensuring that they remain relevant. What are the public purposes of a media provider as you move into the 2030s? We also agree with them on the

impact of economic growth—that is, the impact of the investment of the public pound throughout the wider sector.

The area of lively debate will probably come around funding. We have already said that we do not think several of the options will work. For example, we do not think that advertising on the BBC would make sense for our audience, or for the sector in particular. If you were to talk to STV, Channel 4 or Sky, they do not particularly love the idea of a BBC selling in an ever-shrinking advertising market, so I can understand why they do not want that either. But we know that our audience does not expect us to be carrying commercials.

We also do not believe that we should sit behind a subscription wall. If you are a public service media provider, you need to have universal access for the public, and putting a paywall between you and the public does not seem like a way in which you can ensure universal access to your public provisions.

Those are two options that we do not favour, and we notice that the UK Government have already said that they do not favour funding the broadcaster through direct taxation. Don't get me wrong: we are clear that we think the licence fee, for example, would need reform, but there a couple of options that feel less appropriate to a public media provider.

Q189 Kirsteen Sullivan: What engagement have you had with the UK Government on the charter review process so far?

Luke McCullough: We have ongoing engagement with the UK Government and with the other Governments of the United Kingdom, who also have a roll through the charter process, as well as with the devolved Administration Parliaments and the UK Parliament. We talk directly to Government, we talk with civil servants and the Opposition parties, and we talk one to one with Members of Parliament who perhaps have a BBC base in their constituency, broadcasting interests or matters raised by their constituents. We are always happy to have absolute dialogue on all the issues that come up, and that will continue.

Q190 Mr MacDonald: You may say this is above your pay grade, but the BBC runs its stories on X, and X and its related sites have become unacceptable to a lot of people. Is whether the BBC should come off X discussed at a senior level in the BBC?

Luke McCullough: The director general was asked this question when he appeared at the Public Accounts Committee of this Parliament earlier this month, and the answer he gave at that point was that he thought it was more appropriate that the BBC stayed in the space to try to counter some of the misinformation that sits on that platform. But I think he also said that we would continue to review that.

Q191 Susan Murray: For full disclosure, I had a very informative visit to BBC Scotland—thank you for that—and I am a huge consumer of BBC radio and of Sounds, as opposed to iPlayer. I do not seem to have enough time for television at the moment. The BBC has recently decided to overhaul “Good



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Morning Scotland”, the radio programme that is on first thing in the morning; why was that decision taken?

Hayley Valentine: We have been looking at Radio Scotland as a whole for various reasons since I started this job. It is very successful and does something that nobody else does. We have not really made any changes to Radio Scotland for quite a long time, partly because, as I have talked about, we are concentrating a lot on the pivot to digital and our audience needs there, and we launched a television channel in 2018, so a lot of our focus has been elsewhere. In that time, there has been not a dramatic but a gradual decline in audience figures for Radio Scotland. We had almost a million people listening five years ago; that has gone down by about 200,000. I felt that it was time to look at all our services across radio and make sure that we are absolutely delivering for our audience.

On the changes to the breakfast programme, we have had a presentation change, for a number of reasons, and we have slightly changed the approach of the programme in terms of its tone. We probably do fewer, bigger big interviews and we have looked at, overall, the tone of voice and the relationship we have with the audience. There is probably a bit more audience interaction in there and so on. We have had really positive feedback so far.

What often happens is that in the gap between announcing something and doing it, we get the doom-mongering: “It’s all going to be awful; it’s not going to do the news anymore; it’s going to play music”—all sorts of things that were never our intention and do not turn out to be true. I think the new programme has, so far—these things take a while to bed in—been a real success on air, but I would look across a couple of years to see what the audience change looks like in terms of the raw numbers. We are getting interaction from audience members we have never had before. People are coming to us and/or interacting with us in a way that they haven’t before.

One of the criticisms we had in the past—it is somehow seen as a bit old-fashioned now—is the sense that, particularly on radio, but across the piece, a lot of interviews, because of time constraints, the nature of interviewing and what was fashionable at the time, gave a lot of heat but no light. We are very interested in light, and we know that is what our audience is looking for. Based on audience research, feedback and the incoming we got, we are giving the big interviews more time to breathe. There is a real benefit to that, particularly for political interviews. We are not into the gotcha moment at all anymore. We try to make sure that our interviewers get the time to make sure that our audiences can analyse what is going on, to get to the heart of the story and to ask the questions that audiences are asking of us.

We do a broad range of content. It still covers international and UK-wide news, but we are absolutely focused on delivering news that matters to people in Scotland. I think the light and shade is slightly different. There is an informality about the programme that perhaps was not quite there before. “Good Morning Scotland” was a brilliant and successful



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programme, but I do think we need to look at change. I cannot sit still and wait for audiences to decline. Some of the fear was that we would somehow lose credibility by being more informal, but I do not think that is the case at all. We have hired two of our finest journalists and finest interviewers to make that programme. I think that informality, credibility and seriousness absolutely go hand in hand on the programme. I am really happy with it so far.

Q192 Susan Murray: I note that your expenditure on radio is staying flat, so it will be really interesting to hear what the listening figures are in due course, once you get a chance to get a realistic—

Hayley Valentine: Yes. To be clear, this was not a savings programme at all. This is about growth.

Chair: Do you want to follow up on the other radio programme, Susan?

Susan Murray: Not really. I think the question has been answered in the fact that they do not have the figures yet. We will have to give them some time.

Q193 Chair: I wondered about the late-night radio show, which I listen to now and again. Do you have a plan for ensuring that emerging and alternative Scottish artists will still be highlighted in the new show?

Hayley Valentine: Absolutely. Again, this was an editorial decision that was based on looking at the figures, which have been declining across the late nights. We needed to do something about it and to try something different. More broadly, I wanted to find places across Radio Scotland where we could bring in new presenters and develop new talent. Clearly, you are not going to do that on your breakfast programme, where we have two of our most established and senior people, but whether it is the Saturday offer, which we have slightly changed, or late nights, we need to find places where we develop talent.

The audience were telling us that they were not consuming those programmes in great numbers. The share of the available audience of that time of night, which is clearly a total that is smaller than it would be at a peak time like breakfast or in the middle of the day, was really small, and had been in gradual decline for quite a long time. Radio knowledge would tell you that people want consistency, so what we have done is bring in one new presenter across four days a week, kept the Friday presenter as is and put Roddy Hart—who, as you know, is a big proponent of new music and the Scottish music scene—in a new show across Saturdays and Sundays. Broadly speaking, we have used different presenters, for a variety of reasons, but largely to try to get some growth into that. That is kind of the beginning and end of it.

The music strategy has not changed. It may be slightly different across different nights of the week. People probably did not quite know where they were going to get more new Scottish music and where they were going to get less. With the Roddy Hart strategy in particular—"Mixtape Side A" and "Mixtape Side B"—you know kind of what you are going to get



there. But we absolutely have a strategy of playing Scottish music, and new Scottish music, across the week. We have done a little bit of research into that. It is early days—we are weeks in, not months in—but, broadly speaking, from the last week of the old line-up in December to the first two weeks of the new line-up, that number has remained the same across the week. Broadly speaking, we are representing the same number of Scottish artists.

I will just add, because a lot has been said and written about this, that we do not use a playlist for this. When you think of a playlist, you think of someone putting it into a computer and out it comes, but we do not have a computer at all for that. We have a playlist across Radio Scotland for four hours a day during the daytime: 10 to 12 and half-past 1 till half-past 3. That playlist is curated by a person—a music scheduler who works with our head of music and events. In any given hour of those peak hours, one artist will be Scottish. It is not an exact science—clearly things happen—but, broadly speaking, across any hour we might play four tracks and one of those will be Scottish. In terms of the evenings, none of that is playlisted—the production of the music is done by the production teams on the programmes. Lynne, who has taken over, is very knowledgeable about music and goes to gigs, and the people who are producing are the same. We are absolutely committed to Scottish music and to new Scottish music.

To go back to my point, ideally we are looking for growth, so if you are an emerging Scottish artist who is concerned about this, you will want more people to listen to your music if you come on. Across the whole piece, you will see that we support BBC Introducing act of the year. Last year's overall UK winner was Scottish—he came from us. We also support the young traditional musician of the year and we have specialist music programmes such as "Travelling Folk" and "Take the Floor". All of the music on Bryan Burnett is chosen by the audience; by definition, a lot of that music is Scottish, although obviously not all of it. Across the piece, we support a lot of specialist music programmes. The late-night programmes are not specialist music programmes, but they are absolutely where they were in terms of supporting those acts.

Luke McCullough: Like you, Chair, I used to sometimes listen to the old schedule, and I heard the last programme of one of the outgoing presenters. There was such a mischaracterisation in some of the coverage about what those programmes were. In the edition I heard, there was Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Crosby, Stills & Nash, the Ramones and a choir from New York. That was a very interesting listen, but it wasn't new and emerging Scottish talent. It was not a new music programme. Reading some of the coverage, you would think we had taken off a new music programme and put something else on. That was not my experience of listening to that output.

Q194 Chair: The BBC described the new programme as being easy listening, and that has led to criticism that there is not the cultural depth that perhaps people want to hear, or claim they want to hear. You said that was misinformation when you appeared at the Scottish Parliament



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Committee. How do you reconcile those two?

Hayley Valentine: I think everything that we do is easy listening. Easy listening can be interpreted in different ways, obviously, and this came from a commissioning brief. Fundamentally, we want audiences to feel a warmth in terms of the presentation style, that they are welcome, and that it is inclusive and indeed an easy listen. It is midnight—you want an easy listen. Easy listening is a genre. We are not playing endless Matt Monro—that is not what we meant at all.

Q195 **Chair:** I understand. I move on to my pet subject, which is the Commonwealth Games. The BBC was not successful in gaining the rights to that. Can you explain why that was? Why were you unable to take on TNT Sports or match their offer? I think the BBC has been the principal broadcaster throughout Commonwealth Games history, so for people like me, that was a bit disappointing. Was there a reason for it?

Hayley Valentine: I have said it already and I will say it again: I am disappointed; I share your disappointment. I really wanted the Commonwealth Games. In my head, it is straightforward—we were outbid. We don't have endless deep pockets. We put in a bid and we were outbid by somebody else. I wish them every success. I hope it is a real success and that they show as much sport as possible.

I have also said that there are ongoing conversations about what it looks like in terms of highlights, other options and news coverage. We will still be committed to covering the Commonwealth Games as much as we possibly can, although it will not be what we hoped. For example, it is important for athletes to wear the Scottish jersey. It is one of the rare chances they get to do that, and we always get great stories out of the Commonwealth Games about ones to watch—up and coming athletes and people you haven't heard of yet.

In the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games, we talk to families who have been taking their kid to swimming lessons since they were five at 7 o'clock in the morning or whatever, or before school. We will still do all of that. We will have content dedicated to the Commonwealth Games on our nightly news programme, on the radio, on digital and everything else, but it will be limited by the fact that we do not have the rights to it.

Q196 **Chair:** Clearly this is a curtailed Commonwealth Games. Everything around it has been done with a lot less lead-in time than there was previously for other games, particularly the 2014 games. There also seemed to be a delay in the beginning of discussions and then in a final agreement being reached about broadcasters. Was there a reason for that, or did it make a difference to your offer?

Hayley Valentine: As you will know, we cannot go into the details of a commercially sensitive conversation. We were in the conversations from the start, but we were just outbid in the end.

Q197 **Chair:** Okay. Do you think the Commonwealth Games organisers have considered the differences that there will be with the different type of

broadcasting from what we have traditionally expected and what the BBC can offer?

Hayley Valentine: If I take my own views—with my BBC hat off— and think about the audience, which is my first concern, the chief executive recently gave evidence to the CMS Committee, and I was heartened by what he said, to be honest with you. I was quietly optimistic that they are going to deliver a volume of content. He was confident about what the offer was and the job they are going to do.

I will be clear that I would have preferred it to be us, but my main concern now is that the audience—the people of Scotland—get as much coverage and as good an experience of Commonwealth Games, particularly of the Scottish athletes competing, as possible. We are still talking to them about what else we can do. It will be very close to where we are in Glasgow. Our symphony orchestra is talking to them about whether it might play a role in the opening ceremony. That is obviously a different conversation than it would have been if we were the host broadcaster. These are early conversations in a different context, but we are absolutely committed to keep doing it. As I say, I really wish them the best. I hope they do a really good job.

Chair: It is good to hear that you are still involved, at least to an extent. Thank you for that.

Q198 **Lillian Jones:** With the success of the BBC's coverage of the world cup qualifications, what update can you give about broadcasting the Scotland men's football team beyond the 2026 world cup, and what are you doing to ensure that men's international football does not return behind a paywall?

Hayley Valentine: You are right: it has been a massive success. I was delighted when we got the rights. As you know, I had to be a little circumspect about that when I sat here last year. Few could have predicted the quality of the football and the edge-of-your-seat of the last game. I am so delighted that we are going to the world cup. We are committed to trying again. Obviously, we do not have endless deep pockets, but I think we have proved that the coverage of the football on the BBC has been excellent. Our commentators have become internationally renowned figures, because of the commentary of that last game.

I was not able to talk about this in such a lot of detail last year, but the funding came as a combination of nations funding, my division, and content funding—that is the way that we managed to do it. We were match-funded, essentially, from the content division, which was a new thing for Scotland. They were persuaded of the value of the rights.

We would need that again—Scotland cannot fund the Scotland men's games on its own. We had the success of the games outside Scotland, however, with the numbers that watched: more than 1 million people watched that last game in Scotland and three times that across the whole of the UK. We left it on iPlayer for longer, because people kept watching it



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back, and there was a whole thing about people watching the game on Christmas Day. I am hopeful that we would be able to do the same thing again.

As I have said repeatedly, the funding challenge is considerable. Every time I put money towards something, I have to stop doing something else. We had to prioritise the football over some other decisions. That is not easy, but I am hopeful and not unenthusiastic about it.

Luke McCullough: It is worth noting that the value of sports rights to broadcasters and others in the UK has risen quite dramatically over the past decade or so. As Hayley Valentine noted earlier, in the same period as when the BBC's funding has reduced by about a third in real terms, the cost of sports rights has doubled. Our ability to have a share of that pie gets ever squeezed.

Q199 **Lillian Jones:** When do you expect to begin discussions about the future broadcasting arrangements for Scotland's men's international football matches?

Hayley Valentine: I hope we would start talking about them after the world cup. I do not have those discussions, but I have a very close relationship with the head of rights. With those two big events—the Scotland men's internationals and, obviously, the Commonwealth Games—we have been on speed dial to each other across the year. He leads those discussions. He is excellent at his job. I hope that we would start those conversations once we have won the world cup.

Lillian Jones: You absolutely stole my line there, Hayley.

Hayley Valentine: What else could I say?

Q200 **Lillian Jones:** Are you committed to ensuring that Scottish women's international football remains accessible to audiences across Scotland?

Hayley Valentine: I will let Louise come in, because she started this process long before I got there, but it has been a huge success for us. The sport has grown and the success of the sport has grown as we have been covering them, but, Louise, do you want to come in on that?

Louise Thornton: We have done a good deal working with BBC ALBA to make sure that the women's internationals can be broadcast. We have done a multi-year deal, which is excellent. That is actually just building on our overall support for women's football.

When I came into this job, I was keen that we had parity for the men's and the women's games, but we did not even have the men's internationals then. We started with the women's internationals, but then also had the women's Scottish cup final and were able to put that on BBC One Scotland, the same as the men's. Yes, we have a really good working relationship with BBC ALBA, and we are committed to developing the women's game together.

Q201 **Mr MacDonald:** When the rights are given—for example, by the



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Commonwealth Games Committee—does that include not just the mathematics, but penetration and what that does for the ability of people, for Scotland, to be able to access it? Is that taken into account?

Luke McCullough: That is a question for the rights holder really, rather than for the broadcaster. I would not necessarily want to second-guess what is on their mind, but other examples of major sporting tournaments that the BBC has the rights for are well covered—tournament organisers are very cognisant of the fact that the BBC reaches so many people across the UK. In Scotland, four out of five people use the BBC every week, and 95% of the population every month. It is open to rights holders to take that into account.

Hayley Valentine: The Commonwealth Games are category B listed, so the highlights have to be free to air. Quite what that looks like, we do not know. I am speculating now, but they could take the paywall down for the highlights or give them to a domestic broadcaster. There are a variety of ways in which that can happen; we do not know the answer to that yet, but as Luke says, that is really a conversation for the Commonwealth Games Committee, not for us.

Mr MacDonald: It might not be your remit, but it is certainly our remit as representatives of the people of Scotland. Maybe we should write a letter to the Commonwealth Games Committee. They were sitting in the same place as you a year ago, and I would like to know the answer.

Chair: That is something to look at, Angus, thank you. That concludes our questions for this morning. Thank you very much again for coming along and giving us so much of your time. It has been very interesting, as it always is when we speak to the BBC. I have a feeling that this is becoming an annual meeting that we might decide to have—perhaps even more frequently, given that we are heading towards charter renewal. It will be really good to keep the engagement going with you to find out what is happening.

Hayley Valentine: Absolutely. Thank you so much for having us. As I say, the charter process is very important to us, so with you, your colleagues and constituents, we want as much engagement as possible, so that Scotland's voice can be heard as loudly as possible. I encourage you all to make your views known.

Chair: I am sure we will. Thank you again.