

Written evidence submitted by UK Music

Pre-legislative scrutiny of the Draft Media Bill – Call for Evidence

Introduction

1. UK Music is the collective voice of the UK's world-leading music industry. UK Music represents all sectors of the music industry – bringing them together to collaborate, campaign and champion music. A full list of UK Music members can be found in **Annex A**.
2. The UK music industry is a key national asset. It contributes £4 billion to the economy, employs 145,000 people and generates exports of £2.5 billion. Music represents the best of British to the world and is an industry where Britain is already global. In 2020, 1 in 10 songs streamed globally were by UK artists.
3. The UK's network of public service broadcasters play a vital role in supporting the success of the music industry. They provide a platform for artists, musicians, songwriters, and composers, allowing them to reach a wider audience and gain exposure. They cover a diverse range of musical genres, fund and organise live events such as the Proms and Radio 1's Big Weekend and provide wide-ranging coverage of music events and festivals. This not only benefits established artists but also provides opportunities for new and emerging talent.
4. However, we are concerned by recent cuts to the music provision offered by the BBC and proposed changes outlined in the draft Media Bill. These changes potentially threaten protections that public service broadcasters currently provide for musical content, and we ask that the Government reconsider their proposals.

Media Bill

5. Clause 1 of the draft Media Bill amends Section 264 of the Communications Act 2003 to update and simplify the current public service broadcasting remit. Subsection 6(b) of the original Section 264 notes that the purposes of public services broadcasting are fulfilled if:
 - *the cultural activity in the United Kingdom, and its diversity, are reflected, supported and stimulated by the representation in those services (taken together) of drama, comedy **and music**, by the inclusion of feature films in those services and by the treatment of other visual and performing arts.*
6. Clause 1, subsection 5 of the draft Media Bill removes any specific mention of music, or other cultural activities, and replaces these with a new public service remit. The removal of this from legislation dilutes some of the protections given to help maintain cultural content on the BBC and other PSBs. Music has enormous value to society. Not only at the economic

level we have already set out, but music also increasingly has an impact on our nations. health and wellbeing as our recent Power of Music report set out.¹ Music's impact on communities across the UK will also be set out soon in a forthcoming report. **The Government should amend the Media Bill to retain music and other cultural activity as part of the remit for public service broadcasters.**

7. Clause 38 amends Section 314 of the Communications Act 2003, *Local content and character of local sound broadcasting services* so that OFCOM will no longer be required to secure that stations provide non-news local material. The explanatory notes specifically refer to music as being part of the 'non-news local material'. We believe local stations providing musical content is vital to the music ecosystem, giving a platform to new and upcoming artists. As we will go onto say in this submission BBC Introducing is a vital platform for breaking new musical acts and there has been recent concern about cuts to this service. This proposal could make it even more vulnerable. **We call on the Government to scrap this amendment to ensure that music remains a key part of local analogue radio services.**

BBC Radio Cuts

8. The BBC and music enjoy a particularly strong relationship. It relies heavily on music across all its platforms (radio, television and online), and provides a significantly broader and more distinctive offer for music when compared to its competitors. Data from PRS for Music shows that 75% of all tracks broadcast on the full range of BBC radio services were not broadcast on commercial radio.²
9. Much of the BBC's support for emerging musical talent comes from its BBC Introducing shows which are feature on 32 of its 39 local radio stations. According to the BBC, over 500,000 tracks have been uploaded to BBC Introducing since its launch. In 2020, nearly 2000 emerging music creators received their first ever music royalty because of a BBC play. The BBC Introducing network also plays a crucial role in live music, providing many artists their first festival exposure through the stages they operate at festivals including Reading and Glastonbury.
10. In February 2023, the BBC announced that the 32 BBC Music Introducing shows will be replaced by 20. These shows are particularly good at supporting new music talent, with presenters having a very close connection to the music scenes in their local area. Florence and the Machine, George Ezra and Jake Bugg are just some of the artists whose careers were launched by BBC Introducing. In addition, producers and engineers, even established ones, are dependent on platforms like BBC Introducing to build their reputations and advance their careers.
11. Equally, BBC Introducing is a vital tool used by the UK's independent record label sector, who work with local radio contacts to promote their artists for free, allowing them to achieve

¹ [Power of Music 2022 - UK Music](#)

² [UK Music, BBC Charter Review Submission 2015](#)

cut-through in a highly competitive market. This in turn helps the growth of the independent record label sector which saw a fifth consecutive year of growth in 2022.³

12. These cuts may be a consequence of the funding and operational settlement between the BBC and government yet they still amount to a diminution of service to a great asset to the BBC in supporting the music talent pipeline - 7 of the top 10 biggest selling songs of 2022 came from artists championed by their local BBC Introducing show – **we are calling on the Government to support and work with the BBC to establish a framework to enable BBC Introducing to continue to flourish.**

Cuts to BBC Orchestras and Singers

13. The BBC is the single largest employer of musicians in the UK. It employs more than 400 contract musicians and many hundreds more on a freelance basis. It also one of the largest commissioners of new music: An Ivors Academy survey of previous winners and nominees of the Composer Awards found that 62% of composers had received a commission from the BBC.
14. The world-famous BBC Singers and the BBC orchestras are cultural ambassadors representing the United Kingdom's rich cultural heritage on both domestic and international levels. They have created an immense legacy for performing cutting edge musical works and performances crafted by our creative talent.
15. In March, the BBC announced proposed cuts of 20% to the salaried posts of its three English Orchestras – BBC Symphony, BBC Concert, and the Manchester-based Philharmonic. The BBC Singers and orchestras are a vital source of employment for musicians in the UK and are a key asset that sets the BBC apart from other commercial broadcasters. They are a core part of the BBC proms and one of the most significant players in the global classical music industry.
16. Following backlash and a 150,000-signature petition, the BBC paused its decision to close the BBC Singers and announced they will explore alternative funding models. The threat of cuts to the BBC Singers and orchestras remains, with the threat being more acute for the latter.
17. The BBC Singers and orchestras are trend-setters internationally and a model for other Public Service Broadcasters. Their output is impossible to replicate on the open market, with their quality, agility and flexibility giving them a unique ability produce a vibrant music repertoire at a low cost. These ensembles have played an enormous part in shaping UK and global culture through their ability to perform new music at the highest level. **We are therefore calling on the Government to work with the BBC to scrap these cuts and to commit to maintaining the BBC's performing groups as an essential part of their public service remit.**

³ <https://www.bpi.co.uk/news-analysis/independent-music-sector-on-course-to-grow-market-share-for-fifth-consecutive-year-in-the-uk/>