

Broadcast 2040+ campaign—written evidence (FON0034)

House of Lords Communications and Digital Select Committee inquiry: The future of news: impartiality, trust, and technology

We welcome this opportunity to respond to the Communications and Digital Committee’s call for evidence on the future of news. We are responding directly to Question 5a:

5) Are there any actions the Government should take to address concerns around due impartiality, trust, and the influence of technology platforms?

a) Are changes needed to the Media Bill?

The Broadcast 2040+ coalition comprises a broad range of voices working together to achieve a shared goal – to secure the future of broadcast TV and radio services to 2040 and beyond. We support the modernisation of broadcasting legislation and the ongoing development of Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) and Public Service Channels (PSCs) in a market where consumers have a wide-ranging choice in how they watch or listen to them. Our focus is ensuring that digital terrestrial television (DTT) and broadcast radio remains available to the millions of people who rely on them for decades to come.

News broadcasting represents an important aspect of the public service content delivered by broadcast TV and radio services. Ensuring ongoing universal access to this content relies on guaranteeing that the technology which supplies that content to millions of people every day is protected for the long term.

We welcomed the Culture Secretary’s comments at the Royal Television Society last year, during which she outlined that the government will not ‘pull the rug from under the devoted audiences of Freeview channels’. This was a positive signal, but now is the time for the government to turn rhetoric into reality and deliver for the millions of people who day in, day out, rely on the free-to-air, universal, and high-quality entertainment and information that broadcast services provide.

Millions of people access public service news content, and other entertainment, through broadcast services. Ofcom’s Media Nations 2023 Report¹ showed that broadcast TV has a strong weekly reach of 79%, and that the use of DAB radio services is rising. 88% of adults listen to the radio weekly,² with most using DAB or AM/FM radio. 88% of the time audiences spend engaging with the BBC is through its broadcast services.³

Broadcast services deliver valuable content, including trusted news, entertainment, live sport, and programmes that educate and bring communities together. Currently, this content is universally available through the Freeview

¹ Ofcom: Media Nations 2023, August 2023, [link](#).

² RAJAR: RAJAR data release, quarter 4, 2023 – All Radio Listening, [link](#).

³ National Audit Office, 14 December 2022, *A digital BBC*, [link](#).

service, delivered using the DTT network, and via broadcast radio services received through an aerial in homes, businesses, and vehicles across the UK. There is strong public support for retaining broadcast services, as evidenced by numerous pieces of research.

This includes:

- [Research](#) from Ipsos, commissioned on behalf of the campaign, which found that **90%** of adults in Great Britain believe these services should be continually supported. Importantly, it highlighted the significant negative impact of the potential loss of broadcast TV and radio, particularly for those who are vulnerable. A quarter of people (**25%**) said that they would be “very lonely” if they lost their Freeview services, rising to more than 2 in 5 (**44%**) of those who are 65 and older and living alone.
- [Polling](#) by Strand Partners found that **8 in 10** people value broadcast TV and radio as affordable entertainment options for their families, with **72%** saying the loss of DTT would have a significant negative impact on the UK. Furthermore, it found that half of people are either unable to afford TV subscriptions or do not think them value for money (**50%**), and more than half (**53%**) aren’t interested in switching from TV to streaming apps.
- A [report](#) published by the over-60s advocacy group Silver Voices, a founding member of the Broadcast 2040+ coalition, revealed that over **80%** of respondents believe broadcast TV and radio should be protected well beyond 2040 – to at least 2051. Two in three (**67%**) worry that large sections of the population would be left behind if broadcast TV and radio were not protected, citing older generations, disabled people and those living in rural areas as most vulnerable to future changes.

Broadcast services play a vital role in ensuring the universal reach of PSB and other highly valued content, with nearly everyone (some **98.5%** of the population) able to consume free-to-view content. This means that people across the whole of the UK, including those in rural areas, those in more disadvantaged communities, and those who do not want, cannot receive, or cannot afford high-speed fixed broadband services, still have access to a rich variety of content.

While many viewers and listeners are now also able to access public service content via online platforms, it is not the case for all. Millions of people are expected to continue to rely heavily, or exclusively, on broadcast platforms into the future.

This includes people who are unable to afford, or do not want to pay for, high-speed fixed broadband. Ofcom reported that around one-in-ten households (2.4 million UK households) find it difficult to afford their broadband service.⁴ In the year to 2023, affordability challenges drove as many as one million people to cut off their broadband.⁵ In addition, there are many people that choose not to have fixed broadband; Ofcom has previously found that 5% of households rely solely on mobile internet access to connect to the internet.⁶ Recent research from

⁴ Ofcom: Communications Affordability Tracker, October 2023, [link](#).

⁵ Citizens Advice, 18 May 2023, *One million lose broadband access as cost-of-living crisis bites*, [link](#).

⁶ Ofcom: Digital exclusion: a review of Ofcom's research on digital exclusion among adults in the UK, [link](#).

Silver Voices, 'Safeguarding Universality: The Future of Broadcast TV and Radio',⁷ cited individuals' inability to afford broadband bills (**46%**) and the cost of online subscriptions (**53%**) as the top barriers to moving to online-only TV and radio services over the next 15 years.

A recent [report](#) from EY forecasts that 5.5 million UK premises (almost 1 in 5 of the total) will be without a high-speed broadband subscription in 2040, making the case for the ongoing need for broadcast services.

There are also millions of people that lack the digital skills to use online platforms. Around 10.2 million adults are unable to complete all eight of the 'Foundation Level' online tasks set out in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.⁸ These fundamental tasks include turning on a device, entering login information, using a keyboard or locating a web browser.

At present, broadcast services are only protected until the early 2030s. The DTT multiplex licences expire in 2034 and can be revoked from 2030. Given the importance of these services to millions of people, we believe that they should receive additional, long-term protection in the Media Bill.

We supported Douglas Ross MP's New Clause 8 at Commons Report stage, which would have given long term legal certainty for the DTT platform. We hope that peers will amend the Media Bill to insert suitable legal protections for broadcast services.

Without additional safeguards, there is a risk that audiences who rely on broadcast services to access news are deprived of services in the future, undermining the principle of universality which ensures that everyone across the nations of the UK can access free public service content.

It is important that audiences who use and rely on broadcast services are not disadvantaged, particularly those that are vulnerable – those that are older, unable to afford high-quality broadband, or live in remote areas. Being able to access or afford high-quality broadband or being able or willing to sign-up to and use online platforms should not become a barrier to accessing public service content.

The Broadcast 2040+ coalition urges peers to ensure the Bill champions the vital role that broadcasting plays in providing universal public service content, which underpins societal connections and the sharing of important information.

For more information, visit: <https://www.broadcast2040plus.org/>

⁷ Safeguarding Universality: The Future of Broadcast TV and Radio services October, 2023, [link](#).

⁸ House of Lord Communications and Digital Committee, 29 June 2023, *Digital exclusion*, [link](#).

Full details on the partners:

Silver Voices: *Silver Voices is the UK-wide campaign organisation for the over 60s. With over 5000 paid-up members, and thousands of others supporting their social media channels, they campaign on all issues which have a major impact on the older generations, including pensions, health and social care and retirement housing.*

Age UK: *Age UK's vision is a world where everyone can love later life. They know it won't be easy getting there, but they believe it's how things should be. With your help, they work every day to make it happen.*

Children's Media Foundation: *The Children's Media Foundation is dedicated to ensuring UK children have access to the best possible media, on all platforms, at all ages. The CMF is governed by a Board of concerned individuals. Its activities in various fields are undertaken by the CMF Executive who are all volunteers.*

Rural Services Network: *RSN is the national champion for rural services, ensuring that people in rural areas have a strong voice. They are fighting for a fair deal for rural communities to maintain their social and economic viability for the benefit of the nation as a whole.*

Arqiva: *In today's switched-on world, companies – entire industries – are grappling with how to share data and content across a myriad of connected devices. That's where Arqiva comes in. Fundamentally, they're enablers. Behind the scenes, they apply their knowledge and expertise to stitch together technologies that connect broadcasters and utilities to their customers, and the content, data, information, and entertainment they want.*

British Broadcast Challenge: *The British Broadcasting Challenge has two simple goals: To promote a wide-ranging discussion about the future of UK Public Service Broadcasting – its potential for good, its ability to transmit truth, its institutional place at the heart of the UK, and how it can be improved for the digital age. Secondly, to have this debate in public.*

The Voice of the Listener & Viewer: *The Voice of the Listener & Viewer (VLV) is an independent, non-profit making membership-based charity, free from political and sectarian affiliations. VLV works to promote high quality broadcasting which maintains the democratic and cultural traditions of the UK.*

Digital Poverty Alliance: *Their vision: To live in a world which enables everyone to access the life changing benefits that digital brings. Their mission: To end digital poverty once and for all by 2030. What they do: They convene, compel, and inspire collaboration for the UK & global community to lead sustainable action against digital poverty.*

The Campaign to End Loneliness: *The Campaign to End Loneliness believe that people of all ages need connections that matter. They have been experts in the field of loneliness and connection since 2011. Their vision is that everyone can live a life free from chronic loneliness.*

Citizens Advice Cornwall: *Citizens Advice Cornwall is an independent charity and member of the national Citizens Advice Service. The organisation exists to offer free, independent, and confidential advice to everyone to help solve their problems and improve their lives – from consumer issues to problems at work and from benefit applications to debt relief and homelessness – they’re here to help everyone regardless of race, class, religion, politics or sexual identity.*

Churches 4 Positive Change: *Churches 4 Positive Change are made up of Pastors from various church denominations and community leaders in Wolverhampton. They formed as a result of the work that ‘Men 4 Positive Change’ delivered in the city over the past five years. They formed to respond to the rise in gang and serious youth violence in the city and aim to empower people to facilitate change.*

County Durham Community Foundation: *County Durham Community Foundation is a charity and company limited by guarantee. It is governed by a Board of Trustees made up of a wide range of professionals who either live, work, or have an interest in County Durham. The work of County Durham Community Foundation is also supported by their President, patrons, and ambassadors.*

Age UK: North Tyneside: *The Age UK North Tyneside Group was established in 1972 and has grown to become the largest local voluntary organisation in the borough. They have over 250 staff and over 135 volunteers providing a wide range of services for older adults in North Tyneside.*

Cumbria Community Foundation: *The Cumbria Community Foundation are an independent local charity run by a board of trustees who are elected annually by their members. With the support of their founders they have made grants totalling more than £50m since inception in 1999. They provide a means by which people and organisations can make a difference to the most disadvantaged people in their community. Cumbria Community Foundation is part of a national and international network of community foundations. Together they seek to support people and organisations wishing to invest in the local community.*

Focus4Hope Brighouse: *Focus4Hope is a registered charity, based in Brighouse that seeks to provide support for the homeless, elderly, isolated, and vulnerable in West Yorkshire. They were founded in 2016 as a community-based group of friends, who wanted to develop ways of collectively making a difference in the region. From these humble beginnings, the organisation has gone on to become a pillar in the local charitable community. They have had the great pleasure of helping thousands of vulnerable people in our area, as well as refugees in France.*

WorldDAB: *The global industry forum for DAB digital radio. WorldDAB delivers tailored solutions and advice on all aspects of the switch from analogue to digital radio including regulation, licensing, technical trials, network build out, marketing and production of new digital radio content.*

Frontier Smart Technologies: *Frontier is a pioneer in technologies for connected audio and the market leader in DAB/DAB+ radios and SmartRadio*

solutions. Powering over 50 million devices worldwide. Frontier provides a range of chips and modules, from turnkey entry-level solutions to sophisticated, highly configurable options, to leading consumer electronics brands.

Fix Radio: *Fix Radio - The Builders Station, is the UK's national DAB station made especially for tradespeople. Featuring trade influencers and presenters like The Bald Builders Breakfast with Brad and Sam (Britain's most followed builders on social media), and dedicated programming for individual trades such as carpentry, heating and plumbing and plastering, the station covers all aspects of life on site.*

Communicorp UK: *At CCUK they pride themselves on creating high-quality, bespoke, campaigns across the marketing mix. From radio advertising on some of the UK's most exciting brands to creative print and copywriting.*

Boom Radio: *Boom Radio is a digital radio start-up, using DAB and online technology to broadcast to the UK's 14 million baby boomers.*

LTVN: *The Local TV Network represents the interests of the 34 Ofcom-licensed local television services in the UK. Launched in 2013, Local TV covers localities from Belfast to Medway, Aberdeen to Bristol, delivering locally focused news bulletins on Freeview. They engage with local government, public bodies and media on numerous issues related to policies, relevant access and commercial agreements, on behalf of their services.*

PBS America: *PBS America is the UK home of television America's Public Broadcasting Service, available 24 hours a day on Freeview 84, Freesat 155, Virgin 273 and Sky 174.*

Talking Pictures TV: *Talking Pictures TV (TPTV) is the UK's largest independent television channel and is unique in targeting lovers of classic film and television.*

Together TV: *Together TV is the social change broadcaster brought to you by the experience of Community Channel, the supporter-owned TV channel established in 2000. Together TV inspires and connects people, breathing new life into what a TV channel can be.*

United Christian Broadcasters: *United Christian Broadcasters is all about making sure that every person, in every place, every moment of the day has the opportunity to hear, watch, or read the Word of God in a relevant and engaging way. We do this through 2 national DAB Christian radio stations (UCB 1 and UCB 2), a Bible devotional sent to your home each quarter (the UCB Word For Today), and a Prayerline team who are available to pray with you and for you (whatever your situation).*

Age of Concern North Norfolk: *The registered charity's aim is to maintain its clients' independence and help them to continue to live at home and participate in community life for as long as possible. Through attending the day service hub, clients can have regular social contact, reducing social isolation and helping maintain mental abilities.*

Age UK North Yorkshire and Darlington: *In operation since 1989, Age UK North Yorkshire & Darlington has been offering a wide range of services, all tailored for the over 50's. The organisation's mission is – "to enhance the health and well-being of older people by promoting quality-assured activity, information and care; ensuring that older people have opportunity for choice and continued independence".*

National Federation of the Blind UK: *National Federation of the Blind of the UK is a registered charity founded by blind and partially sighted people in 1947 and is an independent, non political, self-help campaigning group, which is still run by blind and partially sighted people. With representatives in numerous organisations and committees, working with Local Authority and Government departments, it strives to improve the overall welfare and quality of daily life for all blind, partially sighted, deaf-blind people and those whose sight impairment is part of multi disability.*

The British Entertainment Industry Radio Group: *The British Entertainment Industry Radio Group (BEIRG) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that works for the benefit of all those who produce, distribute and ultimately consume content made using radio spectrum in the UK. Venues and productions that depend on radio spectrum include TV, film, sport, theatre, churches, schools, live music, newsgathering, political and corporate events, and many others.*

Sunrise Radio: *Sunrise Radio in its 34th year of broadcasting, was the UK's 1st 24-hour Asian radio station and has remained the number 1 commercial Asian radio station during this time. It's the UK's only national commercial Asian radio service and is synonymous with British Asians, setting Asian culture in a Western context. Its importance to British Asians is unprecedented, it also provides British-born Asians with a link to their heritage through its content.*

Better Media: *Better Media is a membership organisation campaigning for UK media reform by helping people to be the media, know the media and change the media. The successor to the trade union-founded Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, Better Media maintains strong ties to the trade union movement.*

Age UK Mid Mersey: *Age UK Mid Mersey is a local independent charity which is partnered with Age UK. It supports people aged 50+ who live in Knowsley, St Helens, Warrington and Halton. It provides a holistic service, known as 'Living Well' which comprises of four themes: Health and Wellness, Social Inclusion, Personal Independence, Staying Connected.*

Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin: *Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin is an independent charity working in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin to offer support and services to older people. They work in the local community to help older people for 70 years. They have over 50 dedicated staff and over 800 volunteers helping them to deliver services and activities for older people in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.*