

Written evidence submitted by UK Music

UK Music is the collective voice of the UK's world-leading music industry. We represent all sectors of our industry – bringing them together to collaborate, campaign, and champion music. The members of UK Music are: AIM, BPI, FAC, The Ivors Academy, MMF, MPA, MPG, MU, PPL, PRS for Music. UK Music also has an informal association with LIVE (Live music Industry Venues & Entertainment).

Executive Summary

1. The 2027 BBC Charter review provides an opportunity to secure the future of both the BBC and the UK's world-leading music industry so they can continue to provide cultural and economic benefits for generations to come.
2. We outline the successful symbiotic relationship between the BBC and the music industry: the unique requirements under the Charter Agreement and Operating Licence for the BBC to platform British, new and specialist music, which must be maintained and strengthened; the BBC's key role in supporting Research and Development (R&D) for music, education, universal access to music and a global platform for music; and the key role music plays in fulfilling the BBC's public purposes, as well as driving new audiences and building public support for the BBC. We also outline key benefits and strengths of the BBC's musical output that are not available elsewhere and give the UK a competitive edge.
3. To counter the challenge of reduced licence fee revenues and increased production costs, a more sustainable method of public funding is required. We support a sustainable, publicly funded BBC with capacity to increase rather than decrease its musical activities. Making content from a popular and economically successful sector like music a priority can help the BBC maintain and grow audience support.
4. Just maintaining the status quo will have a negative impact on the BBC's musical output, reducing its ability to fulfil its public purposes.

1. The Purpose of the BBC

Why the Music industry and the BBC are a symbiotic success story

5. The BBC's public purposes as set out in the Royal Charter must continue to recognise and protect its irreplaceable role in sustaining the UK music industry — one of the UK's most

successful sectors and a major contributor to national identity, soft power and economic growth, as identified in the government's Industrial Strategy¹.

6. As well as the broad public purposes, the Royal Charter also requires Ofcom to set out the details of the Operating Licence that includes specific requirements for British, new and specialist content²:
7. For example, for BBC Public Radio, services must: *“provide a broad range of original UK content; support new UK talent and creative innovation, including commissioning new titles and output from a broad range of independent producers.”*
8. And there are more detailed requirements for BBC radio stations, for example, for Radio 1: *“In each Financial Year at least 45% of the music in Daytime is from UK acts; in each Financial Year at least 50% of the music in Daytime is New Music, of which a significant proportion must come from new and emerging UK artists; and it broadcasts at least 3,129 hours of specialist music.”*
9. For Radio 2: *“in each Financial Year at least 40% of the music in Daytime is from UK acts;”*
10. For Radio 3: *“in each Financial Year at least 45% of its musical output is live or specially recorded music; and it commissions and broadcasts new musical works.”*
11. Music is an intrinsic part of British culture, and the BBC is the single most important public institution supporting its development, diversity, national and global reach. Therefore, these requirements under the Operating Licence, required by the Charter Agreement³ should be maintained and strengthened where necessary.
12. The UK music industry grew by 5% last year, contributing £8 billion in GVA, £4.8 billion in exports, and employing 220,000 people⁴. Yet as streaming platforms, global media companies and algorithm-driven discovery reshape how people access content it is becoming increasingly difficult for artists to cut through. While still the second largest recorded music export market, UK market share of recorded music is falling⁵.
13. In this environment, the BBC is not simply a broadcaster; it is a vital partner of the UK music industry. Its activities, underpinned by its public purposes and regulated through the Operating Licence, directly enable the discovery, development and promotion of UK talent in ways that no commercial platform can replicate. The BBC is also the largest employer of musicians, and the largest commissioner of new music in the UK.⁶
14. In return the sector enables the Corporation to achieve its public purposes⁷ of supporting learning for people of all ages; showcasing the most creative, highest quality and distinctive output by showcasing UK musicians, songwriters and composers; reflecting and representing the UK's diverse communities through broadcasting diverse content (including content which

has less commercial appeal); and reflecting the UK's culture and values to the world through the nations' musical exports.

The BBC is the UK's most important engine for R&D in music

15. *BBC Introducing* is one of the most significant talent pipelines in the UK. It provides emerging artists and songwriters from across the country with airplay, editorial support, festival slots and national exposure at a critical stage in their careers. In a market where low barriers to entry mean millions of tracks compete for attention, *BBC Introducing* offers a trusted route for new UK talent to break through. The *BBC Introducing* stages at festivals are often the first-time artists perform at a major event, and its support has been instrumental in the early careers of many of today's leading acts from Adele to Florence and the Machine. Twenty-five artists that began on *BBC Introducing* have gone on to have number one albums and therefore have created strong economic returns for the UK.⁸
16. The BBC's role in showcasing new British artists extends internationally through its partnership with the *British Music Embassy* ("BME"), the official UK musical presence at *South by Southwest* (SXSW) cultural and tech conference in the US, a collaboration between the BPI, PPL, PRS for Music, the Department for Business & Trade (DBT), the British Council and PRS Foundation. The BBC broadcasts live radio programming and artist interviews from *BME* stages in Austin, Texas across both *BBC Introducing* and *BBC 6 Music*. Since 2008, the *BME* has showcased 775 UK acts⁹, many of whom have gone on to major global success. For many artists, this is their first opportunity to perform in the US and reach international audiences.
17. Without the reliance on box office income, the BBC Orchestras are able to tackle ambitious repertoires from diverse composers, allowing more risk to be taken in programming and commissioning.
18. BBC emerging talent competitions such as *BBC Young Musician* offer a career springboard and national profile to exceptional young talent, which previous winners have reported as "life-changing".¹⁰

The BBC provides the breadth and diversity of music output that commercial platforms do not

19. The BBC broadcasts a far broader range of music than commercial radio. According to PPL data, in 2024, the BBC played 180,000 unique recordings across its radio network, compared

with 147,000 on commercial radio. BBC 6 Music alone broadcast 38,000 unique recordings, far exceeding the commercial average of 2,500 per station. PRS for Music data shows that 138,099 unique works were played across all BBC radio stations in 2024, of which 76% were not played on commercial radio.

20. This diversity is essential in a fragmented media environment where algorithmic systems impact cultural exposure. The BBC's specialist genre shows such as rock, folk and jazz, through to stations such as Asian Network, 1Xtra and Radio 3 and output in the UK's minority languages ensures that the full spectrum of UK music is represented, nurtured and heard.
21. The BBC is the official broadcast partner of the *Mercury Prize*, the BPI-run event which champions the 12 best British and Irish albums of the year across diverse genres. Its coverage on both TV and radio brings these artists — many of whom may never top the charts — to a wider audience and has enabled the Prize to expand beyond London for the first time in 2025.
22. The BBC's unique ability to create opportunities across diverse genres whilst maintaining high standards helps to retain a large pool of talent in the UK, working to high standards, and is a key factor in giving the UK music industry an advantage over international competitors.
23. Every October, BPI and the Entertainment Retailers Association (ERA) host *National Album Day* - a national moment to celebrate the art form of the album. The BBC are founding supporters of *National Album Day*, and each annual edition takes place in association with BBC Radio 2 as its official broadcast partner. *National Album Day* recognises the creativity and artistry behind albums and their role in popular culture. The day aims to encourage listening and consumption of albums, in particular among younger audiences, and the involvement of BBC Radio 2 and BBC Music is critical to the day's success and the achievement of its goals. *National Album Day* has also enabled those involved in the production of music to highlight their craft to a wider audience, with the Music Producers Guild (MPG) regularly hosting public events for *National Album Day* where producers of culturally significant albums share behind-the-scenes stories and knowledge with members of the public.

The BBC amplifies the UK's cultural soft power and global reputation for music

24. In 2024, *Glastonbury* headline sets from artists including Dua Lipa and Coldplay, were available live internationally for the first time on BBC.com¹¹, and the BBC's longstanding major role in the *Eurovision Song Contest* meant it was best placed to host the competition on behalf of Ukraine in 2023.

25. BBC Radio 1's partnership with the Official Charts Company ensures that the BBC remains the chronicler of the official history of British contemporary music, a role it has fulfilled for almost 50 years.
26. Research by Spirit of 2012 and polling company Public First found that 74% of UK adults said that events that attract positive international attention for the UK make them prouder, and 69% of UK adults say that hosting events improves the global reputation of the UK¹². Newly released data from the BPI shows that music is the cultural output the British public feels the UK can be most proud of. Three-quarters of respondents believe that music by British artists helps to improve the UK's global standing, while more than two-thirds agreed the UK government should be doing more to support homegrown music¹³.

The BBC sustains the UK's specialist music ecosystems

27. BBC Radio 3 is the only station to broadcast daily live classical music, delivering more than 440 live or specially recorded performances each year, including at least 25 newly commissioned works¹⁴. Research from The Ivors Academy shows that 62% of winners and nominees at its *Classical Awards* had received one or more commissions from the BBC or its ensembles.¹⁵
28. The BBC's employed ensembles in cities around the UK provide a focus for thriving classical music ecosystems outside of London, providing a clear career pathway for musicians and those in associated professions (sound engineers, orchestra managers) in locations that may not otherwise support this, and a clear career destination for HE institutions. Additionally, the employed ensembles help sustain a pool of freelancers working to equally high standards, again, supporting a wider local ecosystem
29. *BBC Radio Scotland's Young Traditional Musician* competition preserves and promotes national musical identities while giving young performers a platform. These activities are central to the UK's cultural infrastructure and there is no equivalent ecosystem in commercial broadcasting.

The BBC supports learning about music for people of all ages

30. The BBC's *Ten Pieces* scheme is a set of teaching resources aimed to support seven to eleven-year-olds with lesson plans, arrangements and AV resources about classical music, while the new *Get Singing* programme aims to get eleven to fourteen-year-olds singing inside and outside of the classrooms. These resources include CPD for teachers and contributions from high profile artists and the employed ensembles¹⁶.

31. The BBC employed ensembles, (*BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra Wales, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, and BBC Singers*) provide education and learning, stimulating creativity and cultural excellence whilst serving the UK's nations, regions and communities. This is achieved not just via broadcasting but by taking orchestral performance into communities and education settings across the UK.
32. *BBC Bitesize* contains free resources to support students and teachers of music at all stages in the curriculum. High-quality live events, including those aimed at children and families such as the *CBeebies Proms*, have affordable options for in-person attendance and are universally available to watch and listen on BBC channels, *BBC Sounds* and *iPlayer* platforms.
33. These resources are vital against a backdrop of historic deprioritisation of arts subjects in schools, real terms cuts to school budgets and falling numbers of students taking music at GCSE and A-level.

The BBC's public purposes must continue to reflect its essential role in the music ecosystem

34. The BBC's ability to support the UK music industry is not incidental to its mission — it is a core expression of its current public purposes:
 - **To show the most creative, highest quality and distinctive output and services.**
 - **To reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all the United Kingdom's nations and regions and, in doing so, to support the creative economy across the UK.**
 - **To reflect the UK, its culture and values to the world.**
 - **To support learning for people of all ages.**

These must be preserved in the next charter.

35. While there is significant support among UK Music's membership for an additional public purpose to support economic growth, some members consider the reference to supporting the creative economy in the current public purposes sufficient.
36. Alongside the existing public purposes there should also be a greater focus on the creative workforce — the musicians, songwriters, composers, producers and technicians who make the industry's £8 billion economic contribution possible. Without them there would be no economic growth, no content, and no audience.

2. Funding

37. UK Music favours a sustainable, publicly funded BBC, that has capacity to increase, not decrease its musical activities that are a core pillar of delivering on its public purposes.
38. We recognise that any change to the funding model is not simply about budget but could represent a fundamental change in what the BBC can deliver for audiences and within the music ecosystem.
39. The Corporation recently laid out the funding challenges it faces, a 24% fall in licence fee income since 2016-17, and a mismatch between the 80% of people who pay the licence fee and the 94% of people who access BBC services. It stressed that its funding model is no longer sustainable and must be modernised to preserve a universal public service and efficiencies alone cannot bridge the funding gap caused by rising production costs and declining licence fee revenue.
40. A vibrant and healthy BBC is essential for continued success and growth in the UK music industry. Any approach that reduces the BBC's ability to champion, promote and invest in British music will have damaging consequences. Just as other sectors have public investment in R&D, through UKRI and research grants, the BBC delivers part of the R&D function for the music industry as one of the few institutions that consistently invests in music across genres, regions and career stages.
41. As outlined above, many of unique functions of the BBC are not currently fulfilled by the commercial sector, so it must be appropriately funded to fulfil these. Simply replacing the current shortfall in public funding with commercial revenue derived from music would fundamentally alter the nature or the BBC's musical output and have a detrimental impact on its ability to fulfil its public purposes.
42. A more sustainable method of public funding is required, as maintaining the status quo will have a negative impact on the BBC's musical output, reducing its ability to fulfil its public purposes.

Below are some of the risks of failing to address the current funding challenges:

43. **Fewer opportunities for new artists** — Platforms such as *BBC Introducing* are often the first national springboard for signed and unsigned musicians and are widely valued by both independent and major labels and artists. Reduced funding would limit discovery, exposure and development at a time when other routes are already shrinking. New music obligations should remain within Operating Licence Agreements in order to reach new audiences, and consider being added for music adjacent programming, e.g. TV and radio programmes about new music.

44. **Reduced live events broadcasts** – such as coverage of the *Mercury Prize*, *Glastonbury* or the *Proms*, reducing the UK’s cultural standing in the world, diminishing the platforms and the potential for commercial success for those artists.
45. **Reduced music education and early-years engagement** — Projects that nurture young talent, from *Ten Pieces* to *BBC Young Composer*, rely on stable funding. Cuts would narrow access in a subject that already has unequal provision across the UK.
46. **Fewer commissions and original scores** — Less content means fewer opportunities for composers, producers, and session musicians, weakening the creative workforce in key growth sectors of screen and music.
47. **Threats to the BBC Orchestras and Choirs** — These ensembles are not a luxury; they are a cultural necessity and a vital professional ecosystem. Any funding squeeze puts their future—the skills they sustain, and the communities they reach—at risk.
48. **Reduced appearance and commission fees for artist and composers** — There are already grave concerns within UK Music’s membership around fair remuneration for artists and composers, so any watering down of contract terms or reductions in appearance fees will further limit those who can afford to take part, inevitably limiting the breadth, diversity and overall quality of productions and content.

Commercial Activities, Commercial entities and Third Parties

49. Members acknowledge that commercial activity will continue to be required, and that this may involve third parties as is currently the case.
50. UK Music notes the current Charter gives the BBC a General Duty to consider to the effects of its activities on competition in the UK. It is required to avoid unnecessary adverse effects on competition and promote positive market impact. Building on this its 5th General Duty is to “work collaboratively and in partnership, especially in the creative economy, in the public interest...” and “partnerships [commercial and non-commercial] should be fair and beneficial to all with due attribution and recognition for partners”¹⁷
51. These duties should be maintained and strengthened with due consideration given to ensure fair working practice across the BBC’s commercial entities and third-party partners. This means having robust policies in place to ensure commercial entities such as *BBC Studios* and production companies working on commissions or in partnership have contractual agreements and working practices that are “fair and beneficial to all” as per the General Duty. Implementing UK Music’s recommendation of workforce representation for freelancers and employees will ensure policies are fit for purpose and fulfil the General Duty.

52. There is concern from UK Music members that the BBC's response to the green paper does not fully acknowledge its responsibilities to the part of the workforce working on third party productions or as freelancers, and we believe that robust procurement policies should be used to positively impact working practices in commercial organisations commissioned or owned by the BBC. UK Music believes that the BBC is in a strong position to use its relationships, influence and scale to improve standards across the creative industries.

3. Trust and relevance

53. For UK Music, the BBC's trust and relevance are inseparable from its ability to support the UK's creative ecosystem in ways that commercial platforms do not. Audiences value the BBC most when they can clearly see its distinct contribution — especially in areas where it provides cultural, social, and democratic benefits that the wider market alone would not deliver.

54. Music is one of the clearest demonstrations of this public value. The BBC's universality, expert human curation and diversity of content enables audiences to discover music in ways that differ to other platforms that contain advertising and/or are algorithm driven. The breadth of the BBC's output strengthens its cultural relevance.

55. UK Music recognise the BBC's position as the UK's most trusted news provider for audiences¹⁸. However, trust is not just about those consuming content; it includes how the BBC treats the creative workforce. When performers, composers, songwriters and freelancers are paid fairly, treated well, protected from harm in the workplace (for example from harassment) and represented in decision-making structures, this enhances overall trust in the BBC, improves its reputation and can raise standards across the industry.

56. As a general observation, the BBC (as a music user on a considerable scale) demonstrates due respect for the need to obtain legal clearance and licensing for the use of music rights. However, this is not to say that there is universal satisfaction with all of the BBC's terms and conditions across the UK Music membership, with particular concern among the media composer community around buyouts and from performers across all genres regarding fees and liability for production costs.

Attracting young audiences

57. Music is one of the most powerful gateways for younger audiences, and the BBC is uniquely placed to use this strength to build long-term relevance. Younger listeners increasingly discover culture through digital platforms, and the BBC's ability to curate, champion and contextualise new music gives it a distinctive role that algorithm-driven services cannot replicate.
58. New contemporary music is particularly effective at drawing younger audiences into the BBC's wider offer. Radio 1 which is aimed at people aged 15-29 years old, is used by 13% of the UK population on average per week (BBC Annual Report 24/25) and the station's *Greg James Show* remains the number one breakfast among young audiences.
59. By making more British music and music programming visible across its platforms — including television, radio, the *BBC iPlayer* and *Sounds* and digital channels — the BBC can demonstrate clear value to younger people who may not otherwise engage with traditional broadcast services.
60. The BBC's music programming should also seek to focus on the unique curation that the BBC is expert in, rather than moving towards following the DSP-generated playlists, which do not bring the same value to BBC audiences or artists (for example, some of the playlisted content in the *Music Mixes* on BBC Sounds).
61. Commitment to platforms such as *BBC Introducing* is essential. These initiatives not only support the talent pipeline but also create a sense of discovery and connection that resonates strongly with younger audiences. They showcase emerging artists from every part of the UK, helping young people see themselves reflected in the BBC's output.
62. *The BBC Proms*, the UK's largest classical music festival attracted 50% first -time visitors to the *Royal Albert Hall* shows in 2025, with 40% under 40 and 20% under 30. *The BBC Proms* has increased its digital audience by almost a third since 2024 and there had been 6.1 million streams across *BBC iPlayer* and *BBC Sounds* in September 25, up from 4.6 million at the same time the previous year.¹⁹
63. The BBC's independence also matters to younger audiences, who are often sceptical of commercial influence and value authenticity.²⁰ The ability to take risks, platform diverse voices and support marginalised communities is a key part of what makes the BBC culturally relevant to younger generations.

4. The BBC across the UK

64. UK Music values the spread of BBC activities and spending in the UK's nations and regions. The BBC should continue to commission and broadcast music and cultural content from across the UK, including live events and festivals, ensuring that regional scenes and genres are visible nationally and internationally. Artists, audiences and the wider music industry benefit from a larger talent pool when opportunities are not limited to London or major cities but are spread across all nations and regions.
65. Events such as the regional *Proms* concerts show how world-class performances can be taken directly to communities, inspiring new audiences and supporting local venues and orchestras. *Radio 1's Big Weekend* and *Radio 2's Party in the Park* bring large-scale, low-cost live music experiences to towns that might not otherwise host them, boosting local economies and giving emerging talent the chance to perform alongside established acts.
66. Live performances increase local audiences beyond the in-person concert attendees, driving more listeners from the immediate vicinity to the live broadcasts. *Proms* in the North-East of England and the Radio 3 Breakfast tour of Gloucestershire and Somerset all drove notable uplifts in listening to the station among local audiences. Bristol, Bath, and Cleveland all saw increases of over 10%, while Sunderland saw an uplift of 22%.²¹
67. Key music awards ceremonies have been hosted outside of London for the first time in their history recently. This includes the *Mercury Prize*, owned and organised by BPI, which was held in Newcastle in 2025 and is set to return to the city in 2026. The BBC is a long-standing broadcast partner to the *Mercury Prize* and has worked effectively with organisations like BPI to support this move. Through their support of *National Album Day*, the BBC's regional radio networks play a key role in marking the annual celebration.
68. *BBC Introducing* regional shows ensure that musicians from every part of the UK can be discovered, championed and connected to national exposure, festival slots and industry pathways. It is widely popular across the industry. Already impacted by cuts to BBC local radio, UK Music members would like funding and commitment to this essential platform returned to past levels to secure a broad and inclusive talent pipeline across the UK.
69. As shown in the section on specialist music, the employed ensembles are vital in creating music ecosystems in parts of the UK that could otherwise not sustain them. For example, the *BBC Concert Orchestra's* three-year residency in Great Yarmouth, in partnership with *Orchestra Live* spawned 'Create Yarmouth' a music education project aimed at engaging young people and adults²². It produced inspirational music events, to raise aspiration, provide learning pathways and improve peoples' wellbeing through collaborations with world-class musicians, digital artists, producers and artist managers.

A representative workforce

70. While employees at the BBC benefit from a comprehensive framework of employment rights, over 70% of workers in the music industry are freelance²³, and many will interact with the BBC either as contributors to programmes, or as contractors hired for specific BBC productions, including *BBC Studios* and third-party commissions. Whilst there are many benefits to operating in a freelance capacity, this group can be vulnerable for several reasons:
71. Their freelance status means they have fewer employment rights in law. Formal reporting structures are often unclear, particularly if they are booked in a one-off capacity, or through a third party.
72. There is an inherent power imbalance between a large corporation negotiating with an individual freelancer (or their representative).
73. Both screen and music professionals are reliant on informal personal and professional networks for work, and there is still a fear of repercussions for reporting discrimination and harassment. This is not unique to freelancers but the inherent lack of a fixed employment contract with guaranteed income, notice period and associated rights makes this group particularly vulnerable in this respect.
74. While the *2025 Employment Rights Act*²⁴ places welcome additional obligations on employers to prevent harassment of employees and workers, including from third parties, the fully freelance workforce remains vulnerable. The BBC should lead the way and only work with third parties who can evidence appropriate frameworks and policies for their freelancers, and this should be a requirement of the commissioning process.
75. Ensuring there are appropriate and workable reporting mechanisms for the entire workforce, both in-house and in commissioned productions is in the interests of both the workforce and the BBC, allowing problem behaviours to be identified and dealt with quickly, rather than allowing them to continue unchecked, with ever increasing risk of harm to workers but also reputational damage for the BBC which can occur whether the production in question is in-house or commissioned with third parties.

Maintaining industry standards

76. The creation of *CIISA* is critical in helping protect the creative workforce and raise industry standards, which UK Music and several member organisations continue to support with financial contributions. The BBC has also been an early champion, and we would echo the positive comments from Jen Smith *CIISA* CEO to this Committee, about how integral the

BBC's engagement has been. Given the BBC's critical role within the music industry in terms of working with artists, knowing the corporation wants to uphold the highest standard sends a clear message to the rest of the industry.

5. The Future of Public Service Media

Artificial Intelligence

77. The challenges and opportunities of Artificial Intelligence are of particular concern to UK Music members.
78. While acknowledging there is potential for significant efficiencies and public benefits from AI tools, there is concern in the music industry in relation to generative AI models that have been trained on copyright works including music, without consent or remuneration for creators and rightsholders.
79. Any generative AI applications used in the organisation should be from ethically trained providers which have received the relevant consent of any creators/ rightsholders in relation to training data.
80. The BBC has an important role to play in championing human creativity in this next phase of technological development. The BBC should prioritise the participation of humans in the creative process and rule out the use of AI to replace musical performers or composers in its own productions, and ensure AI does not replace human performers or composers in third-party productions through procurement policies.
81. Music licensed to the BBC has not, as yet, been licensed for the purposes of AI training, and therefore should not be used as such without the express consent of relevant creators and rightsholders. Any AI generated content used for editorial purposes must be clearly labelled as such.

Relationships with third party organisations

82. Any future relationships with third parties – other PSBs and the global streaming platforms – must not come at the expense of the creators involved: music must be licensed through fairly negotiated agreements with all relevant stakeholders and across all relevant territories (either directly by the BBC, or by the third-party platforms) in order to protect the rights of creators and rightsholders. The BBC should collaborate with other UK public service media to ensure a healthy overall ecosystem, while maintaining distinctive music and arts output.

83. A close partnership with the industry and increased investment in music will ensure that the BBC has the strongest possible support to fulfil its public duties and face future challenges from a position of public support and strength.

6. An Independent and accountable BBC

84. The BBC's independence has been a defining principle of every Charter and for the music industry it is particularly significant. Independent editorial judgment enables the BBC to champion emerging talent, take creative risks, and support genres and communities that commercial broadcasters can overlook. British music thrives because it can be bold, diverse, and sometimes uncomfortable. It gives people the freedom to speak truth to power and allows diverse audiences to see their lived experience reflected. The BBC's ability to play, platform, and tell stories about music and music makers across its output – just as it does with challenging dramas or documentaries – depends on it being insulated from the political agenda.

85. However, there is a need for a balanced approach when securing the BBC's protection from political influence in its editorial and operational decisions. UK Music would caution against introducing any new obligations that limit the BBC's ability to curate, innovate, and take risks in music programming or could divert funds away from content production towards increased bureaucracy.

Governance and Board arrangements

86. The BBC's governance structures are broadly effective, but from a music industry perspective, there is a clear gap: the absence of meaningful workforce representation. Over 70% of the music workforce is freelance, and many interact with the BBC through performances, commissions, or third-party productions. Yet their interests are not reflected at Board or senior management level.

87. Strengthening governance should include:

- Representation for both employed staff and freelancers within governance structures.
- Reduced political influence in Board appointments, for example by limiting government involvement to the appointment of the Chair.
- A stronger role for independent Board members to support effective scrutiny and uphold editorial independence.

88. These changes would help ensure that those who create the BBC's musical and cultural content are considered in strategic decision making, leading to less reputational risk, improved relations and even better content.

Impact of a Permanent Charter

89. While there are potential benefits to having a permanent charter, the opportunity for the regular scrutiny and review that the Charter process provides is supported by the music industry as a whole.
90. If a permanent Charter were to be awarded, one benefit would be a degree of certainty for the employed ensembles, who have been under threat in the past, and are vulnerable every time cuts are planned, despite the immense public good they contribute.
91. Regardless of the length of Charter, the General Duties and Public Purposes should be maintained and subject to regular and meaningful review, especially given the speed of change within the technological landscape.

Holding the BBC to account

92. From the perspective of the UK music industry, the BBC's existing transparency and accountability framework provides a strong foundation. The Corporation already operates under significant public scrutiny, with established oversight mechanisms. While more timely communication with the industry together with transparency around decision making is always welcome, we would not wish to see effort and budget directed away from content making nor the introduction of greater bureaucracy. The BBC is already accountable in meaningful ways, such as the current General Duties.

7. Trusted news and the BBC

93. UK Music believes the BBC's ability to provide accurate, impartial and trusted news is fundamental to its public value. This responsibility is strengthened when its journalism reflects the realities of the UK's cultural and creative life. The BBC must continue to invest in expertise and the time required to report cultural stories with nuance. When newsrooms have the resources and independence to look beyond the immediate political cycle and commercial

interests, they are better able to explore how culture, communities and the creative economy intersect.

94. This commitment to accuracy and impartiality is also central to the BBC’s role in countering misinformation and disinformation. As public debate becomes more polarised and false narratives spread rapidly online, the BBC remains one of the most important anchors of reliable information. The music industry is not immune to these risks. Artists and creative communities—particularly those whose work engages with protest, identity or political expression—can be targeted by misinformation designed to distort meaning or divide audiences. Emerging talent is especially vulnerable when reputational harm spreads faster than accurate context.
95. UK Music is clear that ensuring audiences have access to trusted, contextualised reporting about artists and the cultural issues they engage with is essential to protecting creative freedom and supporting a vibrant cultural landscape. The BBC’s reach and editorial independence place it in a unique position to provide this clarity. By strengthening media literacy initiatives, maintaining transparent editorial processes and investing in specialist cultural journalism, the BBC can help audiences navigate an increasingly complex information environment.

Local news provision

96. Building on the above, local news and local cultural coverage are essential to the health of the UK’s music ecosystem. The BBC’s presence across the nations and regions supports local music scenes and venues, emerging artists and grassroots talent and regional diversity in musical culture and identity.
97. Recent reductions in specialist local output such as *Radio Scotland* jazz programming²⁵ have shown how quickly representation can decline when local curation is weakened. Sustaining strong local music and cultural coverage is vital to ensuring the BBC remains a genuinely UK wide public service broadcaster.

¹ DCMS, 2025: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy>

² Ofcom, 2024: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/tv-radio-and-on-demand/bbc/operating-licence/operating-licence-for-the-bbcs-uk-public-services-18-december-2025.pdf?v=409651>

³ BBC, 2025: <https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/governance/charter>

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- ⁴ UK Music, 2025: This Is Music <https://www.ukmusic.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/This-Is-Music-2025-Low-Res.pdf>
- ⁵ BPI, 2025: <https://www.bpi.co.uk/news/12870060>
- ⁶ BBC, 2025: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/articles/2026/impact-of-the-bbc-music>
- ⁷ BBC, 2025: <https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/governance/charter>
- ⁸ MU, 2022: <https://musiciansunion.org.uk/news/bbc-of-exceptional-value-to-public-during-crisis>
- ⁹ BPI, 2026: <https://www.bpi.co.uk/news/13063394>
- ¹⁰ BBC, 2016: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/webarchive/https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bbc.co.uk%2Fblogs%2Faboutthebbc%2Fentries%2Fcf149e8-5731-4627-8b3a-50aa39344fc2>
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