

**Question 1: Which factors have, since the guidance was introduced in 2004, had the biggest impact (positive or negative) on the TV production sector in the nations and regions and why? Are these different to the factors affecting London-based productions?**

Confidential? – Y/N

2004 was the year that the BBC closed its only TV network studio facilities in the Midlands, and moved to a new address, that only contains one small news studio. The reduction in facilities restricted programme making across all genres, further compounded in 2012 with the transfer of any remaining network radio production (with the exception of *The Archers*) and factual programming from Birmingham to Bristol and Manchester, under the DQF plan.

**All of the above has been hidden from view under the current guidance, because production has remained in the regions.**

The Midlands & East contains the BBC's largest number of licence fee payers (fully 25% of the UK total) but is consistently the poorest recipient of BBC spending. This too, is hidden from view within the current guidance.

We welcome increases in BBC expenditure in the nations and regions, but we believe that the guidance that relates to England, should be more precise than an "outside of London" requirement. This definition of England divides the country into just 2 areas, London and everywhere else. It would be fairer if the guidance is attached to existing governmental or EU regional definitions (so called NUTS1 regions) of which there are 8 in England outside of London, or at the very least, to the BBC's original 3 English regions of the North, Midlands & East, the South (-not including London). This would result in a fairer distribution of licence fee expenditure across more parts of England...

**Crucially, it would vastly improve regional representation in BBC output.**

**We also express concern that the guidance has not altered the dismal level of programme making in the Midlands by ITV, which at a network level is virtually zero, and at a regional level is restricted to the news and just one irregular current affairs programme.**

**Question 2: What impact, if any, has the BBC's move to Salford had on the sector, and on regional production specifically?**

Confidential? – ¥/N

The expansion of the BBC in Salford has been a double-edged sword. It has led to an increase of production in the North, whilst there have been drastic cutbacks in BBC spending in the Midlands, which has led to a decline on the representation of the region in the BBC's national radio & TV schedules. It seems that one regional Peter has been robbed, to pay a regional Paul.

It should be added that the BBC no longer maintains any major production facilities in its entire Midlands & East regions, and this restricts the type of programming that it is capable of producing.

**Question 3: Do the opportunities for nations' and regions' producers vary by genre? If so in which genres is it easiest and hardest to get commissions?**

Confidential? – ¥/N

As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question with any degree of authority.

However, we believe it would be easier for all regional producers to pitch their ideas and to gain commissions, if there were more commissioning editors based outside of London.

We would also like to see a more federal structure for the BBC, with a greater proportion of BBC programming making expenditure being held by the regional parts of the BBC, either for local programming or for network commissioning.

<p><b>Question 4: What are stakeholders' views on the impact anticipated future structural changes in the industry might have on the production sector in the nations and regions?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>We welcome the announcement by Channel 4 to move parts of its head office operation to a regional city, and the further opening of two commissioning hubs. We also welcome the intention to open news bureaux outside of London. We just hope that this will lead to a greater and more even spread of resources than we have seen in recent years, rather than an over-concentration in one region (at the expense of others).</p> <p><b>We see little benefit in replacing a London hegemony with that of just one or two regional centres.</b></p>
<p><b>Question 5: In your experience does the definition of a substantive base work well in practice? If not, how could it be improved?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>Our only concern about this question is whether the substantive base is real, or whether it is a quota filler. In theory, we would support a substantive base requirement, but feel that this needs vigorous observation and quantifiable monitoring.</p>
<p><b>Question 6: Does the criterion currently contribute to the objective to strengthen regional production? If so how, if not why not?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>There is no evidence that it has strengthened production in the Midlands specifically. Our answer to Question 1 details why this may be the case. England is the largest of the constituent parts of the UK, and its regional production is bound to be uneven, with a simple “outside of M25” requirement.</p> <p><b>We would like to see a more precise definition for the English regions, to represent the financial contributions made by each of them... more in line with their respective populations.</b></p>

<p><b>Question 7: Are there any circumstances in which an office designated as the usual place of employment of senior or executive personnel should not be considered a substantive base? If yes, please provide further explanation.</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>Ultimately, it is the office with the budget to spend, with the creative talent, and access to facilities that is the most substantive.</p>
<p><b>Question 8: Does this criterion currently create any unintended consequences?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>See our answer to Question 5. We are wary of offices that might be used simply to receive a regional spending quota, whilst real decision making and production happens elsewhere.</p>
<p><b>Question 9: We would welcome any information/examples from production companies on the range and roles of staff in production offices outside of London.</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p>
<p><b>Question 10: Do producers tend to share space in the nations and regions in order to expand and contract in line with their commissioning slate and thus to help with costs/efficiencies?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p> <p>However, it would seem to make sense for producers to share space, and to operate as efficiently as possible. This should be encouraged, as it might help to stop a talent drain, and can lead to greater collaboration.</p>
<p><b>Question 11: Is the production budget criterion set at the right level?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p> <p>However, we would not like to see a reduction in the existing criterion.</p>
<p><b>Question 12: What challenges do producers face in meeting this criterion? Do these differ dependent on the substantive base of the production?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p>

<p><b>Question 13: Does this criterion currently create any unintended consequences?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – <del>Y</del>/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p>
<p><b>Question 14: We welcome any evidence/data of how production budgets for nations' and regions' productions work in practice.</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – <del>Y</del>/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p> <p>However, we note that BBC production expenditure in the Midlands is the lowest in the entire UK, and this is reflected in individual programme budgets. Further evidence of this is provided in our answer to Question 42.</p>
<p><b>Question 15: Is the off-screen talent criteria set at the right level?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – <del>Y</del>/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p> <p>However, we would not like to see a reduction in the existing criterion.</p>
<p><b>Question 16: How easy or difficult is it for programme makers to fulfil the current criterion?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – <del>Y</del>/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p>
<p><b>Question 17: Is there a representative spread of nations' and regions' talent at all levels available to hire? Are there certain roles where it is not possible to fill roles from the nations and regions alone? If yes, which roles and what impact does this have on production budgets?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – <del>Y</del>/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p> <p>However, we are conscious that many broadcasting professionals in the Midlands must either work away from home, or be prepared to relocate, to find work. There is so little radio &amp; TV being made in the area, that working out of the area is the only option.</p>

<p><b>Question 18: Do broadcasters give producers the flexibility to employ the staff they want regardless of location?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p>
<p><b>Question 19: Which roles, if any, are most often prescribed by the broadcaster? Does this vary by genre?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p>
<p><b>Question 20: Does this criterion currently create any perverse incentives?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p>
<p><b>Question 21: We welcome any evidence to suggest whether the distribution of off-screen talent and the range of skills available has changed since this level was set in 2004.</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p>
<p><b>Question 22: Are the three criteria used to define a regional production for the purposes of the quotas the correct ones or are there other factors that should now be included instead/ as well?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>Broadly we are in agreement with the three criteria, and we would not like to see a reduction in their requirements.</p>
<p><b>Question 23: How well do the criteria collectively contribute towards the sustainability of the production sector outside of the M25?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>As a campaigning group, we are not best qualified to answer this question.</p>

**Question 24: Are there any unintended consequences of the criteria or guidance more widely that undermine the sustainability of the sector beyond the M25?**

Confidential? – ¥/N

Yes. In England's case, we believe that the criteria should not simply refer to "outside or beyond the M25" as that in itself, does not address the problem. England is too large to be divided into one dominant city and one everywhere else.

The guidance should go further, and state that England's 8 regions outside of London, are represented in production according to their size of population. Or put another way, they should receive a share of regional expenditure that is commensurate to the licence fee that they pay, or their share of advertising expenditures.

At the very least, we would like to see BBC production and spending to be more equitable across its 3 traditional reporting areas for England outside London, which are: The North; the Midlands & East; and the South.

**Question 25: Are the criteria too narrow? For example, are there cases of nations' and regions' productions that fail ultimately to qualify towards the regional production quota?**

Confidential? – ¥/N

We do not think that the criteria are too narrow. We would be alarmed if the definition became so liberal that merely filming in a region might qualify towards a quota.

For instance, we are often told by the BBC that *Peaky Blinders* is "filmed in the Midlands". However, 4 days of Midland filming per series, does not constitute a Midland made drama. The pre and post production, the bulk of filming over several months, and the employment of the crews is not from the Midlands.

**We urge caution if the criteria are to be liberalised.**

**Question 26: Is the criteria-based approach the best for regulation in this area, or are other models that might work better?**

Confidential? – ¥/N

We support the existing approach. We would not be averse to other models but fear over-liberalisation (see our answer to Question 25) or a lack of rigorous monitoring.

**Question 27: In your experience how big a role does London play in nations' and regions' productions and in what way?**

Confidential? – ¥/N

We note that all UK PSB broadcasters are based in London, and all national radio stations (with the sole exceptions of Radio 5 and S4C in Wales). We also note that virtually all departmental heads and commissioners are based at the head offices of these broadcasters... in London. Therefore, budgets are held in London, pitches are made to London and decisions are made in London.

This has not always been the case, but London's dominant position in the broadcasting sector has been strengthened by centralisation of management at the BBC, by the changes made at ITV and the creation of new channels, such as Channel 4 and Five and a plethora of niche broadcasters, mostly based in and around London.

We would welcome a more federal structure for the industry, and especially for the BBC, where budgets and commissioning decisions are made in more places, other than London.

Ironically, many of the most highly rated programmes on British TV today, date from an era when programme budgets and decision making was more federal.



<p><b>Question 28: What benefits/disbenefits do you consider 'Lift and Shift' production brings to the nations and regions? We would welcome case studies/examples of 'Lift and Shift' productions.</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>The benefits are described in the accompanying Ofcom document to this consultation.</p> <p>The disbenefits are that programmes that are shifted to be made in Glasgow, Manchester or Cardiff are not truly representative of the regions. The spending decisions, the pitching and the commissioning still takes place in London. Lift and shift does not necessarily lead to greater diversity of programme making, or the discovery of new creative talent. For these reasons, we advocate a shift towards a more federal structure for the broadcasters.</p>
<p><b>Question 29: Does 'Lift and Shift' help or hinder the sustainability of production in the locality of a production and in the nations and regions more widely?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p><b>Ultimately, lift and shift is probably of some benefit to regional production, but nowhere near as helpful as a shift in budgets and decision making would be. See our answer to Question 28.</b></p>
<p><b>Question 30: Are there different parts of the production process which are more likely to happen in/out of London?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>In theory, there should be no reason why the production process is more likely to happen in London. See our answers to Questions 27 &amp; 28, which offer some solutions that would help strengthen the production process out of London (across a number of regions).</p>

**Question 31: We would be interested in receiving evidence or case studies from stakeholders which could develop our understanding of the contribution that regional productions currently make to representation and portrayal of the nations and regions in order to gain a sense of the scale of this consequential benefit.**

Confidential? – ¥/N

On the contrary, we are concerned that it is the lack of regional production and decision making, that is causing a problem for our regional economy, and which has led to a massive disconnect between the broadcasters and one of their largest groups of viewers.

There are no programmes that are made in the Midlands in the peak-time network schedules of the BBC or ITV. The Midlands is not to be seen or heard.

The consequential disbenefit is that the broadcasters do not gain the loyalty of Midlands viewers, whilst their regional outputs tend to be similar and rely on tried and trusted formats. This is especially true for drama, which tends to concentrate on a tight northern corridor with similar plots, settings, writers and actors. The broadcasters need to spread their affections around more regions, not least the North East, the East and the Midlands.

**Question 32: Does the process by which productions are allocated to a nation or macro-region work well in practice, or are there any other approaches you think we should consider instead? E.g. allocating proportions of one title to the different areas in which it was made.**

Confidential? – ¥/N

No, we do not believe that allocating a proportion of *Songs of Praise* or *Antiques Roadshow* to the Midlands – because an episode or two might visit the region – would be to the benefit of the broadcasting sector in this area. **Indeed, it would only serve to paper over the vast spending cracks that exist in this region.**

**Question 33: Where a production has met the three criteria in different nations/ macro-regions the allocation defaults to the substantive base. Is this the right approach or does it deliver unintended consequences?**

Confidential? – ¥/N

Generally, this would be the right approach. Please see our answers to Questions 25 and 32.

For the BBC to fulfil its Charter requirement to represent the regions to the nation, it should be making programmes in the regions, with local talent and crews. This is especially true for a substantial population such as that in the Midlands.

**Question 34: Is there anything else we need to take into consideration here? E.g. are the current nations and macro-regions the right areas to use for allocations?**

Confidential? – ¥/N

We are not sure what is meant here by “macro regions”. From what we can tell, the only macro region that applies to England is the one that is “outside of the M25”.

We have stated elsewhere, in our answers to Questions 1, 6 & 24, that we advocate a more robust requirement for BBC spending across all English regions. It certainly seems to us, that not all English regions are created equally in the eyes of the BBC. We would welcome a more rigorous oversight of BBC spending across England, to help ensure that the BBC remains relevant to all those who pay for it.

**Question 35: Are the on-screen criteria used to judge regionality appropriate, or are there other factors that should now be included instead/ as well?**

Confidential? – ¥/N

Regarding regional programming, we regret that this has been reduced by both the BBC and ITV. We believe that it is to their detriment that they have reduced their spending and hours of content, as regional programming provides these networks with a real differentiator.

We also note that regional programme making now follows a cookie cutter model, such as *Inside Out*. This reduces the possibility for local programme ideas that can often be a seedbed for national programming (*The Archers* and *Top Gear* were both local programmes from the Midlands that eventually moved to the national networks).

<p><b>Question 36: Are the three criteria used to determine whether a regional programme was made in the area for which the service is provided appropriate, or are there other factors that should now be included instead/ as well?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>We strongly believe that regional programming should be made in the area. We also believe that there should be a budget requirement placed on the PSB's, to ensure that the quality of regional programming is maintained.</p>
<p><b>Question 37: Are there any other aspects of the regional programming section of the guidance which require more detailed review?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>See our answer to Question 36.</p>
<p><b>Question 38: What is useful about the current 'Made outside London programme titles register' and why?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>We have not referred to the register, but maybe we should. It would be useful to benchmark production in the various regions, and to draw a comparison based on local population, or share of licence fee spend or advertising expenditures.</p>
<p><b>Question 39: Are there ways in which the Register could be improved? If yes, how?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>We are not qualified to answer this question presently. However, we will look at the Register more closely, and we would be pleased to pass on our comments at a later date.</p>
<p><b>Question 40: Is there additional information which could be included in the Register to aid transparency?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>See answer to Question 39.</p>
<p><b>Question 41: Are there any other ways in which we could improve the transparency of our reporting?</b></p>	<p>Confidential? – ¥/N</p> <p>See answer to Question 39.</p>

**Question 42: Are there other issues stemming from the guidance that are not addressed in this Call for Evidence? If yes, please set out what they are.**

Confidential? – Y/N

We would like to see tighter regulation of BBC programme making spending in the nations and English regions. **We firmly believe there should be a more equitable spending formula, commensurate to population and to the contributions made by licence fee payers.**

The BBC have published their network TV expenditure share for each of their 7 UK nations and regions (Scotland, Wales, N.Ireland, the North, the South, the Midlands & East, London), for each of the last 10 years:

Midlands & East share of network TV expenditure:	
2007	4.1%
2008	3.9%
2009	3.8%
2010	3.9%
2011	3.7%
2012	3.7%
2013	2.7%
2014	1.7%
2015	1.8%
2016	1.5%

Source: BBC Annual Reports for each year.

The Midlands & East region contains 25% of all UK licence fee payers, who contribute £1 billion per annum – one quarter of BBC licence fee income. They see the lowest share of BBC spending, despite contributing the most.

These stark figures indicate that a more robust and rigorous oversight is needed for BBC regional spending.

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