

OPERATING LICENCE FOR NEW BBC SCOTLAND CHANNEL

I remain of the view, which I articulated in my submission when the original consultation was initiated, that the new channel is seriously underfunded at less than half the cost of the Broadcasting Commission's proposed new channel, which it was not envisaged would cover all genres, in particular would have little drama on it.

There is a serious problem here: the audience looking for Scottish television drama which offers stories about the experiences of the viewers, and about the country in which they live, has currently to content itself for the most part with the ongoing soap *River City* and crime dramas like *Shetland*. It is too narrow a range, but drama is expensive, particularly at the high end. Even with the very welcome increase in the funds available to Creative Scotland through its recently established Screen Scotland unit - cash which is rightly contestable and open to all film and television companies based north of the border - it is hard to see there being anything like enough money for drama of any substance to appear on the new channel. Somebody has to honestly address this problem.

The requirement to have an average of five hours per week of news in peak time in 2019 is welcome. Given the uncertain outlook for the indigenous press in Scotland, it is vital that there is space for more in-depth journalism than is currently be seen on television north of the border. It is important too that it is pursued in a context where Scottish, UK and international perspectives are in play.

However I would hope that the BBC is given flexibility in how it fulfils the specified quota. The proposed one hour 9pm bulletin - admittedly not prescribed by Ofcom - may be a damaging hostage to fortune, since 9-10 tends to be the spot for popular drama on the main psb channels. No matter the quality of the new 9pm news, there will be little point to it if very few people watch. I remain of the view that BBC Scotland should be encouraged to offer a half hour bulletin at 10 pm, even although establishing such a programme will involve tricky negotiations with London.

David Hutchison, Honorary Professor in Media Policy at Glasgow Caledonian University.

Among DH's publications are-

Scotland's Referendum and the Media: National and International Perspectives (co-editor with Neil Blain) Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

Centres and peripheries: Metropolitan and non-Metropolitan Journalism in the Twenty First Century(co-editor with Hugh O'Donnell). Cambridge Scholars Press, 2011.

The Media in Scotland (co-editor with Neil Blain, Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

Media Policy, Blackwell, 1999.