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MAKING CONNECTIONS

BBC Northern Ireland Annual Review 2007/2008



Making Connections

The connections we make with ideas and each other can take us to new places and unlock fresh opportunities. The BBC makes possible myriad points of contact, development and exchange. Its programmes reflect themes of convergence and diversity, consensus and dispute. They are about the whole of life in all its changing reality and potential.

The colours in this image depict land, sea and sky - the home we share. It also seeks to create an impression of movement, mutability and connection. It is a representation of both the BBC's work and the audiences whose interests it reflects and serves.

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The image features a dynamic, abstract composition of overlapping, curved shapes in various shades of green and blue. The shapes flow from the top left towards the bottom right, creating a sense of movement and depth. The colors range from light, pale greens to deep, vibrant blues and teals. The overall effect is modern and organic.

BBC AUDIENCE COUNCIL
for Northern Ireland



Rotha Johnston, National Trustee

Making Connections - National Trustee Rotha Johnston

This has been a demanding, exhilarating and extremely rewarding 12 months, the first full year of activity for the Audience Council for Northern Ireland.

The BBC Trust came into being at the beginning of 2007 as part of the new arrangements for how the BBC is governed. At the same time a network of Audience Councils was established. It is my privilege, as the National Trustee for Northern Ireland, to chair the Council here and to take the lead role in its work.

It has been a year of listening and learning. We met many people who asked the simple question – what does the Council do?

The answer is – Our task is to engage with local audiences, to understand what they need and expect from the BBC, and through that engagement to inform the work of the BBC Trust.



Viewers and listeners talk about arts coverage at an event in Armagh



A student tells Council what he thinks about the BBC



Audience Council members listening and discussing issues

We aim to ensure that the opinions and observations of the wider community are heard and are at the heart of the Trust's decision-making process. This is particularly important at a time when Northern Ireland itself is going through a period of political and social change with the restoration of devolution and the return of a locally accountable administration.

The members of the Council are volunteers - men and women from a breadth of backgrounds, both cultural and geographical, and with a wealth of experience of all aspects of Northern Ireland life. One common interest unites them: they are champions of the standards of excellence and innovation in broadcasting which audiences deserve and which the BBC seeks to provide.

With that shared purpose in mind, we began the year with a sense of determination – to make new connections, to reaffirm existing ones and, above all, to find out as much as possible about the needs and interests of a diverse community, and how these should influence and inform



the services provided by the BBC in Northern Ireland.

We ended the year with a sense that a lot has been achieved and with evidence of a deeper understanding of our audiences – but there is also an awareness that this is very much work in progress.

At the beginning of the year, six priority areas were identified. These were based on the issues raised by the local audience:

- Sustaining citizenship
- Accountability
- Digital access
- Quality and impact of BBCNI output
- Indigenous minority languages
- Network commissioning

WHAT YOU TOLD US

“The BBC has some very good programmes that I would go out of my way not to miss, mainly in BBC 2 and BBC 3”

Source: BBC Trust Purpose Remits Survey (NI)

This review will assess in more detail how these priorities have been addressed during the year but, in summary, we are pleased to report that there has been positive development in each of the areas. We are conscious that the issues involved are complex and long-term and that they will continue to occupy our attention as we move forward. However, we do so supported by a synergy of effort between the Council and the BBC Trust which is crucial to achieving the needed results.

All of the activity in which we have been involved has strengthened our work as an advisory body and allowed us to make a significant contribution, on behalf of local audiences, to the development and implementation of the BBC Trust's performance framework.

This has included input to a range of BBC Trust initiatives. We responded to ten consultations and we made an essential contribution to the Nations' Impartiality Review. This review was set up to test the impartiality of news and current affairs coverage of local issues by the network, and to assess how the BBC performs in reflecting the complexity of devolution and a changing UK. It raised questions of accurate reporting, context and relevance, and the appropriate balance at network level between national and local issues.

During the year we engaged with BBCNI programme-makers and management, experienced key



BBC Trust Chairman Sir Michael Lyons (centre) meets BBCNI's Head of News and Current Affairs Andrew Colman and BBC Newsline presenter Noel Thompson

productions at first hand and developed greater awareness of innovations in technology.

At our meetings – ten were held during the year - we were kept informed by regular reports from Controller BBCNI. Our work also benefited from briefings by other senior BBC figures, from both Northern Ireland and London, allowing us to consider a broad range of services and activity, both local and network, including programme standards and content; network commissioning; indigenous minority languages; the BBC's five-year strategy, *Delivering Creative Future*; the localised web provision bbc.co.uk/ni; developments in technology; BBCNI's television strategy and scheduling; media literacy activity; and we were informed about how complaints are handled.



Rotha Johnston at Magee College Londonderry to meet listeners and viewers



Sir Michael Lyons and Rotha Johnston meet the First Minister Dr Ian Paisley deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness and then Minister for Culture Arts and Leisure Edwin Poots at Stormont



Rotha Johnston opens the event at Stormont



Edwin Poots then Minister for Culture Arts and Leisure is welcomed to an Audience Council meeting

In addition, there were sub-committee meetings on a range of special projects. These included BBC Trust consultations, audience engagement, the arts and indigenous minority languages. We were also briefed by the local BBC Trust unit on Ofcom's Tier 2 Quotas, the Purpose Remit Survey and the Audience Engagement Consultation.

One notable example of progress can be seen in the developments which have been announced in Irish and Ulster-Scots provision. The Audience Council played a key role in making this a reality. We identified the need for field research as part of the consultation process and we embarked on an intensive round of community engagement. The result is an example of what can be achieved through the effective accountability mechanisms within the Council and the BBC Trust.

We were delighted to host a visit by the Trust in November. This allowed the Council and members of the Trust to engage with a broad spectrum of local opinion. A reception was held for 120 people from different backgrounds who heard the BBC Trust Chairman, Sir Michael Lyons, speak about the importance of local accountability and the unique role which members of the Audience Council fulfil.

Other events took place during the Trust visit. We held a breakfast forum for people involved in the creative industries in Northern Ireland, and the Council initiated and took part



Council member Alan Meban talks to students involved in the ACNI schools project



Sir Michael Lyons asks what young people want from their BBC at an event in Belfast

in an event at Stormont. This was hosted, on behalf of the Chairman, by the then Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Edwin Poots, allowing Trust and Council members to meet Ministers and MLAs. That month also, we welcomed Mr Poots to our regular meeting where he contributed to discussions on local output and network commissioning.

All of our activity has been supported and enhanced by the enthusiasm and professionalism of the local BBC Trust team. Their work in helping us establish new community connections and networks has been invaluable.

One of our key tasks during the year was to reach out to sections of the audience with whom it has been traditionally hard to connect.

During the Trust's visit in November, we held a unique event for young people, hosted at the Blackstaff Studios by the Chairman and by myself as National Trustee. This involved 11-14 year-olds from 23 schools across Northern Ireland.

During a question and answer session they gave forthright views on services for their age group, as well as providing a revealing insight into their perceptions of the BBC.

In all, more than 700 young people contributed to this enormously valuable project which has helped us in our consideration of priorities for 2008/9 and which will assist the BBC Trust in its review of services for young people in 2008.

As well as engaging with the young, we worked hard to connect with a diverse range of audiences and would like to thank the teams from Engage With Age, Disability Action, Mencap, CCEA and NICVA as well as a range of community forums for their help and advice.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

Young people in Northern Ireland prefer programmes that are entertaining and make them feel good

Source: ACNI schools project 11-14 year-olds

In addition, as National Trustee, I explored matters of mutual interest with a number of key stakeholders, including the Northern Ireland Consumer Council and NI Screen, and I met the Managing Director of UTV to discuss issues relating to the digital switch-over.

Being a member of the Audience Council is a considerable responsibility. But it is very definitely not a chore. One of the most rewarding aspects is to experience, at first hand, major audience-centred events. There were several examples during the year, all providing an invaluable perspective on how BBC productions impact on audiences. These included BBC Proms in the Park, which this year was staged in the dramatic and historic setting of Carrickfergus Castle. Another highlight was the BBC Blast Festival in June, held at Customs House Square in Belfast, which gave Council members the opportunity to talk on the fringes to 13-19 year-olds about their perceptions of the BBC and what it delivers. There was also the chance to become involved in a moment of

local broadcasting history – an event to mark the final episode of the long-running series Give My Head Peace and to celebrate its contribution to local broadcasting with an audience at the Blackstaff Studios.

It is also very important that we engage with members of the local BBC staff. This has a mutual benefit: it provides us with a clearer understanding of programmes, how they work and what they try to achieve, and it gives the broadcasters a better sense of our role and responsibilities. In that context, I particularly enjoyed conversations with the Good Morning Ulster and the Stephen Nolan teams. Other members of the Council will find similar opportunities as the year progresses.

A continuing dialogue with the community is a Council commitment. But simply meeting people is not enough. We must listen to what they have to say and learn from the engagement experience so that we, and the BBC, are better informed about the needs, aspirations and interests of our audience.



BBC Proms in the Park and BBC Blast Festival

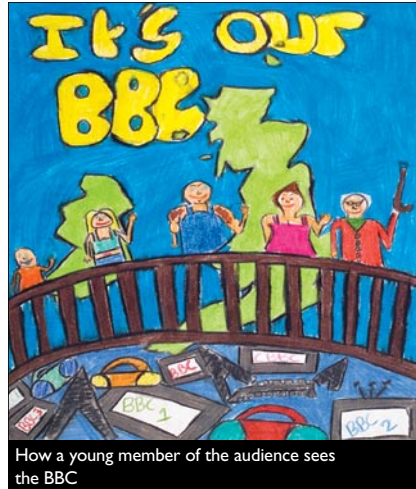




BBC Audience Council members meet at Broadcasting House in Belfast

This will require continued hard work and dedication by the members of the Audience Council. And there is no shortage of volunteers willing to take on that role. Six new members were welcomed to the Council during 2007. Their appointment followed a major recruitment drive, using various BBC services as well as general advertising, a process which also helped to inform the general public about the Council and its work. The campaign was a significant success, with responses being received from a total of 550 people.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to members of the Audience Council for their commitment and contribution on behalf of the wider audience. I would also like to express my gratitude to the BBCNI Controller, Peter Johnston, and his staff for their dedication, professionalism and collaborative approach.



How a young member of the audience sees the BBC

My final thanks must go to all of those who have met and talked with myself and the Audience Council. We have been honoured to share in your views and opinions and regard it as a privilege to reflect your thoughts to the BBC Trust. In this way we hope to ensure, on behalf of licence fee payers in Northern Ireland, that the BBC provides distinctive services of the highest quality for all.

We look forward to a challenging and fulfilling year ahead and to a deepening understanding of the needs of local listeners and viewers.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

Around two-thirds of people in Northern Ireland are happy with the BBC

Source: BBC Trust Purpose Remits Survey (NI)

Performance Against Audience Priorities 2007/2008

Council outlined six priorities for the Northern Ireland audience. We acknowledge that in all the areas involved there can be no 'quick fix' and that development will be complex and long-term. Nevertheless, we note that progress has been made over the last year.

In pursuing these priorities and those which will be set for the future, we believe that the synergy of approach between the Council and the BBC Trust will be of enormous benefit to our local audiences.

In particular, a number of high profile BBC Trust projects, to which we have contributed, will have significant impact for Northern Ireland. These are: the Nations' Impartiality Review, progress on Indigenous Minority Languages and the ongoing Network Supply Review.



Young people share their views with the Vice-Chairman of the BBC Trust Chitra Bharucha

i. Sustain citizenship and civil society in a changing political and social environment

This priority is rooted in the changing political environment in Northern Ireland and the wider changes in society. Over the last year Council invested significant time engaging with diverse audiences in order to better understand and evaluate how the BBC is delivering in this area.

We heard a range of views from across the political spectrum, from church leaders and from other key opinion formers. And we heard the views of the wider public at a range of related events and through contributions on our website.

This engagement, coupled with our own informal assessment of output, leads Council to believe that there are continuing concerns, particularly about the treatment and priority given to stories involving the devolved administration in Northern Ireland and the wider political, legal, economic and cultural arenas.

Council welcomed the Nations' Impartiality Review, in which we participated fully, and we consider that there is more progress to be made in this area for audiences in Northern Ireland.

ii. Work to enhance the impact and visibility of BBC Accountability in Northern Ireland, working in collaboration with other organisations to ensure that views and concerns of local licence payers inform all aspects of the BBC Trust's activities

We have developed a range of strategies for outreach and communication which will ensure that the diverse views of licence fee payers in Northern Ireland impact on the work of the BBC Trust.

We support the BBC Trust's Making Audience Councils Effective initiative and welcome the opportunity it has provided to share best practice across the Audience Councils.



Forthright views at an engagement event in Londonderry

Council has sought to engage with a range of stakeholders in Northern Ireland, from those with specific broadcasting interests to various interest groups which are traditionally hard to reach, in order that we may better reflect the diversity of views and experiences which audiences have.



People queue up to register their views at the BBC Blast Festival

We have invested in the development of the Audience Council website and have been involved in a series of innovative and creative developments, including the Schools Project which reached out to more than 700 young people from right across Northern Ireland and from all educational backgrounds.

In addition, we have enjoyed and benefited from informal events with other partners inside and outside the BBC. A key example is the BBC Blast Festival which provided the opportunity to engage with young audiences.

We consider that much progress has been made in this area but we will continue to invest time and energy ensuring that audiences benefit from Council's activities so that their views inform all aspects of the work of the BBC Trust.

iii. Develop digital access throughout Northern Ireland and work to address the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups

Audiences tell us that digital issues remain a major concern. For Northern Ireland, this is a complex matter in terms of geography and demography. Audiences face restricted and potentially high cost choices in order to gain access to the services they want, due to differences in service provision across platforms and/or the availability of those platforms across Northern Ireland.

We have established a relationship with key organisations, including the Northern Ireland Consumer Council, who are interested in the issue of the phasing and wider availability of digital provision, as well as the needs of vulnerable groups, and we continue to explore the opportunities for joint working.

We are concerned at the potential for audiences to be excluded due to availability and cost, as well as the

WHAT YOU TOLD US

Nearly three-quarters of local people (74%) say they would miss the BBC if it wasn't here

Source: BBC Trust Purpose Remits Survey (NI)



Audience Council member Stephanie Sim-Doran listens at an audience event in Armagh

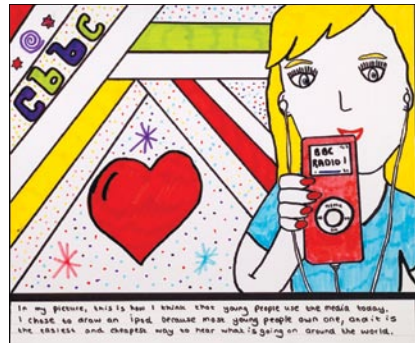
complicating factor of low media literacy levels. We welcome the BBC's work to address issues of media literacy and information needs, with particular regard to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Northern Ireland. Plans to extend iPlayer's subtitling, to include audio description, are welcomed. However, a long-term and sustained commitment is required in this area.

While acknowledging the progress made in the Freesat proposition, Council will seek to monitor the impact and take-up of the service.

Significant long-term concerns remain, therefore, at the extent of digital access within Northern Ireland, particularly through DTT and DAB/DRM, the availability of BBC Radio Foyle on digital radio and the need for plans for digital switchover in Northern Ireland to take into account the phasing and scope of plans for switchover in the Republic of Ireland.

iv. Work to refine the quality and impact of BBC Northern Ireland's output; meet the needs of diverse audiences through enhanced use of technology and interactivity

Council expressed an interest in the creative use of new technology and interactivity to enhance content and to meet the needs of diverse audiences, particularly those in younger age groups.



In my opinion, this is how I think that young people use the media today. I chose to draw an iPod, because most young people own one, and it is the easiest and cheapest way to hear what's going on around the world.

There was significant engagement with young people aged 11-14.

Feedback suggests that there are media literacy issues with sections of this age group, including a lack of knowledge or awareness of digital services. Counter-balancing this, there is a clear demand for programmes relevant to their daily lives and which have an interactive element.

We note the added value for local audiences provided by BBCNI in its developing use of common content across different platforms, with an interactive focus for news and current affairs, and with an access and



impact focus on factual programming. Council would single out the Blueprint series as an example of high quality, distinctive programming, enhanced through the use of technology and interactivity.

We have been concerned that the content which was produced for BBC Jam could be lost to the audience. We are keen to see the release of indigenous minority language and special needs content for use on bbc.co.uk/ni

WHAT YOU TOLD US

Over 70% of young people in Northern Ireland say that the BBC helps them to understand the world they live in

Source: ACNI schools project | 11-14 year-olds

v. Provide 'appropriate provision' (as defined by the BBC Trust) for Irish and Ulster-Scots, having regard to wider cultural issues, quality and range of output to meet diverse audience needs

Council undertook considerable work in this area over the year in order to ensure that the voices of people with a special interest in Irish and Ulster-Scots, as well as those in the wider audience, were heard. This was achieved through a two-stage consultation process and a major research project led by BBCNI management.

This in-depth consultation played a significant role in informing Council's advice to the BBC Trust's assessment of appropriate provision for indigenous minority languages. Council's report was agreed by the Trust at their January 2008 meeting.

We welcome the Trust's decision to approve BBCNI's plans for an incremental increase in provision and we are pleased that these proposals will seek to address those quantitative and qualitative issues which have been of concern to the audience.

We recognise that progress has been made but we will continue to have a monitoring role in relation to financial resources and the development of programme plans.

vi. Work to increase the volume, value and sustainability of locally produced network programming, taking account of cultural representation issues, audience benefits and the development needs of the creative industries in Northern Ireland

Council remains concerned about the low number of hours and amount of spend relating to local commissions for network television. Audiences have clearly and consistently identified the low number of programmes and the portrayal of Northern Ireland to be of concern.

We are disappointed that there has been a struggle for new network drama commissions and that the entertainment and factual genres have also experienced difficulty.

We recognise the presence and reputation of strong current affairs programming from Northern Ireland on the network, particularly for the Panorama strand, but are concerned that continuity of this provision is not secure.

Council looked to the BBC Trust's determination on the Network Supply Review and to subsequent interventions and new processes. The aim is to address obstacles which stand in the way of securing commissions and to enable the development of a sustained production base in Northern Ireland, as well as in the other regions and nations.

The issues of sustainable investment and building production capacity within the creative industries sector have a particular urgency. We believe there must be direct and targeted action to ensure that audiences in Northern Ireland are not less well served than others. They deserve to experience output provided from a vibrant and invigorated sector which will help deliver content of high quality and distinctiveness.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

"I feel the BBC is more mainland Britain oriented and I would like to see more local programs (sic)"

Source: BBC Trust Purpose Remits Survey (NI)



BBCNI Controller Peter Johnston (left) joins Council member Liam Kelly and Rotha Johnston at an audience event





Sir Michael Lyons Chairman of the BBC Trust and Rotha Johnston National Trustee for Northern Ireland enjoy a light hearted response from a guest at an event they hosted at Stormont

Priorities for 2008/2009

In addition to timetabled and ad hoc BBC Trust consultations and service licence reviews, Council has identified the following four key priority areas for 2008/09 on behalf of the audience in Northern Ireland. All of these priorities have been established as a direct result of extensive engagement activity during 2007/08, through Council discussions and in consultation with the BBC Trust.

- News and current affairs post-devolution
- Northern Ireland's contribution to the network
- Creativity and distinctiveness
- Digital access and changing consumption

WHAT YOU TOLD US

“The BBC needs to cover more regional politics comprehensively”

Source: BBC Trust Purpose Remits Survey (NI)

i. News and current affairs post devolution

Secure improvement in coverage and treatment of devolved issues and general Northern Ireland stories in BBC news and current affairs output

The BBC has a particular role to challenge, explore, question and uncover in the context of a changing society. This is especially pertinent at this point in Northern Ireland's development.

Audiences have clearly expressed a desire for scrutiny and analysis of decisions and events in the political sphere.

In our response to the BBC Trust's Impartiality Review, we have noted concerns about the treatment and priority given, at network level, to stories involving the devolved administration in Northern Ireland and the wider political arena.

In addition to evidence gathered by Council, the BBC Trust's Purpose Remit research in 2007 also showed that there is a significant performance deficit of 8 percentage points for Northern Ireland audiences in this area.

We also want to find out more about the impact on audiences of the use of new techniques in news and current affairs programming to stimulate interaction, including the use of texting and different presentational formats.

All of this puts a particular focus on possible concerns about audience access and any resulting over- or under-representation of views.

Our commitment

Council will engage with the local audience throughout 2008/9 in order to assess the performance of the BBC both locally and at a network level.



BBC Newsline presenters Donna Traynor and Noel Thompson meet Sir Michael Lyons, Rotha Johnston, Andrew Colman and Peter Johnston

ii. Northern Ireland's contribution to the network

Secure a sustainable increase in the volume, range and sustainability of locally produced network programming, taking account of cultural representation issues, audience benefits and the development needs of the creative industries in Northern Ireland

Council believes that action in building sustainable production capacity is required in order to ensure that audiences in Northern Ireland are no longer under-represented and less well-served than others and to ensure that content is provided at network level which reflects the diversity of life across the UK.

We would stress the importance of developing talent both on and off screen and would wish the BBC to effectively address the issue of building production capacity in Northern Ireland. We consider that the establishment of minimum network output guarantees may be an effective mechanism and we suggest that the BBC should play an active role in addressing any deficit through appropriate investment.

Our commitment

Council will monitor this priority through engagement with the Northern Ireland audience in 2008/9 and through a continuing review of BBC performance. The Council also requests the BBC Trust to ensure that the BBC develops and implements a strategy to deliver an appropriate level of growth in network commissions from Northern Ireland. The level of commissions should be capable of supporting and sustaining a vibrant production base which can represent to a network audience local life and culture, as well as creating and contributing high quality content reflecting life inside and outside the UK.

We would also wish the Trust to ensure that any harmonisation of definitions between Ofcom and the BBC Executive will not have a negative impact on opportunities for commissions from Northern Ireland, particularly in the choice of film locations.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

Over 70% of young people in Northern Ireland would like the BBC to tell others about life here

Source: ACNI schools project 11-14 year-olds

iii. Creativity and distinctiveness

Ensure that high quality, creative and distinctive content, relevant to and reflective of, the needs of diverse audiences in Northern Ireland and across the UK, is available across all platforms

Council continues to be concerned about the limited representation of life experiences in Northern Ireland at a network level. As Northern Ireland society changes and becomes more complex and diverse, this is not solely a matter of cultural representation. There is also a need for greater editorial innovation.

This view is informed by direct engagement with local audiences and is also evidenced in the BBC Trust's 2007 research on Purpose Remits. This showed that in the area of "fresh new ideas" there was a perception gap among local audiences of -30 percentage points. This is not a problem only in Northern Ireland, it is also an area of significant concern for the wider UK audience where there is a -21 percentage point performance gap.

We consider this to be an area of significant concern. We would wish to see a strengthening of content that seeks not only to reflect a wide range of voices and perspectives but creates innovative and enjoyable content that delivers relevance and audience connection.

Council notes that, at a local level, progress has been made in addressing issues around the appropriate provision of Irish and Ulster-Scots. We will continue to scrutinise the development and implementation of these plans.

Our commitment

As part of its work under this priority, Council will engage creatively with a diverse range of audiences in Northern Ireland to gain a fuller understanding of their appreciation of the BBC's provision. We would also encourage the BBC Trust to develop measures of distinctiveness and creativity in order to monitor and evaluate BBC Executive proposals and thus to ensure that the diverse needs of audiences are met.



Sir Michael Lyons meets one of the stars of BBCNI's Sesame Tree



Council member Clifford Harkness talks to a member of the audience

iv. Digital access and changing consumption

Develop digital access, ensuring that the needs of Northern Ireland audiences are met

Council recognises audience concerns about the limited availability of digital services as well as the acknowledged digital divide in Northern Ireland.

We would wish to see plans to address this issue effectively both before and after the Digital Switchover in 2012. These plans should also take account of the phasing and scoping of digital broadcast developments in the Republic of Ireland, in so far as they affect Northern Ireland audiences.

Council still wishes to see BBC Radio Foyle available on digital radio.

We also wish to ensure that the impact of rapidly changing consumption patterns (Freeview, Freesat, HD, online and mobile) is analysed and assessed rigorously, in the context of the value of a public service broadcaster.

We are particularly interested in the creative use of emerging technologies and interactivity to enhance content and meet the needs of a diverse audience, with a particular focus on young people.

Our commitment

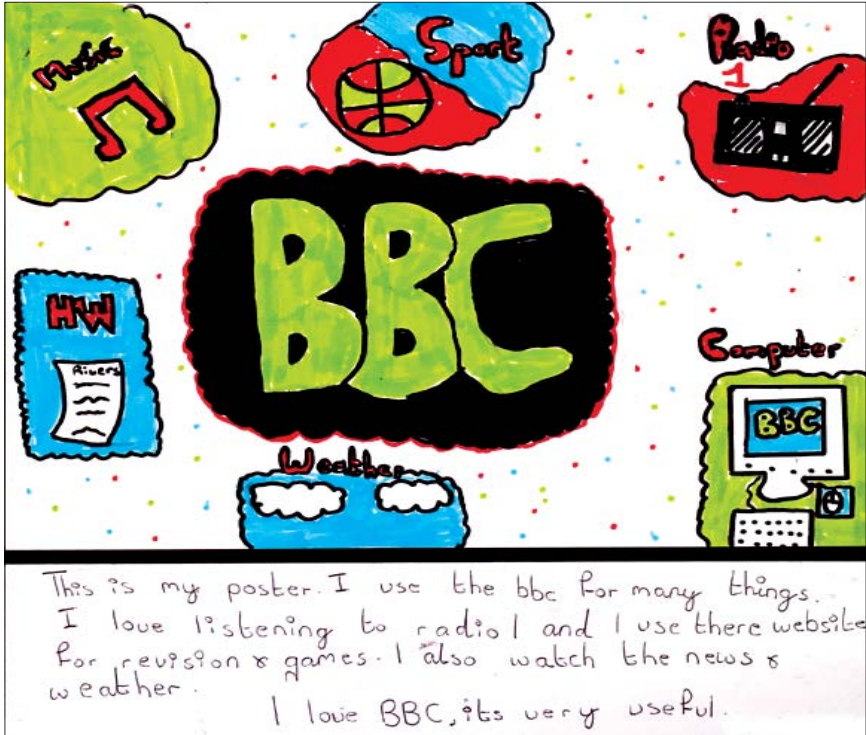
Council will continue to monitor progress towards Digital Switchover with a particular focus on synchronisation with the Republic of Ireland; to press for maximum availability of digital radio; to understand the impact of new distribution platforms on audiences and to review access issues, particularly for vulnerable groups.

We would also request the BBC Trust to ensure that relevant and accurate information is gathered and assessed relating to accelerated changes in consumption patterns across platforms and services. This will assist a better understanding of the various ways in which connection is made with the audience and ensure that there is not an adverse impact on audiences in Northern Ireland in pre- and post-Digital Switchover and with the launch of Freesat and other digital initiatives.



“Why rave on about DAB radio when it is not widely available in certain areas of the UK?”

Source: BBC Trust Purpose Remits Survey (NI)



What is the BBC Audience Council for Northern Ireland?

The Audience Council champions the interests and views of audiences in Northern Ireland.

It actively seeks to engage with audiences to better understand their needs and expectations of the BBC.

The Council has sought the views of the audience on a range of issues this year including the impartiality of news and current affairs coverage, bbc.co.uk, Irish and Ulster-Scots provision and the BBC's coverage of the arts.

It has represented those views to the BBC Trust and has also advised on other performance areas that the audience has told us are important to them, including: network commissioning, digital access and creative and distinctive programmes.

The Council is made up of 11 people who seek to reflect the diverse views and opinions of the local audience. They are all volunteers who give their time freely.

If you would like to find out more about the Council, including how to apply to become a member visit bbc.co.uk/northernireland/audiencouncil

The image features a series of overlapping, curved, ribbon-like shapes in various shades of blue and green. The shapes are layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. The colors range from light, airy blues and greens to deeper, more saturated tones. The overall composition is abstract and modern, with a clean, minimalist aesthetic. The shapes appear to be part of a larger, continuous design, possibly representing a stylized flower or a dynamic, flowing form.

BBC NORTHERN IRELAND REPORT 2007/2008



Making Connections

Peter Johnston, Controller, BBC Northern Ireland

The past year has been a challenging one for BBCNI but it has also been a period of creative success and notable performance across all platforms.

It was an important twelve months for Northern Ireland with the restoration of devolution and the return of a locally-accountable administration. This allowed us to resume our dedicated programming about the work of the Assembly, with Stormont Live on television and Today/Yesterday at the Assembly on radio. Other programmes and services, particularly in news and current affairs, analysed political developments as they unfolded and provided local audiences with a platform to debate important issues. BBC Newsline kept audiences updated on breaking news stories at Stormont and elsewhere and our local television news offering was extended with the introduction of a new weekday evening bulletin at 8.00pm.



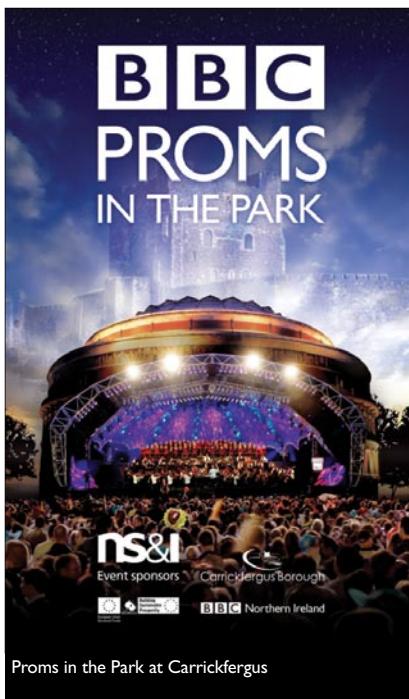
Hillsborough Revisited: Wendy Austin with former Secretaries of State Lord Mayhew and Lord Hurd and Household Manager David Anderson

It was a year in which our programming explored the increasingly diverse nature of cultural and community life. We also embarked on several highly innovative projects. Blueprint was a landmark production across television, radio and online, and used advanced special effects to explain the physical and environmental changes which have shaped our landscape and the lives of its people over several millennia. The Sesame Tree, made in conjunction with the creative team behind the legendary Sesame Street, brought Muppets with Northern Ireland accents to the screen in an imaginative series for 3-6 year olds. These programmes will soon be available to UK-wide audiences on Cbeebies.



Sesame Tree characters Hilda and Potto

Our new local television schedule placed key programmes at the heart of the evening offering and brought with it increased pressure to deliver content of ambition and originality. Locally-produced television output remains a defining feature of the BBC's role in Northern Ireland. We are committed to its continued development, making use of creative partnerships and based on audience feedback and research. And in all of this we will want to take account of the many different changes that are affecting society and people's expectations of BBC services.



DID YOU KNOW

The annual cost of a colour television licence is currently £139.50 – about 38p per day for each household. For more information on buying or renewing your television licence visit: tvlicensing.co.uk



Blueprint: Imagining the past



Bright Sparks: The fun side of science



Fairy Tales: Network drama from BBCNI

BBCNI's investigative journalism remains an important area for development and we delivered several high profile programmes for both local and network audiences, including an award-winning exposé of illegal dog-fighting. Work goes on to develop the scale and sustainability of our network current affairs programming. It was also a better year for our network drama. Fairy Tales and Messiah were both filmed in Northern Ireland and there were a number of other significant productions.

It remains our objective to deliver a sustainable network supply strategy and to ensure that network production, especially drama, is more culturally representative and that it provides local economic and creative benefits. We are also targeting other new areas of network output building on some specialist local strengths.

Much of this development work will be carried out in the context of the BBC's strategic five-year plan, Delivering Creative Future. This is rooted in detailed audience research and is designed to deliver the BBC's public purposes – providing fewer programmes but concentrating creative and commissioning energies on those which are most innovative and distinctive; a digital step change, offering audiences programmes and content wherever and whenever they want them; and a smaller BBC,

providing the best value for audiences. At a time when Northern Ireland itself is undergoing rapid change, this presents an opportunity for us to re-focus our content, to raise our creative sights, as well as simplifying our business processes and streamlining management structures.

At the end of 2007 we said farewell to a familiar friend – Give My Head Peace. This long-running comedy series has been one of our biggest success stories. Its writers are now busy developing other projects, including some for the BBC. Comedy and entertainment are key genres on which we will continue to focus, in part through the further development of our successful relationship with the local independent sector.

FIND OUT MORE

You can get reception advice about BBC radio and television services and obtain a range of fact sheets on how to obtain our new digital services at: bbc.co.uk/reception



Documentary: Made in Belfast with painter Graham Catney



Lost For Words: Noel Thompson and Nicola Harkin explore the condition aphasia



Andrew Maxwell – Comedy across the divide

During the year we achieved record audiences for BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle, securing its position as the most listened to station in a competitive local radio environment. This reflects the quality, attractiveness and popular appeal of the programmes which it provides. News and current affairs is a core element of this service and it was recognised with a Sony Gold Award in the Breaking News Category for coverage of the Omagh fire tragedy. Our web services have also grown in popularity and usage. We are enriching our interactive/multiplatform capacity



The Tractor Show with Alan McKee and Conor Grimes

with additional listen again facilities and the availability of local programmes on the BBC's iplayer service.

In sport, there is always pressure to obtain and retain the rights to coverage of events with sometimes intense competition from other broadcasters. We began the year under review with disappointment at having been unable to secure the IFA contract for live television broadcasts of the Northern Ireland Home Internationals. We were pleased however, to subsequently secure the rights to show highlights of these games and other domestic fixtures over the next four years. Arrangements are also now in place with the GAA and RTE for extensive coverage of Gaelic games. In addition, our North West 200 coverage brought this major sporting event to a local, national and international audience.



Season Ticket – Stephen Watson and Rory McIlroy

We continued to develop our indigenous minority language output and initiated an extensive review of our services. As the financial year concluded, we were able to announce plans for an enhancement of programming in Irish and Ulster-Scots. These commitments will benefit from additional funding over the next three years and have been informed by audience research and consultations led by the BBC's Audience Council for Northern Ireland.

We are committed to making the BBC's digital services more widely available. Local audience access to digital television has now been enhanced by the BBC's FreeSat proposition and we are working with other broadcasters on issues relating to digital switch-over.

Stephen Nolan brought the style of his weekday BBC Radio Ulster programme to television in Nolan Live, which was a popular feature of the autumn schedule. It included extensive audience interaction through texts, emails and telephone calls. States of Mind, presented by Declan Curry, was developed with support from Queen's University and examined our levels of tolerance. Second Chance School was a powerful series examining important social issues and we also produced a number of strongly-performing single documentaries. These included The Lost City of Craigavon, The Poppy Day Bomb, marking its 20th anniversary, Bateman On Bangor, The Ginger Gene, Healy! and a special programme on Tommy Makem, the renowned musician and entertainer, shown shortly after his death.



Behind Closed Doors – The world of the Poor Clare nuns

We were saddened by the death of Kieran Hegarty, our Head of Interactivity and Learning. He was a broadcast pioneer and a key figure in the development of our Irish language output.



Naval history with Tim Collins



Darryl Grimason and Dennis Taylor – Saving Planet Earth

DID YOU KNOW

In 2008/09 BBCNI television will broadcast at least 280 hours of news and current affairs and 135 hours of non-news programming. Find out more about our commitments to local audiences at: bbc.co.uk/info/statements2008/



Where the Titanic was built – with Glenn Patterson in the series Building Britain

We are committed to finding and developing new talent and ideas and re-launched our Production Trainee Scheme after a break of several years. Ten trainees are now in place, learning about every aspect of our work and developing the skills to equip them for a career in the industry. New programme initiatives currently in development include Project X which will provide an opportunity to test innovative formats and approaches, with a particular focus on younger audiences.



Blas Ceoil – Lynette Fay and Karen Kirby

Audiences are at the heart of everything we do. Many challenges lie ahead, including the further development of network and local services, digital access and wider audience outreach. But there are also opportunities for us to draw on the BBC's core creative strengths. These are built on generations of service to audiences in Northern Ireland. They include a passion for the place in which we live, a deep understanding of its people, and a commitment to public purpose, editorial integrity and creative excellence. BBC audiences deserve the best and our ambition is to ensure that they are never disappointed.



THE YEAR IN REVIEW



Newton Emerson explores The Lost City of Craigavon



Stephen Nolan Christmas Special

Local Television

Our local television service delivers a blend of news, current affairs, documentaries, music and entertainment - all of it aimed at reflecting the diverse needs and interests of our audience.

There were a number of innovative projects during the year, including Blueprint, States Of Mind and Return of the Raptors and we launched a new scheduling strategy to make more local programmes available at peak viewing times.

We produced a number of single documentaries, including The Lost City of Craigavon, in which Newton Emerson examined the experimental planning idea that shaped his birthplace. The Poppy Day Bomb marked the 20th anniversary of the bombing at Cenotaph in Enniskillen. The Ginger Gene looked the history, myths and stereotypes associated with this



Owen O'Neill - The Ginger Gene

characteristic and Tommy Makem, the Bard of Armagh, celebrated the life and career of the renowned musician and entertainer a short time after his death.

Nolan Live, in which the presenter brought the energy, style and interactivity of his BBC Radio Ulster programme to television, was a feature of the autumn schedule, culminating in a Christmas special. The year also brought to a close one of BBCNI's biggest success stories, the long-running comedy series Give My Head Peace. Its creators are now working on a range of other projects. A tribute night featured a specially-commissioned finale, a documentary and a favourite episode from past seasons, chosen by the BBCNI audience.

Continuing series included Derek's Dreams, Looking For Love, Greenmount Garden and Lobby Lives. Second Chance School followed the lives of staff and students at Loughshore Educational Resource Centre on Belfast's Shore Road. Under The Hammer was an observational series focussed on Ross's, the Belfast auctioneers. And in Mission Employable

DID YOU KNOW

In 2008/09 BBC Radio Ulster will broadcast 220 hours of indigenous minority language programmes. We will also broadcast 27 hours of news and current affairs each week. Find out more at: bbc.co.uk/information/statements



A tribute to Tommy Makem – with the Clancy Brothers



Give My Head Peace – the last chapter



All the fun of Looking for Love



Second Chance School – dedicated to teaching



ATL RockSchool



Under the Hammer – the world of the auctioneer

the ubiquitous Stephen Nolan tried to help six of Northern Ireland's long-term unemployed find a brighter future.

Music programmes catered for a range of tastes. So *Hard To Beat* explored popular music with a local theme from the Sixties to the present day and included Van Morrison's first-ever interview for BBCNI. The *Blackstaff Sessions* showcased emerging and established talent; ATL in NYC went to the United States for a Northern Ireland new music event; and *Blas Ceoil* featured bands and solo artists from venues throughout Northern Ireland.

Learning

This was a high-profile year for BBCNI Learning with the launch of major creative initiatives, including The Sesame Tree, and the further development of services across all platforms.

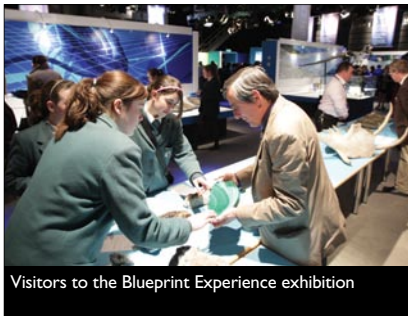
There has been imaginative work on resource materials to support the requirements of the local curriculum and more informal initiatives, such as BBC Blast which ran the first UK Blast Learning Festival over five days in Belfast's Custom House Square with support from a range of partner organisations. Blast also teamed up with the local bureau of Headliners, the news agency for young people, and BBCNI television news to help a team of young journalists produce a week of reports for BBC Newsline.

Throughout the year development work continued on the State Apart interactive project and a number of new sites were launched, including Titanic Journey, which included previously unseen footage from BBC Newsline's documentary about the vessel; Landscapes Unlocked, offering

a multi-dimensional exploration of Northern Ireland; and Sleepover Planet, which provided primary school teachers and pupils with copyright-free tools and content to produce a school musical. New interactive content was produced for the Tandy website on the theme of invaders and a Viking Day was organised by the Tandy production team to launch the new academic year.



The Blueprint Experience



Visitors to the Blueprint Experience exhibition



Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness at the launch of the Sesame Tree



The Sesame Tree family

More than 300 children went to Carrickfergus Castle for a day of activities delivered in partnership with the Environment and Heritage Service. The Blueprint website was showcased at a specially commissioned weekend exhibition. It was developed in partnership with National Museums and attracted almost 2,000 visitors.

Detailed monitoring of web page impressions allows BBCNI Learning to review the success of its online provision. In five years, the average monthly figures for wpi have increased from 110,000 to 1.25 million.

FIND OUT MORE

The BBC's licence fee allows us to provide 8 interactive television channels, 10 radio networks and more than 50 local television and radio services across the UK. It also supports the BBC's website. Find out more at: bbc.co.uk/info

Sesame Tree

This major new series from BBCNI Learning was produced by a local independent production company in association with the Sesame Workshop, the non-profit organisation behind the world-renowned Sesame Street. The series complements the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum and is aimed at children between 3-6 years old. Each of the 15-minute episodes feature Muppets Potto and Hilda on an adventure of laughter and learning. They answer questions about topics posed by children and introduce short films showing the diversity of Northern Ireland life through the eyes of a child. In addition to the television series, there is a BBCNI Learning Sesame Tree website which includes clips from the show alongside interactive discovery games for children. All of this seeks to promote the development of thinking and decision-making skills and an understanding of social and community diversity.

BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle

BBC Radio Ulster and BBC Radio Foyle cater for a range of audience needs in a constantly changing and increasingly competitive environment.

They deliver a creative mix of entertainment, factual, documentary, and other programmes and seek to reflect the needs and interests of a community rich in cultural diversity. All of this is underpinned by a core service of news and current affairs.

This varied menu of programming remains popular with listeners. A year after major scheduling changes (which included new evening slots for specialist music output) BBC Radio Ulster recorded its highest ever audience reach. The success of the station is based on a close

connection with the interests and concerns of local communities. Building on that relationship and ensuring that programmes continue to meet the expectations of their audiences, remains a key priority. The Stephen Nolan Show adopted a more in-depth and investigative approach to issues and looked at a number of stories, including the extent of C Difficile in Northern Ireland.



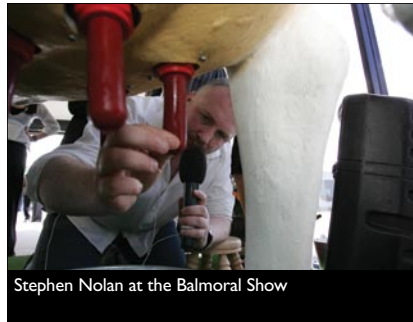
Music with Foy Vance and Duke Special



Building work on Broadcasting House, Belfast began in 1938 and was completed in 1941. You can visit the building and see how programmes are made by joining a public tour. For more information visit: bbc.co.uk/tickets



Sinead O'Connor at the Cathedral Quarter



Stephen Nolan at the Balmoral Show



BBC Radio Ulster presenters read Oscar Wilde

Listener interactivity was also developed during the year. It is an increasingly valuable element of all regular speech strands including Good Morning Ulster, Evening Extra and Talk Back. And BBC Radio Ulster launched six new podcasts to allow listeners to listen again to parts of the station's output.

BBC Foyle's speech-based programmes benefit from high levels of listener involvement. Its schedule changes have included the introduction of a new weekday morning show, presented by Paul McFadden, in which listeners' calls, texts and emails provide lively content and a sense of intimate contact with the local community. The new sports programme on Saturday afternoons is proving popular and the station is visiting more local clubs to broadcast from their grounds.

During the year, the popularity of Days Like This, the daily story-telling strand on BBC Radio Ulster, led to the commissioning of an animated series for local television. A book is also planned. And the previous storytelling strand, My Story, is being looked at as a model for other BBC regions.



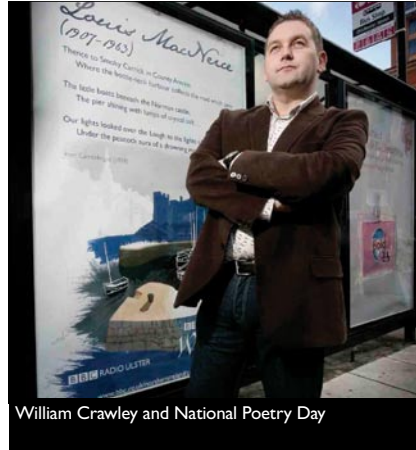
John O'Neill – the story of the Ulster Hospital



Ash on Across the Line

Music programmes, both live and recorded, delivered an innovative blend, including productions such as Washington Nights, three live programmes from the US capital marking the Smithsonian Folklife Festival; a live St. Patrick's Day concert from the Waterfront Hall celebrating the work of the composer Shaun Davey; and live coverage of The Beach Party 2007 from Portrush. Marching On looked at the world of the flute band whilst Year Zero provided a documentary account of the emergence of Punk in the 70s.

Community engagement is a constant feature of the station's output with recorded programmes and live



William Crawley and National Poetry Day

broadcasts from a number of venues and events throughout Northern Ireland. Programmes included Morning Service, Gardener's Corner and Balmoral Show. And people and places of significance were highlighted during the course of the year. Arts Extra celebrated the life and work of Louis MacNeice with a week of special programming while The Ulster was a portrait of the people and the work of the Ulster Hospital, Dundonald.

The Saturday morning schedule continues to develop and other slots have been created to showcase new writing and presenter talent.

**FIND
OUT MORE**

BBC Radio Ulster began in 1975 and BBC Radio Foyle followed shortly afterwards in 1979. Find out more about these stations and listen live or again to your favourite programmes at: bbc.co.uk/radioulster

Current Affairs

This was a year of considerable achievement for BBCNI's current affairs unit. It delivered a range of investigations for local and network audiences and secured a BAFTA nomination and a Royal Television Society Award for Spotlight as the best regional current affairs programme.

The research involved in current affairs programmes can extend over many months and sometimes requires considerable courage from the journalists involved. BBC investment in this area allowed us to undertake a detailed and wide-ranging investigation into illegal dog-fighting. Spotlight also secured the only interview with the former RUC Chief Constable, Sir Ronnie Flanagan, following a highly-critical report by the Police Ombudsman on alleged Special Branch-UVF collusion. Other investigative highlights included a programme on issues surrounding the death of Captain Nairac.

BBCNI also produced a number of current affairs programmes for BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio 5 Live. Work is ongoing to develop the volume and range of network television output in this area.

FIND OUT MORE

You can read about local BBC programmes that are making the news by visiting BBCNI's Press Office website. It includes regularly updated stories about the BBC's work in Northern Ireland: bbc.co.uk/pressoffice



Topical issues on Spotlight



Spotlight special on dog fighting

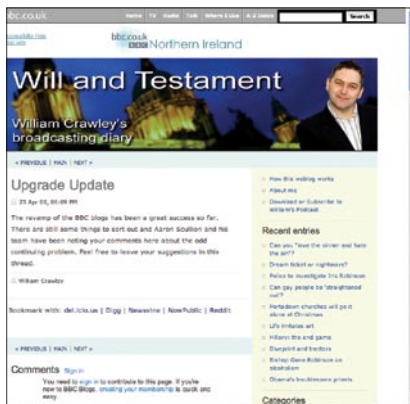
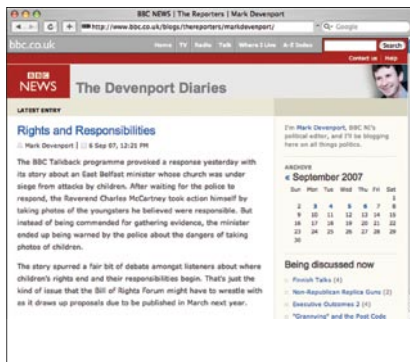
Online

Our online presence continues to develop in range and originality and includes website resources for every local programme.

BBC Radio Ulster and BBC Radio Foyle have their own sites and there is a portal for BBCNI television programmes with increased access to local content using the BBC's iplayer service.

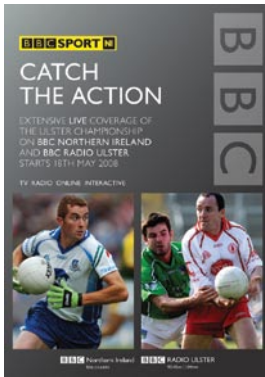
The internet provides a forum for individual members of our audiences to have a conversation with each other and with programme makers, as well as commenting on our output. BBCNI began developing message boards in 1999. Since then it has been building opportunities through simple comment systems, blogs and websites such as Your Place And Mine.

Blogs, our online journals, are growing in popularity. They provide an insight into the lives and work of our programme-makers and broadcasters and allow themes raised in our programmes to be explored in greater detail online. The Devenport Diaries is now fixed firmly as part of our political coverage. During the year, our Political Editor Mark Devenport provided much interesting material from behind the scenes as devolution returned and the Assembly and the Executive got down to business And Will And Testament, the blog by presenter William Crawley, provided comment and discussion on a variety of cultural and ethical issues.



Sport

This was an exciting and varied year in sport with a range of major events being covered - some of them being broadcast live for the first time.



Coverage of motorcycle racing reached its peak with the North West 200 and an ambitious range of programmes across television, radio and online. A mobile phone link allowed bike enthusiasts to connect to a NW200 site where they could browse pages, download onboard video, rider profiles, competitions and quizzes. Practice sessions were also streamed live on the web.



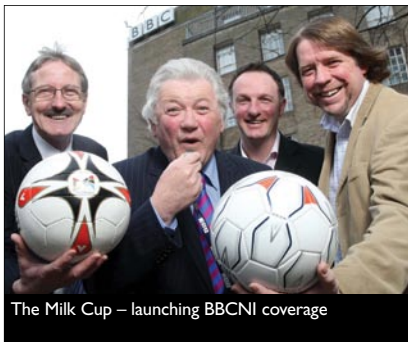
We also transmitted our first-ever World Cup tournament with the IRB U19 World Cup, the third biggest international rugby tournament. There was also a selection of GAA games, live football and rugby international matches.

DID YOU KNOW

You can watch BBC Newsline reports and find out more about the programme and its production team by visiting its website: bbc.co.uk/newsline

Our regular television sport series were given a new look. Final Score was enhanced and Season Ticket changed its editorial remit to include profiles of sporting personalities. These included boxer John Duddy and the golf prodigy Rory McIlroy. Healy! was a special one-off documentary celebrating the success of Northern Ireland's most prolific goal-scorer. And on the 50th anniversary of the Munich air disaster, Re-United followed the former Northern Ireland and Manchester United goalkeeper Harry Gregg as he recalled the grim events of that day and travelled to Belgrade to meet a woman whose life he had saved as well as that of her unborn baby.

There was extensive production commitment to coverage of the Milk Cup, one of Europe's premier youth football tournaments, including



The Milk Cup – launching BBCNI coverage



Northern Ireland International David Healy

a dedicated website. After the disappointment of not being awarded the contract for live coverage of Northern Ireland Home Internationals, we were pleased to secure the rights to broadcast television highlights of these games and other domestic fixtures for the next four years. And new arrangements have also been put in place involving BBCNI, RTE and the GAA for coverage of Gaelic games. Our GAA output attracts large and appreciative audiences and they can now enjoy enhanced BBC programming in this area.

FIND OUT MORE

The BBC's new iplayer service allows you to watch and listen again to a range of local and network programmes. These are available for 7 days after transmission and can be stored on your computer for up to 30 days. Find out more at: bbc.co.uk/iplayer

Network Programming

It is a priority for BBCNI to secure additional network commissions - with all their associated benefits for both audiences and the creative industries.

Our ambitions are supported by the BBC Trust's commitment to increased network production activity from centres across the UK. We are working to develop programme proposals which reflect life in contemporary Northern Ireland and which will provide cultural and economic benefits for the region.

It was a busy year for drama with a number of high profile productions. Fairy Tales and a new Messiah project were both filmed in Northern Ireland, enabling us to begin to develop a more sustainable network drama presence. Other productions included Rough Diamond, Lilies, Murphy's Law and Ballet Shoes. Future projects include Five Minutes Of Heaven, and Occupation, a serial set in Iraq.

Our current affairs unit continued to provide programmes for network television, including Panorama. An investigation into organised dog-fighting received high audience ratings and was nominated for a BAFTA.

Entertainment programmes experienced a more difficult year. After several seasons, the successful series Just For Laughs was not re-commissioned and we are conducting a network supply review as a basis for increased and sustainable activity in this and other areas.



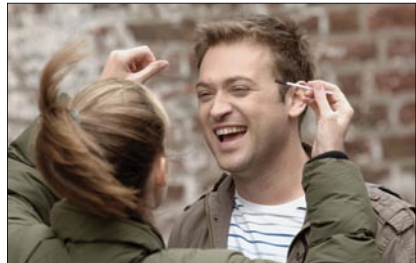
Network drama from NI with Fairy Tales - Billy Goat and Rapunzel





Programmes for network radio covered a broad range of interests. Street Corner Soul, for BBC Radio 2, was a four-part series presented by the singer Ronnie Spector on the history of American doo-wop music. It was described by The Times as “the music series of the year”. On BBC Radio 3 audiences were treated to a week of Ulster Orchestra afternoon concerts and a chamber music series recorded at the Fiddlefest in Londonderry. BBC Radio 4 and 5 Live commissions included Peace Work which followed a team of conflict negotiators trying to transform war zones into normal societies, and The Queen And The Republic, which looked at the prospect of the Queen’s first visit to the Republic of Ireland.

There were a number of successful network radio drama productions, among them Avoid London which was a special commission in the Woman’s Hour slot across the week of the



Fairy Tales - Denise Van Outen;
James Nesbitt and Maxine Peake;
Paul Nicholls behind the scenes

anniversary of the 7/7 bombings. It subsequently became an extended Saturday play. Other commissions included works by John Banville, Ronan Bennett, Bernard MacLaverty and a Book at Bedtime reading of David Park’s novel The Truth Commissioner.

DID YOU KNOW

You can watch BBC radio presenters at work and see behind the scenes at our studios in Broadcasting House, Belfast by visiting our website: bbc.co.uk/radioulster



The Politics Show with Jim Fitzpatrick

Politics

BBCNI's politics output is delivered by specialist journalists and production staff and aims to provide our audiences with authoritative news, analysis, information and debate.

It makes use of a region-wide network of studios and correspondents and benefits from the BBC's unique newsgathering capabilities across radio, television and online.

The restoration of devolution saw the return of programmes and services focussed on the Assembly. Stormont Live and Today/Yesterday at the Assembly resumed their detailed coverage of Assembly business after a gap of five years. On television, Hearts and Minds, The Politics Show, Spotlight, Let's Talk, Nolan Live and BBC Newsline examined a range of social, economic and political issues.



Hearts and Minds



The Stormont debating chamber



Mark Carruthers and Let's Talk

Inside Politics on BBC Radio Ulster continued to provide in-depth and extended interviews with senior political figures and developments at Stormont and elsewhere remained an important element of daily news strands and programmes on radio such as Good Morning Ulster; Evening Extra and Talk Back, as well as BBC Newsline on local television.

Tony Blair's decision to stand down as Prime Minister was the focus of a special edition of Good Morning Ulster live from Westminster and Spotlight examined the impact of his premiership on Northern Ireland.

Coverage of Assembly debates and decision-making is a core element of our local service offering. Our role is to record and explain developments at Stormont and to provide

opportunities for wider debate about the many different issues affecting local communities.



Blast supports 13-19 year olds in developing their skills in art, dance, film, music, writing and much more. Find out how to get involved and look at some recent projects by visiting: bbc.co.uk/blast



Inside Politics with Mark Devenport

Events

We made a big contribution to a number of major events during the year, ensuring full and comprehensive coverage for audiences on radio, television and online.

These included news – with the return of devolution and events surrounding the establishment of the new Executive; sport – the North West 200 and a series of important football, rugby and GAA matches; and music. Our events-based programmes included Proms In The Park from Carrickfergus, the Ulster Orchestra and Duke Special performing at the Waterfront Hall in the opening concert of the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival and the ViTAl concert in Belfast featuring Razorlight. Other key events in the Northern Ireland calendar featured prominently, including the Balmoral Show, the Twelfth, the All Ireland Pipe Band Championships and the Belfast Festival at Queen's.



Alfie Boe – Proms in the Park



Duke Special – BBC Radio Ulster concert



Outside broadcast with Alan Simpson

News

This was an important year for Northern Ireland and for our news provision. Developments at Stormont featured prominently in local news programmes.

There was also much evidence of original journalism in other areas however, supported by the effective use of our specialist and regional correspondents.

May 2007 saw the formal establishment of new Northern Ireland Executive at Stormont. The inaugural day's events were covered live on BBC Radio Ulster and on BBCNI television with Stormont Live and a Spotlight Special. Our news online coverage attracted almost 500,000 individual users and BBC Newsline's programme that evening went on to win the award for Best News Programme at the Irish Film and Television Awards.

We provided live coverage of the meeting of the British-Irish Governmental Council – Gordon Brown's first engagement in Northern Ireland as Prime Minister. And Political Correspondent Martina Purdy was the first journalist to report the news of the Rev Dr Ian Paisley's intention to step down as Moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church.

Other social and political issues were reflected throughout the year. These included the lengthy strike by classroom assistants, the controversy over the Giant's Causeway visitor centre, and a range of economic and social issues.



Stormont – The return to devolution

Our core service offering on radio and television enjoyed a year of strong audiences and popularity. BBC Radio Ulster provided hourly news bulletins. Good Morning Ulster, Talk Back and Evening Extra explored a range of topical issues and made increasing use of audience reaction to news events through emails and text messages. BBC Radio Foyle's news team continued to provide a dedicated service in the North West and further developed its own online news presence with the appointment of two new online journalists.

On television, local news provision was increased with the introduction of a nightly 8pm bulletin on BBC ONE NI. BBC Newsline continued to develop a strong relationship with its audience through a diverse news agenda and innovative journalism, including a special series of reports to mark the end of the Army presence in Northern Ireland. And Family Focus provided an important outlet for a range of everyday issues, with many of the stories suggested by viewers themselves.

Our news interactive provision grew in scope during the year. More content on demand was made available, aided by a creative partnership with BBC Newsline. News online accounts for 75 per cent of all visits to our local internet services.



Noel Thompson and Donna Traynor in the BBC Newsline Studio

FIND OUT MORE

The BBC publishes information about different aspects of its work, including responses to Freedom of Information requests, on a dedicated website. Read more and find out how to make an FOI enquiry at: bbc.co.uk/foi

Special Projects

A number of highly innovative projects were developed during the year, using a multi-platform approach to reach different audiences.

Blueprint was a landmark production chronicling some of the physical and environmental changes that have shaped our landscape and its inhabitants over several millennia. It used special effects and stunning photography to bring this story to life. An interactive website allowed further exploration and in Blueprint: Off The Beaten Track viewers were encouraged to get out into the countryside and see it for themselves.

Return of the Raptors combined television, radio and live webcams to tell the story of our fastest bird of prey, the peregrine falcon. Darryl Grimason headed up this multi-media event, tracing two falcon families as they faced the trials and tribulations of the changing seasons.

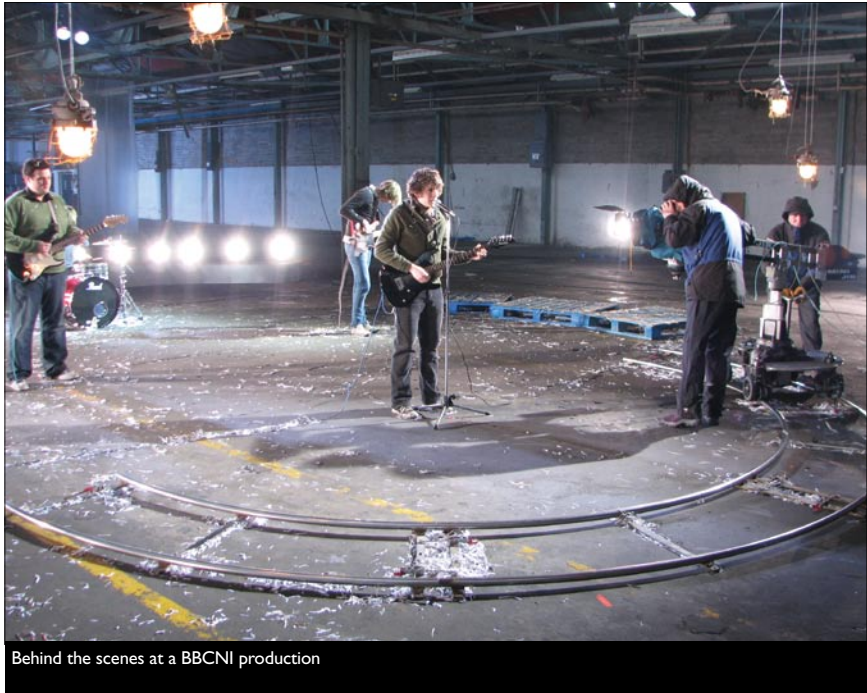
States of Mind, presented by Declan Curry and developed with support from academics at Queen's University, blended science and entertainment in a unique project looking at levels of tolerance within Northern Ireland. There were two strands to this initiative. In the first programme, the attitudes of children born in the year of the IRA ceasefire came under scrutiny. And in the second, viewers were given the opportunity to monitor their own levels of tolerance by taking an interactive test.



Darryl Grimason – the Return of the Raptors



The Blueprint Team



Behind the scenes at a BBCNI production

Trainee Scheme

Our commitment to nurturing new talent was supported by the establishment of a Production Trainee Scheme.

It aims to provide participants with skills, experiences and opportunities that will allow them to become great programme-makers. The Scheme attracted a huge level of interest and the trainees have begun to make an important contribution to local BBC output.

GET IN TOUCH

BBC Information received almost

3500 telephone calls, emails and letters from local audiences about BBCNI's output in 2007/08. 92% of complaints were concluded within 10 working days. Find out how to make a comment or complaint at: bbc.co.uk/complaints

Community Bus

BBCNI's Community Bus has continued its work in promoting media literacy with groups and organisations across the region.

It benefited from an upgrade in facilities and equipment and is heavily involved in helping local people to tell their stories using video and audio recordings. All of this material is published on the Bus' website. The team have also been working to provide a platform for audience issues and concerns. A new accountability feature allows people to talk about BBC services and to put questions to management and programme-

makers. And we've developed a short film explaining the BBC's complaints process and how audience feedback can affect the development of local BBC output. Work is underway to further extend the Bus' work at community level. Its website will be re-launched in the autumn and several new projects will soon get underway.

Significant highlights of the Bus team's work over the last few months have included a series of recordings and activities coinciding with National Poetry Day. We also made BBCNI's biggest-ever contribution to School Report. This UK-wide initiative provided pupils with the opportunity to develop news packages on issues affecting their lives. Local activities were supported by a dedicated website and were featured across a range of programmes on BBCNI television and radio. Several pupils secured an interview with the outgoing First Minister which was included in The Politics Show and a selection of reports from other schools was included in a short programme on BBC network television. Work is already underway on School Report 2009.



The Community Bus at Stormont

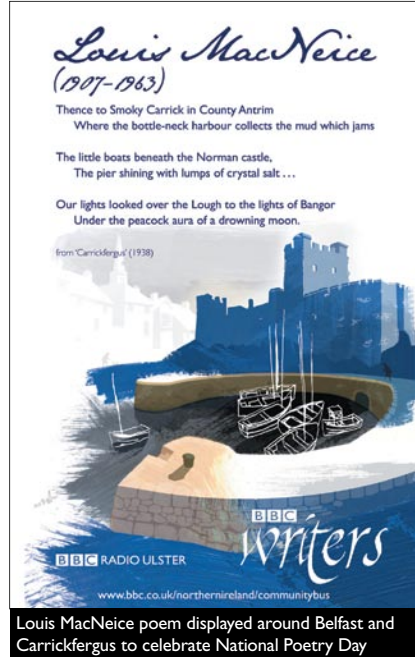


Special events with Community Bus

Community Archive

BBCNI's Community Archive provides free access to a huge storehouse of local radio and television programmes.

It offers guidance and support to researchers and is also responsible for the development of touring exhibition projects on BBC personalities and output from across the last eighty years. The Archive is administered in partnership with National Museums and is based in dedicated (and recently re-furbished) premises at Cultra. Key projects in the last twelve months have included a multi-media exhibition and accompanying booklet on Louis MacNeice and the development of an ambitious project looking at the changing role and nature of BBC journalism in Northern Ireland. It is hoped that this will be launched in autumn 08 as part of a wider programme of events. Work is also underway to make the Archive's exhibitions and recordings and its extensive database available online. This will contribute significantly to public access and should provide users with information and materials that they can include in their own exhibition projects. Our ambition is that all of this work will be guided by an informal advisory group and that it can be linked to community-based reminiscence and local history projects – some of whose online activities are being supported by the Department of Finance and Personnel.



Storyfinders

Storyfinders is an inter-agency initiative which aims to assist local people in developing their media and storytelling skills.

It involves six groups at locations across Northern Ireland and their work has included the development of website resources based on historical and cultural themes. These materials provide a diverse and fascinating snapshot of community life and include art work, reminiscence and music. Participants have been able to undertake a range of training and several of them have also contributed to local BBC programmes. Some of the groups have created short films about people and places in their area and others have hosted large-scale community events. A gathering to look at the history of Bessbrook attracted a capacity-breaking crowd and was extensively covered on BBC Newsline.

Storyfinders websites are maintained by local people and are part of a growing community-owned network which facilitates the sharing of stories and experiences and the creation

of new relationships at home and around the world. BBC involvement in the development stage of this initiative is now drawing to a close. The contribution of participating groups was recognised at a special award ceremony in Broadcasting House and it is hoped that the Storyfinders' network will continue to grow and provide a model for others to follow.

**FIND
OUT MORE**

Find out about
how the BBC's

archives are maintained and look
at themed collections of radio and
television programmes at our new
website: bbc.co.uk/archive



Storyfinder Lexy Higgins with Alan Simpson

Broadcast Appeals

The BBC has been supporting the work of local charities through Broadcast Appeal opportunities for over eighty years.



The annual Family Appeal

Monthly slots are available across BBCNI television and radio and are used to promote awareness of an organisation's work or to make an appeal for volunteers and/or financial support. Appeals are allocated by a local Appeals Advisory Committee. It also has a developing role in providing advice to the BBC on issues affecting the community and voluntary sector. It provides oversight of the annual Family Appeal (which is jointly organised by the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul with support from the BBC) and members were pleased to note the success of the 2007 Christmas Appeal. It distributed over 12,000 gifts to almost 5,000 disadvantaged families across Northern Ireland. The Appeal benefited from the support of many

different organisations, including Belfast Rotary and the member companies of Business in the Community. NICVA also provided generous assistance with the detailed evaluation of Family Appeal activities.

A recruitment exercise has been undertaken to appoint new members to the Committee and work is underway to develop a more engaging approach to local Appeals. This will include new website resources and should make it easier for people to make donations. We will also be working to provide audiences with additional information about the work of Broadcast Appeal charities and to explore how the Committee can assist BBCNI's wider engagement



Hugo Duncan and Pudsey

with the community and voluntary sector. Members received a useful briefing on editorial policy issues from Margaret Hill, the BBC's Chief Editorial Advisor, and were additionally involved in meetings with other BBC Appeals Committees.

Most of the Committee's work involves the assessment of local grant applications to Children in Need and the review of the charity's activities in Northern Ireland. Members play an important advisory role to the Trustees and help inform their decision-making about funding policies and priorities and the particular circumstances facing groups working

with children and young people at local level.

In 2007, Children in Need's on-the-night total in Northern Ireland was £606,399. The charity allocated grants to 254 local groups with a value of just over £2.6m.



Find out about Children in Need's work, subscribe to its Newsletter, get fundraising packs and much more at: bbc.co.uk/pudsey



Actor Brian Capron turns chef for Children in Need

The background features several overlapping, curved, ribbon-like shapes in various shades of green and blue. The colors range from light, almost white-green to deep teal and dark green. The shapes are layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall composition is clean and modern.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Hours of Output

	2006/07	2007/08
	hrs	hrs
BBCNI - Television	663	657
Radio Ulster & Radio Foyle	8,756	9,121
Network Television	50	36
Network Radio	198	207

Spend by Area (£m)

	2006/07	2007/08
	£m	£m
BBCNI - Television	30	29
Radio Ulster & Radio Foyle	11	12

Radio Ulster & Radio Foyle

The spend value for Radio Ulster & Radio Foyle differs from the figures reported in the BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2007/08 under the Service Licence tables. This is due to Service Licence reporting requirements adopting a fuller re-allocation of central costs and overheads onto BBC Services.

Network Income (£m)

	2006/07	2007/08
	£m	£m
Network Television	22.7	13.0
Network Radio	2.0	2.0

Network Television

Includes all content delivered and executive produced by BBCNI. In its Annual Report and Accounts 2007/08, the BBC reports Nations' network television spend on the basis of broadcast programmes meeting the Ofcom definition of Nations' production.

Using this definition, the television content from NI transmitted on the BBC networks is as follows:

	2006/07	2007/08
	£m	£m
Network Television		9.0

Hours of Output - by Genre / Service

BBCNI - Television	2006/07 hrs	2007/08 hrs
Entertainment	48	49
Drama, Comedy, Music & Arts	4	3
News and Weather & Current Affairs	381	414
Sport	113	111
Childrens, Education, Factual and Learning & Religion	117	80
Total	663	657
Further analysed as		
In - House Production	537	556
Independent Productions	126	101
Total	663	657

Network Television	2006/07	2007/08
	hrs	hrs
Entertainment	5	8
Drama, Comedy, Music & Arts	31	21
News and Weather & Current Affairs	10	8
Sport		
Childrens, Education, Factual and Learning & Religion	3	
Total	49.5	36
Further analysed as		
In - House Production	13.5	4.5
Independent Productions	36	28.5
Total	49.5	33
	2006/07	2007/08
Network Income Further analysed as	£m	£m
In - House Production	1	3.7
Independent Productions	21.7	9.3
Total	22.7	13

The background features several overlapping, curved, ribbon-like shapes in various shades of green and blue. The colors range from light, almost white-green to deep teal and dark green. The shapes are layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall composition is abstract and modern.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH YOUR BBC

Contacting Your BBC

BBC Northern Ireland, Broadcasting House, Belfast BT2 8HQ

Telephone: 028 9033 8000

Textphone: 028 9033 8100

BBC Radio Foyle, 8 Northland Road, Londonderry BT48 7JD

Telephone: 028 7137 8600

Television Licence

The 2008/09 colour television licence is £139.50 – equivalent to 38p per day for each household in the UK. People aged over 75 do not have to pay for television licence. A 50% reduction is available for people who are registered blind. A black and white licence is £47 for 2008/09.

Licence fee income allows the BBC to provide a wide range of services for audiences across the UK, including television, radio and online. The BBC Trust ensures that everything that the BBC does is informed by the interests of licence payers.

For help and information about your television licence, including different ways to pay, contact TV Licensing at:

Telephone: 0844 800 5870

Textphone: 0844 800 6778

Email: tvlicensing.co.uk

BBC Complaints

We hope that you enjoy the BBC's programmes and services. If you have a complaint about our output however; we want to know. The BBC has dedicated arrangements in place for the handling of feedback and comments from licence payers. You can find out more about how we deal with complaints by visiting our website at: bbc.co.uk/complaints It also contains additional contact information, complaint summaries and the outcome of appeals to the BBC Trust.

BBC Complaints

PO Box 1922, Glasgow G2 3WT

Telephone: 03700 100 222

Textphone: 03700 100 212

Digital Switchover

Switchover is a process which will lead to all television services being made available through a digital signal. It will take place on a phased basis over the next five years. Switchover in Northern Ireland is scheduled to take place in 2012. At that stage, viewers will need to have digital receiving equipment to continue receiving BBC and other television services. There'll be plenty of advance warning and assistance available for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Going digital need not be expensive or difficult.

The BBC will be working with other broadcasters to provide information, support and advice to local audiences on all aspects of switchover and is involved in the work of Digital UK – an independent organisation which is co-ordinating switchover across the UK.

Telephone

General information

Tel: 08456 50 50 50

Text Phone

Tel: 0845 234 0380

Large Print, Audio and Braille

Tel: 0845 234 0388



Our Wee World – as seen by children

Freedom of Information

You can find out how the Freedom of Information Act applies to the BBC by visiting our dedicated website bbc.co.uk/foi. It includes a full listing of information which is made available by the BBC under its publication scheme (including minutes of meetings, speeches and responses to FOI enquiries) and how you can make an information request.


BBC Freedom of Information
Room 2252

White City Media Village,
201 Wood Lane, London W12 7TQ
Email: foi@bbc.co.uk

BBC Audience Council for Northern Ireland

The BBC's Audience Council for Northern Ireland advises the BBC Trust on behalf of local licence payers. It comments on all aspects of the BBC's output and contributes to the Trust's strategic overview of programmes and services and its assessment of any new development proposals from BBC management. Council members are appointed through an open and independently audited recruitment process. You can find out more by visiting the Council's website at bbc.co.uk/ni/audiencecouncil.

BBC Audience Council for
Northern Ireland,
Broadcasting House,
Ormeau Avenue,
Belfast BT2 8HQ
Tel: 028 9033 8856



Editorial: Keith Baker, Libby Kinney and Mark Adair
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Environment Policy: The BBC supports maximum energy efficiency; the reduction of waste and the use of recycled materials; and the control of pollutants, including vehicle and ozone emissions. The paper used in the production of this document is from a sustainable source.



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