

APPENDIX C

BBC Trust Impartiality Review of network news coverage of the four nations of the UK: BBC Management submission

1. Introduction

This paper sets out BBC Management's submission to the Trust's review of the impartiality of the BBC's network news coverage of the UK's nations, focusing on the issues of accuracy, context and balance. It includes:

- an overview of research on the value placed by viewers on news for the nations and regions
- an assessment of the current performance of BBC news provision in the nations and regions
- the BBC's response to the first phase of devolution in the late 1990s
- the challenges facing UK-wide network news in reflecting the realities of devolution and the changing face of the UK; and
- an outline of the BBC's strategy for improving performance in reporting the UK, including the key investments in the BBC's six year plan and additional options identified by BBC News

The Trust's Purpose Remits for 'Sustaining Citizenship' and 'Representing the Nations, Regions and Communities' set clear expectations for BBC journalism:

- Independent, accurate and impartial – providing news & current affairs of relevance, range and depth which audiences trust
- Engage a wide audience in news and current affairs via different platforms
- Meet the needs of the nations, regions & communities *and* reflect them to rest of the UK
- Reflect the shared experiences of UK audiences as well as international affairs
- Build greater understanding of the political institutions governing the UK

It is important that the BBC provides high quality and authoritative journalism for licence fee payers, helping to maintain reach and provide an effective vehicle to reflect the issues which are important within a devolved UK. The BBC's portfolio of news services should be considered as a whole. The BBC's network and nations and regions' output perform complementary roles. Dedicated news and current affairs output for the nations is an essential part of BBC's portfolio given the asymmetric nature of devolution and the cultural, institutional and political differences that apply between Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In providing network news, the BBC seeks to cover those issues that are of most significance to UK audiences (as both consumers and

citizens), recognising the editorial challenges involved on many domestic policy stories given the complexities of devolution.

The BBC's daily news bulletins are supplemented by comprehensive coverage on the BBC's continuous news outlets, namely News 24, Radio 5 Live and bbc.co.uk. It also provides long-form current affairs programmes on radio and television. These outlets have greater time and space to cover a broad news agenda, including in-depth coverage of international affairs and events in the UK's nations and English regions, going beyond the headlines and bringing important stories to air that do not receive widespread coverage elsewhere. In addition, as audiences shift away from traditional linear news, the BBC's online news services are playing an increasingly important role in providing relevant news to local communities, as well as informing citizens about the changing face of the UK.

The BBC has a duty to respond to political changes like devolution, not anticipate or pre-empt them. Devolution is a fluid process, not an event. Structurally, the BBC should keep its approach to covering the UK under review to ensure that it remains in line with audience expectations. Editorially, the BBC must reflect and explore all the issues around devolution and independence.

2. Overview of news provision in the Nations & Regions

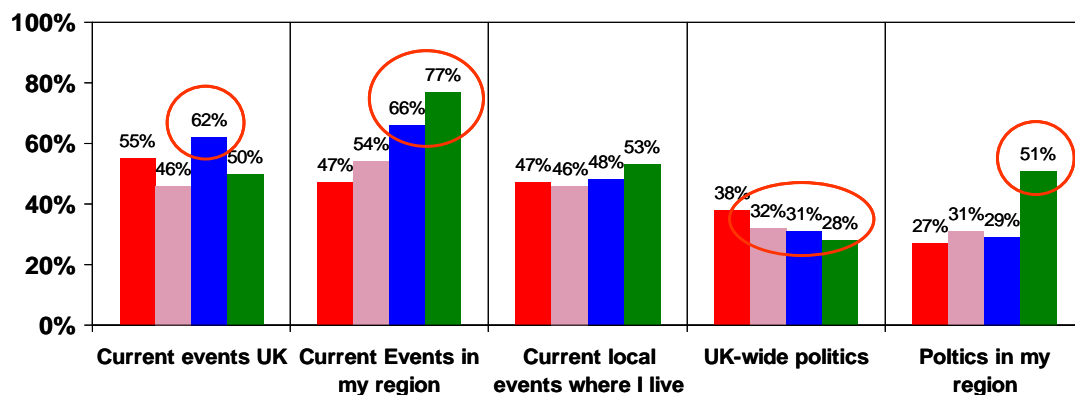
Despite facing common challenges - such as the growth of non-linear consumption and declining reach among certain audience groups - any consideration of BBC news provision for the UK's nations and regions must recognise that the picture is not uniform. Due to their separate political institutions, there is a clear distinction between the nations as a group and the regions of England. However, 'the nations' should not be seen as one entity – they have important distinctions one from another and the performance of BBC journalism varies. Key differences include:

- *Political institutions and culture:* Scotland has the longest established independent tradition, with separate legal and education systems – long pre-dating devolution. Northern Ireland has a tradition of devolution dating from 1920, albeit with periods of instability. A key feature of the Welsh nation is a vigorous indigenous language in particular areas. The BBC provides Welsh language radio and online services and also supplies content to S4C. The UK system of devolution is asymmetric, in that there are different levels of devolved responsibilities in the Nations and there is no common pattern.
- *News consumption:* the patterns of news consumption over different platforms vary according to differences in demographics
- *Interest in news subjects:* each nation has its own priorities in terms of the news agenda audiences want
- *Performance of BBC Journalism:* BBC performance varies due to differences in attitudes towards the BBC, news priorities and relative strength of the competition

There are significant differences in interest levels between the UK nations (see figure 1). Audiences in Northern Ireland (77%) and Scotland (66%) are more likely to see current events in their Nation as being of interest compared to Wales and England. Within England, there is a large range between regions, from 36% in the North West and London to 60% in the South West. Interest in local news is relatively similar across the nations, again highest in Northern Ireland. Interest in UK-wide events is highest in Scotland; this is consistent with the strong relative performance of the Scottish editions of UK newspapers compared to indigenous titles. Interest specifically in UK and local politics is lower for all, with the exception of Northern Ireland.

Fig 1: News interests by nation

Q: Which types of news are you personally interested in?



Source: Ofcom, *New News, Future News 2007*

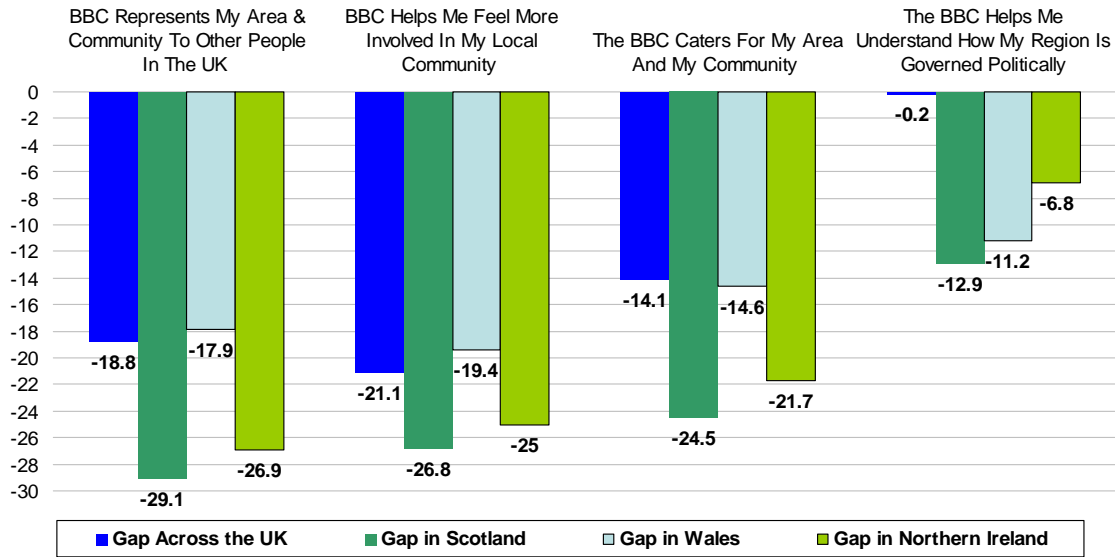
Note: 'My region' is replaced with Scotland, Wales, NI in those nations

The BBC Trust's *Purpose Remit Survey* identified specific areas where the public expects the BBC to improve its performance in meeting the citizenship purpose:

- While overall the priority to engage a wide audience in news and current affairs is seen as being delivered effectively, there is a small performance gap among 'low approvers' of the BBC (in particular 35-54 C2DE men)
- Licence fee payers in the devolved nations of the UK consider that the BBC could do more to help them understand how their nations are governed. Audience also feel there is room for improvement in how the realities of devolution are reflected in the BBC's network news coverage.

The research also identified significant under-performance against the BBC's 'representing the nations, regions and communities' purposes in the four nations, and the North of England. Scotland recorded the largest gaps across the board; this is consistent with the high priority attached by audiences (80%) in the BBC Scotland Journalism Review in 2003 to improving journalism at the local level.

Fig 2: Public purpose gaps in the Nations

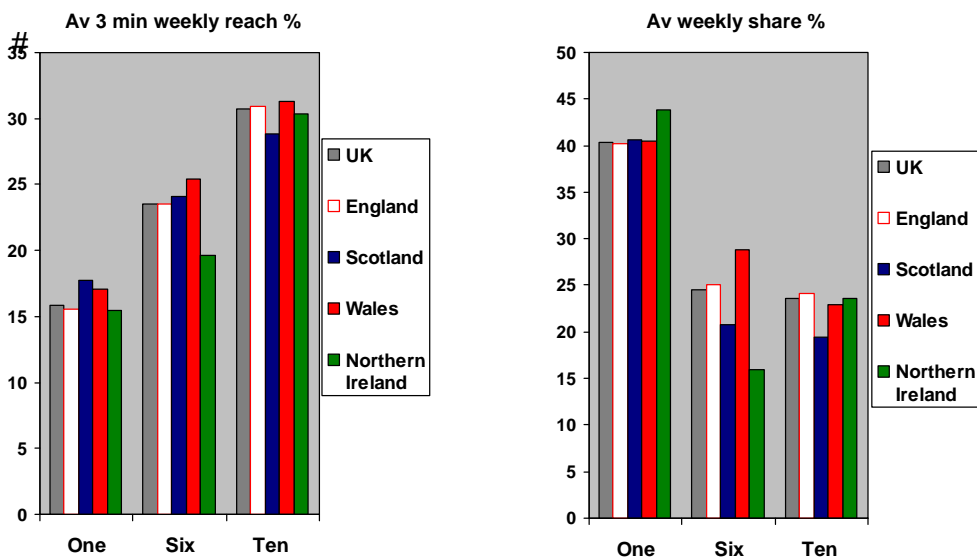


3. Current BBC News Performance in Nations & Regions

BBC Journalism tends to perform best overall in the South of England (East, West, South West and South), where there is a higher concentration of BBC high approvers. News & Current Affairs on network radio follows this pattern and nations and regions radio performs best in rural areas with older populations.

The reach and share of the BBC's UK-wide news bulletins varies by nation. In 2007/08, Wales had the highest reach for the *Six* and the *Ten*; Scotland had the highest reach for the *One*.

Fig 3: Reach & Share for network bulletins in the Nations

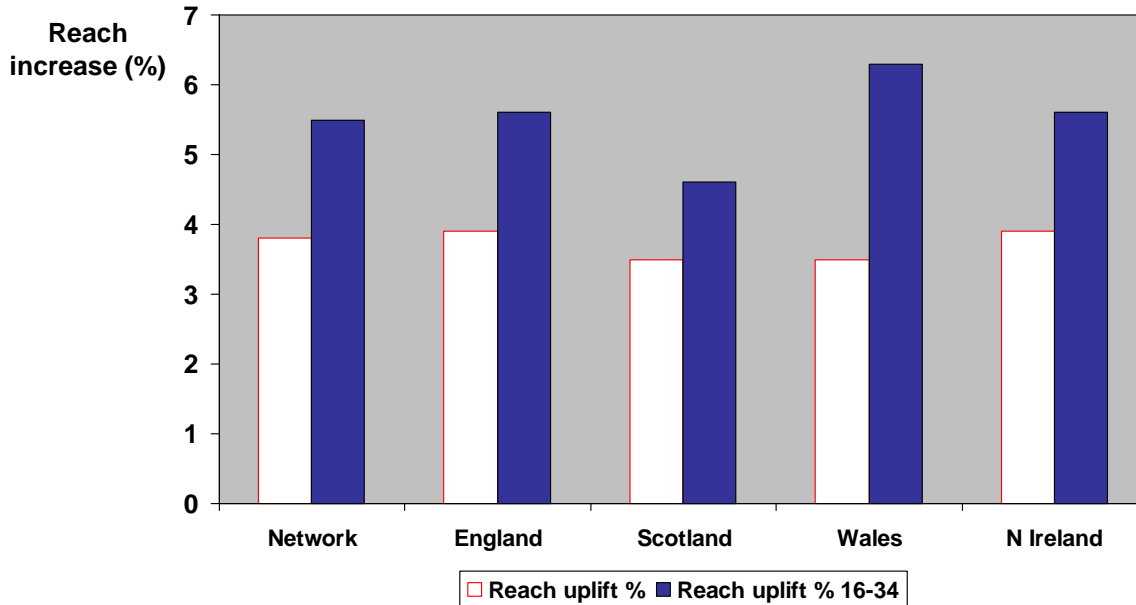


NB Based on BARB Apr 2007 – March 2008 (02/04/2007 – 30/03/2008)

Source: BARB / TRP

Average audiences for the *Ten* have increased in each of the Nations in 2007. The new 8pm bulletin on BBC1 has led to a marked uplift in weekly reach to BBC news in the Nations, particularly among 16-34s.

Fig 4: Additional reach (1 min) to BBC News from 8pm bulletin



The reach of BBC regional news is ahead of ITV at the all UK level; the nations and English regions 6.30pm bulletins remain the most watched news programmes in the UK¹. The reach of the BBC 18.30 bulletin is consistent across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland at c26%², with slight growth in Q4 2007. Across the English regions, there is significant variation in reach – ranging from 33.1% in the East and 32.6% in the West down to only 21.4% in London.³

Consumption of Nations news via bbc.co.uk has seen dramatic growth in 2007: 50% for Scotland and 19% for Wales year-on-year increase in unique weekly users. The Nations and regions' sections of the news site achieve high favourability (Net Promoter) scores: England News had +54, Scotland News +52, Northern Ireland News +52 and Wales +56%⁴ (bbc.co.uk average is 30%).

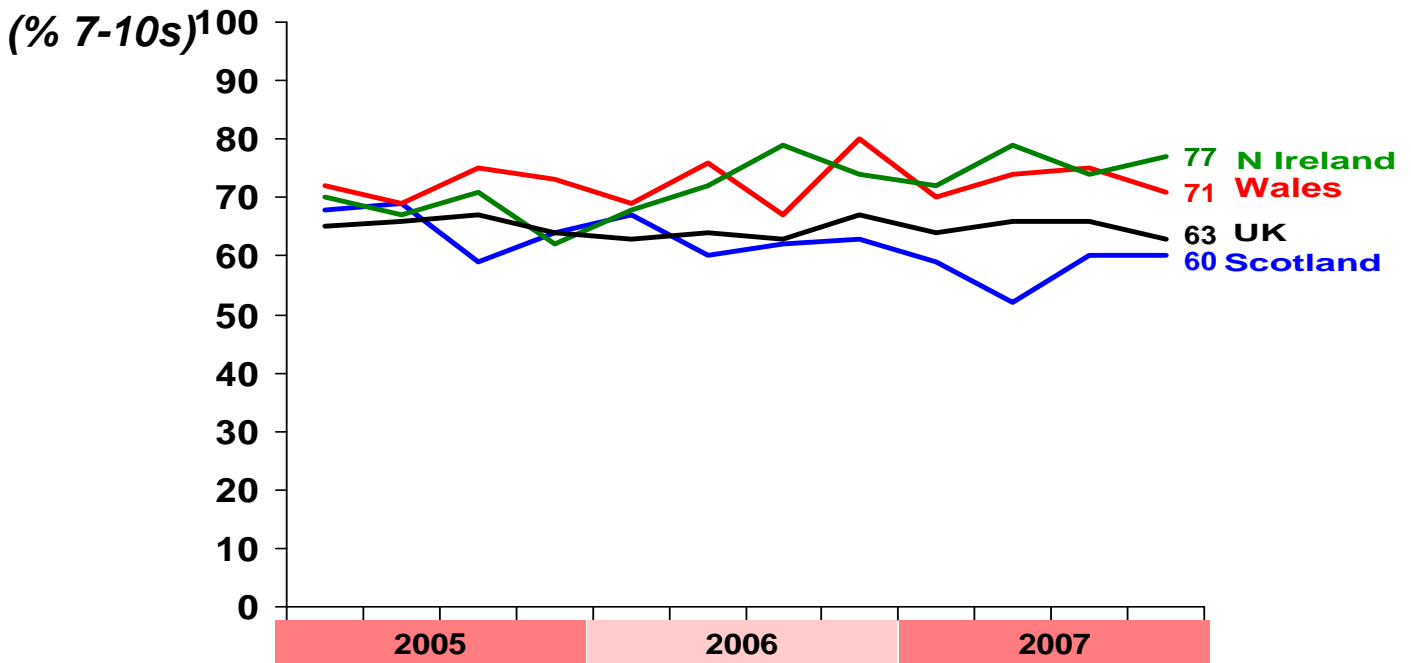
¹ BARB, 2007

² BARB, 3 min reach, 2007

³ BARB/TRP, 3 min reach, Q4 2007

⁴ bbc.co.uk Pulse, Q4 07

Fig 5: Approval of BBC network news in the Nations



Source: PBTS, Nations Boost tracker

Approval of BBC Network news varies by nation. Northern Ireland & Wales have higher levels of approval than UK overall. Approval in Scotland has improved slightly in the second half of 2007, but is still lower than other Nations

Scotland

Overall, the reach of the BBC's Journalism in Scotland is 76% compared to 80% across the UK⁵. Audiences in Scotland value access to a family of BBC News brands on different platforms, but the role of TV is weakening as online strengthens.⁶

The BBC last addressed the issue of the balance of UK/Scottish news in BBC Scotland's Journalism Review in 2003. At that time, 45% of the Scottish audience remained in favour of the status quo, with 38% in favour of one integrated News programme from Scotland and 17% undecided.

TV News: Reach of BBC Scotland's TV news bulletins was stable in 2007 at 45.4% (2.2m). Scotland's 18:30 bulletin, *Reporting Scotland*, has established itself as the most popular TV News bulletin in Scotland, with an average daily audience of 472,000 in Q407 (average weekly reach: 1.24m).⁷ (For many

⁵ BBC Scotland Annual Performance Review 2007

⁶ When asked, 'Which ONE TV channel do you think is best overall for News?' those in Scotland are less likely to pick a BBC channel - Scotland: 48% any BBC; UK: 54%. However, when asked 'Which ONE internet website do you think is best overall for news?' users in Scotland are just as likely to pick bbc.co.uk/news as the UK overall, with 1 in 4 doing so - Scotland 26%; UK 27%. (Base: Approval score 7 or more out of 10. PBTS, Jan-Jun 07)

⁷ ITV early evening News bulletins: 386,000 average audience, July 07. (BARB)

years, ITV was ahead; BBC gained top position around five years ago). ITV has closed the gap following the launch of regional opt outs for Edinburgh, Glasgow, Tayside and the North East/Highlands.⁸ ITV's *Scotland Today/North Tonight* has added 55,000 viewers in 2007.⁹

In Scotland, reach to the *One and Six* network news bulletins are higher than for the UK; reach to the *10 O'Clock News* is lower than in other Nations. In share terms, the 1pm network bulletin performs on a par in Scotland compared with the UK overall. The other network bulletins achieve a lower share in Scotland. However, the performance of network news in Scotland must be viewed in the context of the lower share performance of BBC1 in Scotland than in the UK overall¹⁰. Importantly, the share for network news bulletins in Scotland is higher – with the exception of the *Ten* – than the average share for BBC1 in Scotland.¹¹

The BBC1 8pm news now attracts the largest audience of any TV News bulletin, at 450,000, and adds 200,000 viewers a week to overall BBC News reach in Scotland – 126,000 of who are under 35 years old.

Both *The Six* and *Reporting Scotland* have AIs of 77, compared to 76 for ITV's UK 18.30 bulletin, and 75 and 80 for *Scotland Today* and *North Tonight* respectively¹².

Current Affairs and Political programmes: Newsnight Scotland achieved an average audience of 67,000 and share of 5.6%¹³, slightly higher than the 5.1% share achieved by *Newsnight* from 2230-2300 in Scotland, but lower than the UK-wide share of 6.5%. The Politics Show has been extended to 90 minutes, but has seen a dip in average audience from 110,000 (Oct 06-Mar 07) to 84,000 (Apr-Sep 07). The new Investigations Unit produced four network editions of *Panorama* in 2007 and a range of TV and radio output for Scottish audiences.

On radio: the weekly reach of Radio Scotland's *Good Morning Scotland* was 375,000 in Q4 2007 (9.6% share); it covers the international, national and Scottish News from a Scottish perspective, with local opts and a strong sports offer. The reach of Radio 4's *Today* programme in Scotland has remained stable.¹⁴

Online: Weekly users of BBC Scotland online news are growing rapidly, reaching a high of 2.2m with the terrorist attack on Glasgow airport, and a UK weekly average reach of 1.5m (50% growth year on year). For the Scottish

⁸ *Reporting Scotland* had a lead over ITV of 5% share in 06, a lead of 1.9% share in 07 to July, and a lead of 0.4% in July 07. After ITV launched local news opts, the BBC's lead in audience numbers fell from 119,000 in Jan 07 to 33,000 by July 07 (419,000 total). Share was on a par at 27%. (BARB)

⁹ Source BARB

¹⁰ BARB, 1.8 share points lower for BBC1 in Scotland in '07.

¹¹ BBC1 in Scotland share was 20.24% in 2007.

¹² Pulse: average AI, August-Nov 2007

¹³ BARB, Jun-Sep 2007

¹⁴ RAJAR

election, whilst the TV results programme attracted 250,000 live viewers, the online results service recorded over 1m unique users in one day, and 2.8 m over the week-end. In May 2007, the average number of weekly unique users to the Scotland news section of bbc.co.uk overtook the weekly reach of the 18.30 bulletin in Scotland. BBC online offers Scottish and local News, with links to the BBC's UK and international pages and a strong sports offer.¹⁵

Brian Taylor's online blog has become a daily part of Scottish political life for many licence payers and is referred to by the First Minister and other leaders on regular occasions.

Wales

Overall, the reach of the BBC's Journalism in Wales is 78.3%¹⁶. Average 3 min reach to the network news bulletins in Wales is higher than in Scotland or Northern Ireland. The 3 minute reach of all *Wales Today* bulletins was 1,180,000 in 2007

TV News: Wales Today has the largest inheritance from the *Six O'clock News* to any of the 18.30 news bulletins (70%). *Wales Today* has an average audience of 261,000 compared to *Wales Tonight's* 126,000¹⁷. The 18.30 *Wales Today* bulletin has a 29% share against *Wales Tonight's* 18% at 18.00¹⁸.

The overall AI score for the 6.30 programme in 2007 was 79, matching *Wales Tonight* and in the fourth quarter this climbed to an average of 81¹⁹.

*Current Affairs and Political programmes*²⁰: BBC Wales' main current affairs strand, *Week In Week Out*, has an average audience of 99,000 and a share in BBC Wales of 15%. BBC One's political programming is led by *Dragon's Eye* with a 14% share and average audience of 75,000. The *Politics Show Wales* opt had an average audience of 54,000 in 2007 with a share of 13%.

*Radio*²¹: Almost one in five adults in Wales listen to Radio Wales each week. Radio Wales reaches 401,000 listeners, a 10% share, making it the third highest after Radio 2 and Radio 1. Radio Cymru reached 143,000 listeners each week a share of 17% among Welsh speakers.

Online: Unique users to BBC Wales's news pages have increased by 19% year-on-year²². In 2007 the average number of weekly unique users to the wales/news was 893,000.

¹⁵ In Q2 07, News Scotland had 1.3m users a week, Sport Scotland had 540,000 users, /Scotland had 200,000 users. There were 1.74m requests for live video streaming, 324,000 requests for live audio streaming, and 125,000 requests for live Sport streaming. (Sage emetrics)

¹⁶ PBTS, Jan-Oct 2007

¹⁷ BARB, average weekly audience

¹⁸ BARB, average share, 2007

¹⁹ Pulse: Average AI, 2007

²⁰ BARB, 2007

²¹ Rajar Q4 2007

²² BBC server logs

Northern Ireland

Overall, the reach of the BBC's Journalism in Northern Ireland is 81%²³.

TV News: Newslime has the lowest inheritance from the *Six O'clock News* to any of the national 18.30 news bulletins (47.2%). The reach of BBC Northern Ireland's own TV news programme, *Newslime*, is currently 19%, below that of the ITV NI regional news bulletin. *The Six* has a reach of 10%, which is low in comparison to the ITV UK news bulletin reach of 18%. The share of ITV's national and regional bulletins is greater than the BBC's.

On radio: BBC Radio Ulster outperforms BBC network radio and commercial radio in Northern Ireland with an exceptionally high reach of between 35% and 45% average across the year of 39%. This is significantly higher than the other BBC regional radio stations.

Online: The trend of growth in online news is apparent in Northern Ireland. Weekly users of BBC Northern Ireland online news are growing rapidly, up 41% year-on-year for Q307, with an average in Q307 of 700k unique users. The average number of weekly unique users to the Northern Ireland news section of bbc.co.uk overtook the weekly reach of the 18.30 bulletin in Northern Ireland for the first time in April 2006, and is now consistently ahead by 200k users (Oct 07). Net promoter scores for the Northern Ireland news (57%) and sport (55%) pages far outperform the Northern Ireland homepage (10%).

English Regions

Overall, the reach of the BBC's Journalism in England is 80.3%²⁴.

TV News: Average weekly reach to the 6.30 programmes across England was 26.5%, up in Q4 2007²⁵. Combined Reach (excluding breakfast) to BBC regional news programmes was 47% in Q4. The regional news programmes have a clear lead over their ITV counterparts in all eleven regions in terms of 3 minute combined average weekly reach (excluding Breakfast). Reach to the 18.30 bulletin is highest in the East and South West and lowest in London²⁶.

Current Affairs and Political programmes: Across England, the winter 2007 series of *Inside Out* recorded a share of 14.4% and an average audience of 2.6 million. Viewing is strongest in the South East and East and weakest in the North East.

The regional section of the *Politics Show* attracted average audiences of 860,000 across England in 06/07. Share averaged 12.5%, which is up 1% in comparison to the 05/06 series. The regional opts performed notably well in Yorkshire & Lincolnshire and the North West. The latest series covering the 07/08 political year has been regularly attracting average audiences of over one million during October & November.

²³ PBTS, Jan-Oct 2007

²⁴ PBTS, Jan-Oct 2007

²⁵ BARB, 3 min reach, Q4 2007

²⁶ BARB: combined average weekly reach, Q4 2007.

Radio: With a weekly reach of 7.49 million (18.5%) in Q4 2007, BBC Local Radio was up 0.1 percentage points quarter-on-quarter, but down 0.8 year-on-year. BBC Local Radio continues to be most successful in the East and the Midlands. Independent Local Radio is strongest in London and the North of England. Lower comparative performance remains concentrated in a limited number of big market stations – e.g. Manchester, Solent, Southern Counties, WM, Three Counties. 38% of the BBC Local Radio in England weekly reach is made up of people who do not listen to any other BBC radio service.

Online: In January 2008, News England Online recorded 12 m unique UK users. The England News Home Page had a strong net promoter of 59 in Q3 '07²⁷. The quality of the *Where I Live* sites is variable, with some recording low net promoter scores.

4. BBC's original response to devolution

The BBC responded effectively to the first phase of devolution in the late 1990s, with the following initiatives:

- Significant new investment from 1999 in news, politics and current affairs programming in the Nations (over £20 million per annum, to cover the new political institutions in a comprehensive manner across radio, TV and online.
- Subsequent enhancements to output included: *Politics Show* launched in 2002 with nations opt; new 10.25pm bulletin; and online streaming of devolved assembly debates
- Introduction of a BBC-wide training programme for programme-makers to facilitate both accuracy and consistency in coverage of the political and institutional differences in the nations
- From 2002/3, following the RPI+ licence fee settlement, significant new content investment went into the Nations (and English regions) across a range of genres to support cultural devolution (c£40 million pa). In 2004 as a part of its Out of London strategy, the BBC committed that 17% of relevant eligible network television output would be made in the three Nations by 2012 (proportionate to their share of the UK population).

In *Scotland*, there was significant new investment from 1999 (c£10m per annum): *Newsnight Scotland* (20 mins opt); live coverage of Scottish Parliament on BBC2 Scotland; dedicated online news provision within bbc.co.uk; expansion of newsgathering to cover devolved institutions, including appointment of Political Editor; and enhanced politics output on Radio Scotland (e.g. *Scotland at Ten*).

²⁷ Pulse Q2 and Q3 2007

In Wales, £6.7 million was invested in 1999 to establish an Assembly base and output. There was a fivefold increase in the number of BBC Wales staff covering Welsh politics in both Wales and at Westminster, including the appointment of a Political Editor. There has been considerable expansion in amount of Welsh politics covered by daily news since 1997, and in the number of TV & radio programmes which cover Welsh politics. In 1997, Welsh politics was confined (outside of daily news) to 2 half hour bespoke TV programmes per week. In 2007, political programmes accounted for 760 hours of BBC Wales output, covering both Assembly and Westminster politics (e.g. *Politics Show* opt, *Dragon's Eye*, *AMPM*, *CF99*; two radio programmes devoted to Welsh politics). BBC Wales also provides live bilingual coverage of the Assembly's deliberations on S4C2 for S4C.

In *Northern Ireland*, there was £5m investment in late 1998/99 directed into a range of new politics output: *Stormont Live* twice a week on BBC2 covering the business in the chamber; a new daily 8 minute opt-out bulletin within *Newsnight*; an extension of weekly politics programme *Hearts & Minds* by 15 programmes per year; ten hour-long discussion programmes (*Let's Talk*); and four specials per year from the *Spotlight* current affairs team. There is a daily digest of Assembly proceedings on Radio Ulster; establishment of Northern Ireland index of News Online; and the appointment of a Political Editor.

Across the *English Regions*, all 6.30 regional news bulletins have been available anywhere in the UK on dsat since 2003. In 2005 English Regions completed its network of political programmes with bespoke programmes for East Midlands & South East. Both regions had shared programmes with neighbouring regions (additional £590k pa). BBC Two's regional political programming was integrated with network output into a new BBC One programme, *The Politics Show*. Current Affairs also moved from BBC Two to BBC One peaktime from autumn 2002 with launch of new strand, *Inside Out*.

5. BBC network news provision on TV, radio and online

The BBC has a responsibility to provide high quality news and analysis of range and depth to a UK-wide audience. The key editorial judgements involved in providing a broad and varied news agenda include:

- how significant is a story for UK society and what are its international implications?
- to what extent will a story interest the UK audience, as both consumers and citizens?
- how relevant is the story to the audience: does it reflect their concerns and does it impact on them?

The weight attached to a particular story will depend on balancing these factors. It will also be relative to other editorial choices, particularly within the constraints of 25 minute news bulletins. The average edition of the *Six* and *Ten O'Clock* news carries between six and eight stories. The BBC News has worked hard in recent years to improve the accuracy, balance and sensitivity

of its UK coverage. A series of mechanisms have been put in place BBC to improve performance:

1) Editorial Policy Guidelines

The BBC's editorial policy guidelines include a section on reporting the UK and a requirement to be both accurate and consistent in coverage of the political and institutional differences (e.g. legal systems, provision of education, health and social services) across the Nations.

2) Training of programme makers

The College of Journalism developed a major new online module ('Reporting the UK') which was rolled-out in early 2007. A total of 4,512 BBC journalists have so far accessed the course. The College of Journalism website looks at issues of accuracy and context as they arise, and also has substantial sections covering reporting the UK. In addition to training modules, the College's Journalism Programme organised a series of seminars in London in 2007 given by the Political Editors from BBC Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Prior to the Parliamentary and Assembly elections earlier this year, workshops were organised for London-based editors in Scotland and Wales

3) Co-ordination between BBC News and Nations & Regions

Ensuring proper coverage of the Nations on network outlets is a 'two-way process', involving N&R teams 'pushing' stories to the network and a willingness on behalf of the network output editors to engage with news agendas in the Nations. Concerted efforts have been made in recent years to improve daily co-ordination and planning between BBC News and N&R, with the aim of better reflecting the changing face of the UK and the impact of devolution on network news. Current arrangements include:

- Formation of Journalism Board in 2004 to bring together the three main news divisions - News, Global and Nations and Regions - plus Sport, Editorial Policy and the Colleges of Journalism under the direction of the Deputy Director General. It is the chief policy-making forum for all journalistic matters within the BBC
- Senior N&R representation on the News Editorial Board, which meets twice a month and is a key editorial decision-making body in BBC News. The Board assesses impartiality issues and identifies ways to improve coverage
- Director of Nations & Regions attends the "Big Stories" meeting held by the Deputy Director-General to plan the multi-platform coverage of key issues
- Representatives of Scotland and Wales join the daily 8.40 am editorial meeting held by the Director of News to review coverage and discuss the daily news agenda. This provides an opportunity to discuss the accuracy, impartiality and balance of coverage
- The views and decisions taken at the 8.40am meeting inform the 9am departmental meetings of output editors which plan the day's coverage in greater detail. A second departmental meeting takes place in the afternoon at which the on-going treatment of stories is assessed and plans for the rest of the day and following morning's key output are reviewed

- Daily ‘hook-ups’ between network news and each region and Nation to discuss coverage and a weekly planning conference call
- Creation in May 2007 of *N&R Co-ordinator, Home News* to improve the daily flow of information and better planning between network and N&R newsrooms
- In Scotland, the move to Pacific Quay has allowed the UK network team to be co-sited in the main newsroom with the Scottish news teams²⁸

In addition, there have been two key changes made by BBC News in the last year aimed at making better use of network reporters and correspondents based in the English regions:

- From the first time, there is now a network of dedicated reporters based in each region of the UK
- Creation of a Midlands network bureau - along the successful model of the North of England bureau in Leeds.

UK-wide news bulletins

The complexities of devolution present real editorial challenges – in terms of accuracy, balance and relevance - for UK-wide news bulletins. The audience is overwhelmingly based in England, but there are still significant populations in each nation. Particular ‘hot-spots’ in UK reporting concern devolved policy areas. With devolution, policies on many areas – health, education and social care - are locally determined and are increasingly different from England. There are a number of ways in which BBC News seeks to address these challenges within UK-wide news bulletins:

a) *Labelling of stories*: it is the case that stories on a range of policy areas apply differently, or not at all, in different parts of the UK. The UK system of devolution is asymmetric, in that there are different levels of devolved responsibilities and different political priorities in each Nation. It is important that BBC News is accurate about whether or not the facts and views conveyed in output apply to each individual nation. This should be achieved through accurate labelling in the ‘lead-in’ to stories (e.g. the health plans on x apply in England).

b) *Explain policy differences*: this involves reflecting different perspectives from the Nations on particular policy developments. Over the last year, the BBC’s TV and radio network output have commissioned a range of stories specifically to examine how policies are implemented in different parts of the UK and to seek to explain the differences. Examples include: NHS models; long-term care for the elderly; class sizes; university tuition fees and the smoking ban (see annex A).

c) *Illustration of UK-wide stories*: seek to feature perspectives and examples from across the nations and regions when reporting major UK stories (e.g. economy or business), to reflect the fact that stories impact differently in different parts of the UK

²⁸ Only two other BBC bureaux in the world – Washington and Brussels – have more network correspondents than Glasgow.

d) *Coverage of significant stories in the Nations*: this involves giving appropriate weight to coverage of stories which are of major importance to audiences in the nations and regions, including the actions and policies of the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (see annex A).

Over the last year, the number of stories covered from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has been quite substantial. This is partly due to the prominence of the Nations, particularly Scotland, in the UK-wide news agenda: for example, the terror attack at Glasgow airport; the national elections; new SNP government in Scotland; and the problems with voting and subsequent investigation in Scotland.

The national elections in May 2007 represented an important editorial challenge. There was comprehensive news coverage in April and May, with network news editors benefiting from visits to Edinburgh and Cardiff earlier in the year where they received in-depth background briefings by all the political parties and by BBC colleagues. In Scotland, Brian Taylor (BBC Scotland Political Editor) made an authoritative contribution to both network and BBC Scotland outlets. On the election night, there was comprehensive coverage plus analysis on special election results programmes on TV, radio and online.

However, over this period, BBC's network news bulletins have on occasions failed to cover, or insufficiently covered, stories which were significant in particular Nations and had a wider relevance for UK audiences. For example, the main TV bulletins should have worked harder to cover the aftermath of the Welsh Assembly elections in May 2007, despite the difficulties in reflecting the complexities of a lengthy coalition process. With hindsight, there should also have been greater network coverage of Gordon Brown first visit as Prime Minister to Northern Ireland to attend a meeting of the 'Council of the Isles'. There are also examples of where the BBC has not given appropriate weight to the Nations in crime and sports news coverage.

The reasons can include a failure to recognise the importance of a story from the perspective of the devolved nations, and failures of communication between network and nations news teams. At the same time, the space within network news bulletins is constrained and this requires difficult editorial judgements to be made about the significance and relevance of stories for UK audiences. A very busy news day can result a story being dropped one day which is on another, less busy day would make the bulletin. In most cases, the stories in question were carried on the BBC's other UK-wide news outlets.

News 24 & Five Live

The BBC is able to use the flexibility of its continuous TV and radio news services and online offer to enhance coverage of the Nations and English regions.

BBC News 24 has the capacity to provide comprehensive and in-depth coverage of events in the nations and regions (as well as UK and international affairs), bringing stories to air that do not receive widespread coverage

elsewhere and giving regional perspectives to national stories. News 24 covers UK politics across the schedule, including proceedings of the devolved Parliament and Assemblies and provided in-depth coverage of the national and local elections last year. Analysis shows that News 24 reports significantly more UK stories from outside London and the South East than other continuous news channels.²⁹ The BBC significant investment in cameras in all local radio stations means News 24 gets to far more locations across the UK. There is, however, scope to make News 24 more reflective of the Nations and Regions.

Radio Five Live regularly broadcasts on-location coverage of news and sport from the nations and regions, and its daily phone-ins encourage debate and reflect a range of perspectives from across the UK.

BBC Parliament

BBC Parliament devotes extensive coverage to the work of the UK's devolved parliaments and assemblies. The channel shows First Minister's Questions three nights a week in a strand at 2330 on weekdays and on Saturdays broadcasts 7.5 hours of debates and statements from the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and Northern Ireland Assembly.

The channel takes the opportunity to show the work of the devolved institutions *live* when Westminster is in recess. On election night the channel has shown BBC Scotland as a UK-wide alternative to the London-based election night programme. It broadcasts the leaders' speeches from all the major party conferences last autumn.

BBC Parliament's weekly review of Parliament, The Record Review (Friday 2300-0000) uses interviews and parliamentary actuality to tell the story of the evolving relationship between the national and UK-wide institutions.

News online

The BBC's online news service supplements and enhances its linear news outlets. As consumption of non-linear news accelerates, the BBC's online offer will play an increasingly important role in informing audiences about the changing face of the UK. BBC News website includes 55 sub-sections covering the nations and English regions, with content contributed by nations and regions journalists; together these account for about 60% of the News website's output. Each Nation has a dedicated section that provides extensive political coverage in the form of news, analysis, features, debates, and blogs by political correspondents in Westminster and in the devolved assemblies.

The key strengths of the BBC's online coverage of the Nations include:

²⁹ Analysis by Cardiff University Business School (Febr/March 2007): 71 to 44 (Sky) for UK stories outside London and SE. The North of England received more coverage than elsewhere, but relatively few stories came from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. 37% of News 24 stories featured reporters on location vs 22% for Sky.

- *flexibility*: space and time to provide comprehensive analysis of devolved issues and explain the policy differences
- *expertise and diversity of perspective*: content comes from network as well as Nations and Regions journalists
- *depth*: aggregation of the best of BBC content and external links (e.g. from devolved assemblies, newspapers etc) around key stories
- *local relevance*: provide relevant news to local communities within the Nations and English Regions
- *international reach*: show-case Nations news to UK-wide and international audiences

bbc.co.uk provided a comprehensive picture of last year's elections in the devolved nations, including results analysis, voters' panels, moderated discussions, blogs, and online guides.

The BBC has recently announced plans to enrich its future online coverage of elections as part of the 'Digital Democracy' initiative. The proposal is to develop an ambitious multi-media 'portal' that brings together live and on demand video feeds from political institutions, including Westminster, the Scottish Parliament, the Wales and Northern Ireland Assemblies, and the European Parliament. The 'portal' will also include interactive guides to how the institutions work; information about political representatives (e.g. profiles, voting records); aggregated information around key issues; opportunities for users to discuss and engage with those issues; and links to other sites. The aim is to offer audiences across the UK a world-class interactive website covering the political institutions of the UK to help promote greater understanding and engagement.

6. Future strategy

Delivering Creative Future, BBC Management's six year framework for the delivery of the public purposes, sets out a number of proposals to address the identified purpose gaps (see section 2) and enhance the quality, impact and relevance of the BBC's news coverage for audiences in the Nations and Regions:

a) *new investment to enrich online and on-demand news coverage for local audiences across the UK*

- *BBC Local Video*: a multi-media, broadband offer for 60 local areas across the UK, based mainly on the BBC's current pattern of local radio stations and online *Where I Live* sites. The editorial focus will be on local news, sport, weather and travel information, with the aim of providing a more relevant, higher quality and distinctive offer for local communities across the UK.³⁰ The proposal will have the effect of strengthening the BBC's newsgathering pyramid to benefit regional TV as well as network services like News 24.

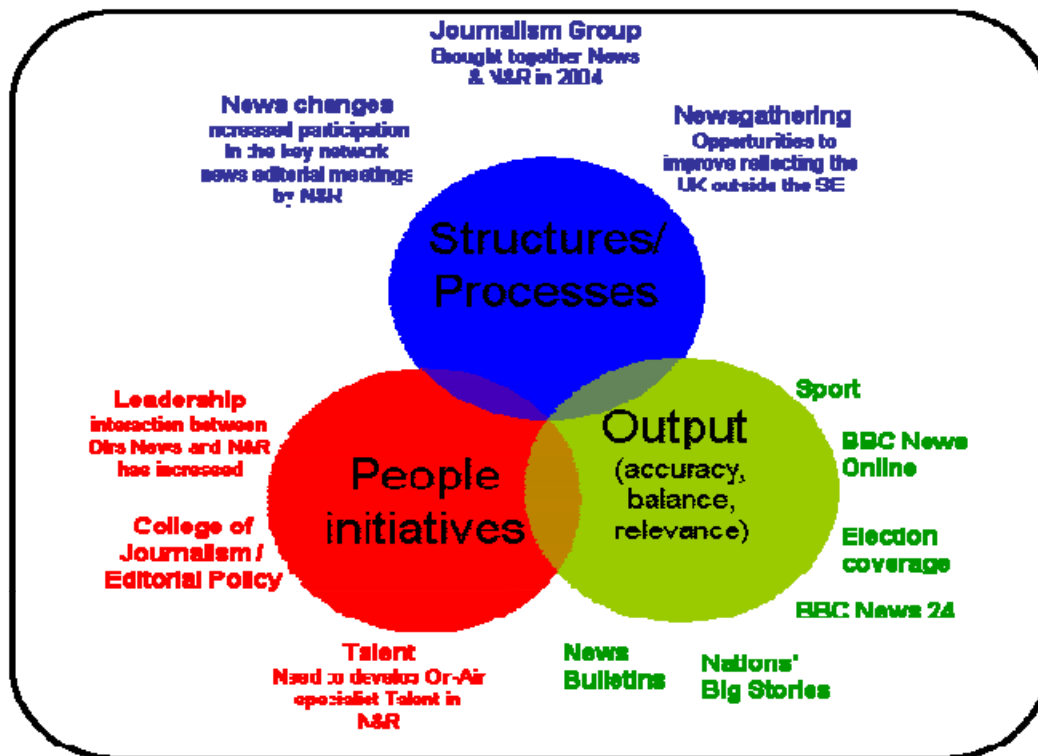
³⁰ The expansion of local news and news-related online video content within these sites will require regulatory approval from the BBC Trust.

- *Nations News online*: the Scottish online news on bbc.co.uk will be enhanced with video embedding, audio clips on-demand and improved search and analysis. Furthermore, the flagship news programmes for the Nations (i.e. *Reporting Scotland*, *Wales Today* & *Newsline*) will be developed as multi-media brands. A key priority will be to improve online coverage of the devolved institutions as part of the BBC's wider Digital Democracy plans (see above)
- *Nations On-demand*: enhance the BBC's multi-media content that reflects the distinct life of the Nations in genres such as history, music and drama.

b) *improve the quality and impact of journalism for Nations audiences*

- Improve specialisms within BBC Nations & Regions newsgathering: in Scotland, for example, there are plans to significantly enhance the specialist coverage of business and politics across TV, radio and online. This resource will be available for use within network output to cover major stories and explain policy differences on devolved areas
- Launch of 8pm news bulletin on BBC1 with Nations and Regions dimension. The new bulletin has led to a marked uplift in weekly reach, particularly among 16-34s, to BBC news in all the Nations.

In addition, BBC News is exploring a range of options to further improve the accuracy, balance and relevance of UK-wide news. This involves consideration of the different parts of the editorial chain, including newsgathering and output, and the relationship between the network and Nations & Regions' news operations, including information flows. The assessment of options can be viewed through three lenses: output; structures/process; people/talent.



Output

BBC News has identified room for improvement in the following key output areas:

- All output teams will be required to prioritise clear and accurate labelling of news stories covering policies that only apply to certain parts of the UK (e.g. education and health). All daily news prospects will clearly indicate where policies do and do not apply
- Use the flexibility of News 24, Five Live and bbc.co.uk to enrich coverage of nations and regions for UK-wide audiences - including the actions and policies of the devolved administrations - using the BBC's extensive news gathering network. There should be appropriate sign-posting to invite audiences to find this content.
- Use the new network of reporters in the nations and regions (see below) to deliver illustrations of how different policies impact differently across (e.g. tuition fees, long-term care, police pay)
- Appropriate prominence in network news schedules for major nations sports stories

Structures & Processes

The recent restructuring of BBC News daily news, with joint planning and editorial meetings for all daily output across TV, radio and online, should make it easier to push important national and regional stories across the output. The daily editorial 'enforcer' role in the multi-media newsroom (rotating between the Deputy Head of department, the Controller of News 24/Editor of the One, the Editor of the Six and Ten and the Editor of the radio bulletins) will have a focus on the accurate reporting of devolved issues as one of his or her specific responsibilities.

Initial analysis has identified a number of changes to newsgathering operations and co-ordination between network news and the Nations & Regions, which could improve BBC News' reporting of the UK:

- Location of specialists outside London: BBC News has plans to establish an expanded network newsgathering cluster for the North of England in Salford, as part of the BBC's wider plans to devolve production outside London. This will include the appointment of a UK Affairs correspondent to enhance coverage of major themes reflecting changes in UK society. In addition, BBC News will move more network specialists (e.g. in health, education and business) outside London³¹
- In Scotland, the BBC plans to redefine one of the network reporter jobs so that their job will be to better reflect on-going devolution themes. We have recently agreed a new formal editorial remit with the network team based in Glasgow to better reflect devolution themes
- Network outlets will be encouraged to make more use of Nations & Regions correspondents. There has been progress in certain areas over the last few years (e.g. Nations Political Editors), but there is scope to expand the role and impact of regional journalism and voices across BBC news output. This would build on the successful practice within News Online of using regional newsrooms for stories
- Supplement the daily news 'hook-ups' between network and N&R with more strategic sessions that analyse longer-term themes and forthcoming stories and plan future coverage. The BBC's UK newsgathering editor and Head of Journalism Development in Nations & Regions will jointly take the lead in co-ordinating these sessions

Talent & Training

- Refine the role of Home Editor to place greater emphasis on reporting the realities of devolution and the changing face of the UK. This refreshed role would be underpinned by a new producer role whose job would be to support both the UK Editor and other correspondents and output editors in getting the facts and analysis of devolution right.
- BBC News will have a development plan for future network editors to familiarise them with working outside London if they do not have that experience. The period of familiarisation would be at least a week working in a newsroom in a region or nation. Any Editor appointed without this experience would be expected to take up the familiarisation period within the first six months of the new role
- The College of Journalism has recently launched its Journalism Foundation, a mandatory year-long programme for all new journalists joining the BBC. Both the face-to-face elements and the online learning cover impartiality and devolution in some detail. The College plans to launch the Editorial Leadership programme later this year and impartiality, devolution and public interest reporting will be among the key elements. By the end of March, some 20,000 BBC staff will have

³¹ The BBC must balance the benefits of devolving newsgathering with the potential diseconomies of scale involved.

attended workshops as part of the *Safeguarding Trust* programme designed by the College.

In addition to these news provision changes, BBC Management is developing a supply strategy for network television outside London in order to improve cultural representation of the whole UK and appropriate economic investment in the Nations and Regions. As part of this, the BBC will expand the current 'centre of excellence' for network TV current affairs in Northern Ireland. In recent months, Belfast has produced memorable current affairs, including Panorama's investigation into dog fighting, and the remarkable *Facing the Truth* which examined the theme of reconciliation in the province.

Annex A: Recent examples of BBC journalism that reflects the complexities of devolution and the changing face of the UK

1. BBC Network News (daytime bulletins)

a) Key coverage of devolved institutions/politics included:

- May Election - Various campaigning previews - including live presentation of the One and Six from both Cardiff and Edinburgh. VT reports examined the powers held by the Assembly and the Parliament. Live interviews with Brian Taylor and Betsan Powys. Richard Bilton travelled across the UK - visiting Scotland and Wales and reporting on issues of particular importance in each nation
- On election results day a high proportion of the One and Six were presented live from Cardiff and Edinburgh with full analysis of the results and the implications for the Westminster Parliament. Nick Robinson live.
- Scotland Voting Chaos - What went wrong, and the report of the inquiry into the number of rejected votes.
- Formation of the new administrations. Explanation of its powers in both Cardiff and Edinburgh, including 'coalition' negotiations.

News Stories with UK relevance - Scotland

Peter Tobin - various reports
Gordon Brown election and Scottish roots.
Rail Strikes in Scotland - various reports and lives.
Scottish Roman Catholic attack on abortion and pro choice abortions.
Stockline Plastics Factory - report of the inquiry.
Lockerbie Bombing - row over apparent deal with Blair and Gadaffi.
Ospreys breeding.
Sewage spill in Firth of Forth
Death of Colin McCrae, Rally Driver.
Euromillions Winner in East Kilbride.
E Coli outbreak in Paisley
Trapped whale in Fraserburgh harbour
Aircraft Carrier order, River Clyde
Wendy Alexander on decision not to prosecute over allowances (Andrew Cassell live)
Electricity being switched on to all households on Egg

News Stories with UK relevance - Wales

Troops return - Cardiff parade
Speeding Chief Constable
Four school girls killed in car driven by young driver - inquest.
M4 Crash
E Coli outbreak from Abattoir

Dyfed Policemen resigns
Teacher convicted over child death
DWP Policy - how to get people off disability benefits in Wales
Bridgend - Suicide case - 2 cousins found dead

b) Policy comparisons & explanations on One and Six: daytime bulletins have also commissioned a range of stories specifically to examine how policies are implemented in different parts of the UK and to seek to explain the differences. Examples include:

Politics

- SNP's first budget - decision to freeze council tax and cut business rates. Piece pointed out how SNP was using its powers to create a different financial climate.
- A Devolution Day - "After the summer recess, the SNP is about to announce its legislative programme. Since devolution we've seen growing differences in law making between England, Scotland and Wales". What are the differences? Lorna Gordon report itemising the main SNP plans and the reserved powers still held by Westminster. Brian Taylor live, Westminster Live.
- Referendum Debate - Andrew Cassell report on the powers wanted by Alex Salmond with explanation of some of the main policy and spending differences with England.
- Welsh Identity - Ten years on from the referendum, Wyre Davies took a journey across Wales to report for the One on Six on whether devolution had changed the sense of Welsh Identity.

Agriculture

- Animal Movement Ban - Explanation of partial lifting of restrictions taken by Scottish Executive and importance of Scottish livestock industry.
- Shambo - decision and powers of Welsh Assembly to order culling of sacred bull. (NB Story first broken on Six O'Clock News. Various reports)

Education

- Class Sizes: Report on the England/Scotland policy divide as Scottish government announces reduction in average class sizes to 18. Comparison between Scottish and English schools. Interview with Scottish Education Secretary. Andrew Cassell
- New Term Education Differences - Report from either side of the River Tweed at Coldstream and Cornhill on the impact of increased Education spending in Scotland compared with England. Explanation of the different budgets.
- Free Lunches - Young Children in Scotland to get free lunches regardless of income. Lorna Gordon report on Scotland's plans to increase healthy eating in Scottish schools. Comparison with policy in England.
- University Fees - Comparison between two students - One Scottish and One English to coincide with start of new university term and to explain Scottish policy and the graduate endowment. Lorna Gordon Report. Explanation of financial implication on both sides of the border.

- Welsh Schools - examination of impact to close smaller rural Welsh schools taken by the assembly at a time when England wants to split larger schools. Colette Hume, Wales Education Correspondent

Health

- Smoking Ban in Wales - preview piece, Wyre Davies. Follow up piece looking at whether people would now travel across to England to smoke.

Immigration

- How is inward immigration having an impact on different parts of the UK. We report from Inverness - where 3000 East Europeans have settled. Edinburgh - impact of 23000 poles now living and working in city as part of the UK debate.

Energy and Climate Politics

- Danger of the Islands and mountains being damaged by UK's demand for renewable energy. Reports from outer Hebrides of plans for a wind farm.
- Differing impact of warming in South West England and Eastern Scotland, including lack of snow for skiing. Lorna Gordon and Jon Kay
- Isle of Lewis - debate over impact of plans for a massive wind farm on Isle of Lewis. Lorna Gordon.

Transport Policy

- Congestion charging - comparison of plans around the UK. Separate pieces from Manchester and Edinburgh. Reaction to plans for a £2 per day charge in Edinburgh. Two reports from Tom Heap and Lorna Gordon.

Crime

- Comparison of how rape is dealt with in the best and worst counties - Comparison between Wales and Scotland. Reports from Wyre and Lorna

Other

- Investigation into suicide policy across England, Wales and NI - examining success of a scheme called "Choose Life" running in Scotland (James Westhead)
- UK hit by storms. Reports from Andrew Cassell at Braemar and Danny Savage at Tebay in Northern England.
- Fortnightly bin collections - now more than half of all households. Map showing percentages across the UK with breakdowns for each nation.
- Childcare costs - Highest costs in Europe are in UK. Highest increases in Wales. Report from Wyre Davies in Cardiff

2. News 24

News 24 Service Licence includes a commitment to feature *'more local and regional news coverage than the other main continuous news channel(s) in the UK, in part through giving regional perspectives to national stories'* - see briefing analysis.

Communication between network and Nations: Dedicated producer who speaks to the N&R every day to ensure flow of stories onto News 24 - often after 7pm.

Nations politics: Number of days of live coverage from Scottish Parliament & Welsh Assembly on the significant days and also several preview days ahead of both sets of elections from around Wales and Scotland looking at the main election issues. (Scotland days were done with Reporting Scot). Plus coverage of SNP conference - live coverage of Salmond speech & other interviews.

Policy differences: a day of coverage from both sides of the Scottish-English border in Sept '07 on the differences in prescription charges/NHS and care for the elderly in the 2 Nations.

Scotland domestic stories with wider UK relevance: recently covered SNP introducing free school meals in parts of Scotland; coverage of the Scottish and Welsh smoking bans and their later impact; coverage of the end of prescription charges in Wales and the impact; extensive coverage from Scotland on Farepak and its fallout;

Sport: extensive coverage of the Commonwealth Games decision - including opting into a BBC Scotland Special

3. Online

Extensive political coverage on various indexes (e.g. UK frontpage; UK politics; Scottish/Welsh/NI politics sections etc) in the form of news, analysis, features, debates, blogs by political correspondents in Westminster and in the devolved assemblies etc. Recent examples include:

News stories:

Scottish independent paper to be released:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/6917542.stm>

Features and analysis:

Question of Scottish MPs: Nick Robinson blog on English only votes:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/nickrobinson/2007/10/question_of_sco.html

Brian Taylor blog on arrest of Tommy Sheridan for perjury
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/briantaylor/>

Devolution's decade shapes Wales:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/6992861.stm>

Have Your Say:

Should Scotland become independent? Have Your Say debate:
<http://newsforums.bbc.co.uk/nol/thread.jspa?forumID=3411&edition=1&ttl=20071217174923>

4. Network Radio

Today

Policy differences: Series of three reports in *Today* (January 2007, mark 300th anniversary of the Union & run-up to May elections) which looked at two areas in which Scotland is perhaps not as different as people might assume - personal care and tuition fees - and one area where things are run very differently - the NHS.

The first report examined the flagship policy of providing free personal care for the elderly in Scotland. New research suggests some pensioners are losing out, while some local authorities are saying it's simply unaffordable.

The next report examined how not all students are being treated equally and for some, tuition fees have never really gone away, despite the abolition of tuition fees north of the border

Third report looked at increasing divergence between NHS models in England and Scotland (e.g. in Scotland there are no foundation hospitals, no primary care trusts; spend far more per head on health than in England)

Radio Five

Devolution/Nations politics: At start of 2007, Breakfast marked 300 years since the Act of Union by debating the findings in a BBC poll which suggested people backed the idea of an English Parliament. In April, Breakfast came live from a sweet factory in Stenhousemuir during the Scottish election campaign, talking to the various parties about the impact of devolution.

Policy differences: Drivetime did an OB from Glasgow on April 23rd - ahead of the elections to the Scottish parliament. As well as talking to all the main parties, we looked at the changes devolution has brought to Scotland and the ways in which it's increasingly different from England in a number of policy areas. Parallel OB from Cardiff on April 26. On Drivetime on May 8th, the day devolved government returned to Northern Ireland, Simon Jack presented his money slots from Belfast to tell us what economic impact the Good Friday Agreement had.

On December 6th, Richard Bacon discussed the fact that Scottish Police were getting their pay rise backdated. The programme used this as another example of things being done differently in Scotland from the rest of the UK - the latest in an ever lengthening list. Scots already have different rules for student fees, nurses' pay, prescribing drugs - and now talk of a possible council tax freeze in Scotland as well. We asked: do Scots actually get a better deal?

Radio 1

To explain the complexities of the SNP struggling to form a government in Scotland after the May elections we sent our (Scottish) technology Reporter Iain Mackenzie north of the border to make sense of it all - with a specific brief to unravel the complexities of Scottish politics as Scot for a UK audience.

Our politics reporter Rajini Vaidyanathan kept Radio 1 and 1Xtra audiences abreast of the previews and the results from the Nations and local elections