

**Ofcom Advisory Committee for Wales**

**Consultation Response**

**Phase Two of Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review**  
**"Preparing for the Digital Future"**

**Executive Summary**

The Ofcom Advisory Committee for Wales (ACW) was pleased to note Ofcom's recognition, evident in the Phase Two consultation document, that the provision of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) content for the devolved nations is an essential requirement for any future model. Wales requires a broadcasting and on-line environment which provides a plural supply of news, current affairs and a wide range of other high quality programmes that reflect the life and culture of the nation. However, the ACW recognises that there are major challenges to be overcome in the immediate and long term future in order to maintain and strengthen the provision of public service broadcasting for Wales.

The biggest challenge is to ensure that the Welsh consumer of television and other media retains a choice of news, information and other programming about Wales in the event that ITV opts to reduce further its PSB role and pull out of the nations and regions. The ACW believes this may well prove to be an issue which arises much earlier than previously anticipated, and urges Ofcom and DCMS to bring forward a Communications Act to deal with this eventuality before it becomes a crisis.

Given the many uncertainties over the next few years in a changing communications environment, the ACW believes the best way forward is a flexible approach to meet those changing circumstances. We propose a Welsh-based funding agency, which we call a **Broadcasting Commission for Wales**. Its function would be to place news and non-news programmes where they would achieve greatest range and impact, bearing in mind particularly the ITV Wales audience which would have lost the programmes to which it was accustomed.

We set out below the range of options which such a Broadcasting Commission might have, and how a system of competitive funding operated by the Commission might work. In particular, we look at the possibility of a dedicated digital channel for English language programming from Wales. The options however would not be confined to television, but could include providing radio programming, in particular, a news service to commercial radio in Wales and a strong on-line presence.

It is the view of the ACW that the issue of plurality in news and non-news programming in the nations, especially in Wales, is the most urgent priority to be faced in this PSB review. It should therefore be the first call on any funding which is available, which is likely to be that part of the licence fee which has been used to facilitate the digital switchover. It is our submission that the £130 million per annum used for that purpose should be divided between Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Whatever the source of funding, in order to provide adequate resources for a sufficient range of programme commissions and to secure sufficient reach and impact, an annual grant of around £40 million, at the minimum, will be required to operate the proposed Welsh Broadcasting Commission.

## Consultation questions

### Section 4: Models

1) *Do you agree that public service provision and funding beyond the BBC is an important part of any future system?*

Yes. The Ofcom Review accepts the need for plurality of PSB provision and the ACW would stress that this could well be a particularly urgent issue in Wales. With the inadequate supply of other media in Wales, any withdrawal of ITV from its remaining PSB obligations would create a BBC monopoly in English language broadcasting about Wales to Wales on television. It would be especially disturbing if this were the case during 2010 when a general election is expected and during 2011 when elections to the National Assembly are scheduled (with a referendum on additional law making powers also likely to be held during this period).

The review accepts that replacement funding is likely to be necessary for PSB services in the nations. The ACW believes that such new funding will be a prerequisite of any new PSB settlement.

The ACW agrees that the BBC should remain the cornerstone of public service broadcasting and that its core provision of high quality public service output should not be reduced. This is particularly important in Wales where there is a paucity of other media providing public information about Wales. This aspect of the BBC's role is relevant not only within Wales but also in reflecting Welsh life, including news about Wales, on the UK networks.

In the light of the BBC Trust's King Report, Members believe that it is now appropriate to consider if the BBC's current peak time network news provision continues to be fit for purpose, particularly in ensuring that its UK networks genuinely report on matters which are of relevance to audiences across the UK and not just in England. The ACW therefore believes that there is now a strong argument for replacing the BBC 1 6pm Network News with a dedicated 'Wales Six' which would cover International, UK and Wales news in one programme. This would go part of the way to address the problems identified by the King Report, regarding the significant failure to report events in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the BBC's UK networks by providing complete editorial control to a team of journalists based in Wales. In addition, to the Welsh Six, the ACW believes that the BBC has to significantly improve its network coverage of Welsh public affairs, along with events in Scotland and Northern Ireland in order to ensure that the BBC's network news fully reflects the diversity of life across the whole of the UK.

The ACW also supports the idea, set out on page 57 of the consultation document, of giving the BBC Nation services greater freedom to provide a different pattern of news and other kinds of nations programming. Members suggest that, regardless of developments elsewhere, BBC Wales should be given greater editorial freedom to schedule its output, independently of the BBC 1 and BBC 2 networks.

2) *Which of the three refined models do you think is most appropriate?*

ACW notes the findings that audiences in Wales tended to prefer the evolutionary model because they valued the role of ITV Wales and attached high priority to plurality in the supply of Welsh news on television. It is, however, difficult to predict for how long ITV will still wish to carry out its PSB obligations in Wales. In the face of rapid change over the next few years, it would be inadvisable to plump at this stage for one model, when decisions on implementing any new PSB settlement might have been made under a different set of circumstances than exist at present.

The most sensible approach would be for the next Communications Act to establish a new funding mechanism which can respond to changing circumstances without requiring fresh legislation every few years. This principle should apply to the UK as a whole as well as to Wales. This approach implies that any new funding would be controlled by an arms-length body through competitive tendering, which would be responsible for ensuring that the money was spent according to the criteria laid down in the Act. The implication of such a funding process is that – under any model – all of it would be ultimately contestable.

In our response to Phase 1 of the Review, the ACW proposed a dedicated funding agency for Wales, managed in Wales and focussed specifically on the PSB needs of Wales. We continue to advocate such a solution, which we believe would be compatible with the structure outlined above or any of the three models outlined in Phase 2 of the review.

3) *Do you agree that in any future model Channel 4 should have an extended remit to innovate and provide distinctive UK content across platforms? If so, should it receive additional funding directly, or should it have to compete for funding?*

The ACW believes that Channel 4's record in covering Welsh life on its networks has not been particularly impressive or indeed that extensive and we suggest that a change of culture is required in which the broadcaster moves away from its current distinctly metropolitan mind set. The ACW therefore agrees that under any future model Channel 4 should have an extended remit to innovate and provide distinctive UK content across all platforms. The relevance of such an extended remit to Wales we discuss later.

We would not support direct, institutional funding for Channel 4, which would be incompatible with the principle outlined above that all new funding should be contestable.

4) *Do you think ITV1, Five and Teletext should continue to have public service obligations after 2014? Where ITV1 has an ongoing role, do you agree that the Channel 3 licensing structure should be simplified, if so what form of licensing would be most appropriate?*

Ideally, ITV 1 would continue to be a public service broadcaster after 2014 and in our response to Phase 1 of the review, the ACW argued for the creation of a new Channel 3 licence specifically for Wales, to replace the present licence which includes Wales and the West of England. We argued that such a licence could include obligations to

broadcast programmes for viewers in Wales paid for through contracts agreed with a funding agency.

The ACW continues to believe that the creation of a Channel 3 licence for Wales would be an optimum outcome for viewers. However, it is difficult to predict at this stage whether that would be a practical proposition at the relevant time, and we note the review's unfavourable analysis of the Channel 3 affiliate model. We discuss this in more detail later.

5) *What role should competition for funding play in future? In which areas of content? What comments do you have on our description of how this might work in practice?*

The ACW believes, as stated above, that any new public funding for public service broadcasting should be administered on a competitive basis. As the Phase 2 report points out, there are a number of examples around the world of such funding on a large-scale and small-scale basis for programme genres which the market alone will not supply, the example closest to home being the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (see Annex 1). The ACW would therefore support the general approach outlined on page 60 of the consultation document.

In Wales, such funding could apply to long-term contracts – for example for a news service or programme series such as current affairs programmes or children's content, or shorter-term contracts for heritage, arts or documentary programmes. The best judge of what would be appropriate funding, based on programme and platform, would be a Welsh-based funding agency. What would be wholly inappropriate would be for PSB programming aimed at viewers in Wales to become a minor part of contracts issued on a UK-wide basis. The ACW believes that for Channel 4 to replace ITV 1 as a provider of programming for the nations in opt out slots would be a retrograde step which would be in danger of replicating the intrinsic disadvantages of the past, without delivering any enhanced reach and impact.

## **Section 5: Long-term: nations and regions**

1) *Do you agree with our findings that nations and regions news continues to have an important role and that additional funding should be provided to sustain it?*

See our previous answer to 4.1

2) *Which of the three refined models do you think is most appropriate in the devolved nations?*

It is not possible to confine discussion of future opportunities for broadcasting in Wales within the three refined models in the review. As we look forward, there are a number of possible scenarios, all based on an assumption that – post 2012 or earlier, ITV is no longer fulfilling even its revised PSB obligations in Wales:

1. Channel 3 might continue to be the main carrier service with a residual obligation to carry UK news and fulfil UK origination quotas and – as Michael Grade

- recently suggested – provide slots for transmission of news from the nations funded by a third party. It is ACW's view that reach and impact must be an important consideration in allocating future public funds for PSB. That does imply that in Wales, at least in the short term, the priority must be to keep as much PSB on Channel 3 as possible. It has the largest television audience outside the BBC (23%) and a high proportion of viewers (CDE's) who, because of their other media consumption, would not otherwise receive information about Wales, its society, culture and politics. The ACW believes that Ofcom should make the provision of such news slots (the so-called "Swiss cheese" option) a condition of permitting ITV to withdraw to such a residual PSB role. No intervention with the help of public funds, however, should be confined to news provision.
2. A separate Channel 3 licence for Wales could be established in a Communications Act, as discussed above. The extent to which this would be viable would depend primarily on whether ITV was prepared to provide the network programmes which would form the backbone of the service, as with stv and UTV, and the degree of public funding available to bolster the programming originated in Wales. The current direction which ITV is taking makes this option now look unlikely. We note, however, the determination of UTV to keep their Channel 3 licence by securing an alternative sustaining service to ITV if necessary. The option of a similar Channel 3 licence for Wales should be kept firmly in view.
  3. ITV might have abandoned all its public service obligations and might no longer be carried on Channel 3. Considerations of reach and impact could then depend on the percentage of Welsh viewers reached by ITV's alternative digital service and their willingness, under those circumstances, to make any slots available.
  4. Channel 4 might, under a UK-wide model, be given an enhanced remit to include provision for nations and regions. The ACW's view at this stage is that Channel 4 does not provide a satisfactory alternative to Channel 3 as the provider of Wales-based programming. Current viewing to Channel 4 in Wales is only 4% of the audience, partly because of the existence of S4C and the fact that analogue Channel 4 has not been broadcast in Wales. Channel 4 has little track record of involvement in Wales but it cannot be excluded as a provider of English-language programming for Wales, as a number of factors could change.
  5. Sufficient funding might exist for a digital channel dedicated to programming about Wales in English. The ACW has noted the proposal from the Scottish Broadcasting Commission for such a dedicated Scottish channel. The ACW's view is that such a channel might ultimately be the best outcome for viewers in the long term since it would provide a much wider range of programming to reflect different aspects of life in Wales. Such a dedicated channel, perhaps using its own gifted spectrum, could emerge as the best way to ensure there is sufficient non-BBC PSB programming for Wales.
  6. It might well be that, when the time comes to make the decisions, there is no single satisfactory television channel on which to carry publicly-funded PSB programming for Wales. In response to this uncertainty, the ACW's preferred model, as set out initially in our response to Phase 1, involves the creation of a dedicated funding agency (The Welsh Broadcasting Commission) which could commission, fund and secure carriage for PSB programming. The aim would be to create an institution that would be sufficiently flexible in order to achieve the greatest degree of range, reach and impact for Wales-based PSB content.

## A Broadcasting Commission for Wales

The ACW believes that a funding agency, which we call the Broadcasting Commission for Wales, should operate under an agreed overarching strategy aimed at maximising the reach and impact of non-BBC, English language PSB content for Wales, delivered through the most appropriate platforms and technologies to secure this objective. It could share premises and other facilities with S4C to maximise value for money and ensure that the bulk of the Commission's resources are used to create content.

The Commission would:

- administer a PSB production fund for Wales
- commission PSB programming and content, possibly in conjunction with other partners. This would include television programming but also radio programming, including news and on-line, new media content.
- negotiate carriage of its commissioned content with broadcasters and platform operators
- broadcast programming on its own spectrum/capacity and arrange carriage of its programming on other platforms and within services provided by other broadcasters
- research the television, radio and on-line markets in Wales to ensure that the delivery of content to consumers and citizens remains effective, taking account of audience preferences and changes in viewing behaviour. The Commission could work jointly with other organisations, such as the Welsh Assembly Government, to make the most efficient use of research resources and avoid duplication.

As listed above, this strategy could involve supplementing any PSB content based on television, with public service programming or information on radio and the internet. For example, there is no all-Wales radio news service currently in existence outside the BBC and any funding mechanism must be sufficiently flexible to permit that to be part of the PSB provision for Wales if required. There is also considerable argument in favour of upgrading the 'findability' of Welsh public information websites and for greatly enhancing the current on-line provision available for Welsh citizens. The Commission would have a key strategic role in the long term development of PSB in Wales and, under any subsequent legislation, it might receive gifted spectrum, for example on the digital terrestrial television platform and acquire powers to assist with its functions, for example in securing due prominence for its commissioned content and in providing leverage in negotiating carriage with platform operators and digital broadcasters.

A Broadcasting Commission for Wales does not imply a large bureaucracy. Equivalent broadcast funds in Ireland employ only a handful of full-time staff for this purpose. The Commission might also decide to form partnerships with other organisations, which could either be broadcasters or content providers working with other platforms and media.

### Co-operation with S4C

S4C, the Welsh language television channel, was secured after a decade or more of dedicated and extensive campaigning by Welsh speakers. Welsh is the most widely spoken indigenous language in the UK (after English), particularly compared with the minority languages in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and the intervention by government to secure a dedicated Welsh language channel in the early 80s, along with the growth in Welsh language schools, has contributed significantly to reversing the fortunes of the language in later decades. Indeed for the first time in almost a century the 2001 census indicated a significant growth in the number of speakers, particularly in younger age groups. S4C, was established for the specific public purpose of securing the Welsh language and this provision should not, in our view, be confused with the current need for increased PSB plurality for Wales in the English language.

The ACW does not therefore recommend any change to the existing financial settlement in relation to the provision of Welsh language television broadcasting, nor any change to the size of direct grant provided by the DCMS to the Welsh Authority which is used to fund the current range of S4C services. Nor do we favour any change to the Welsh Authority's statutory remit to provide these services.

However, Members believe there are a range of practical measures that the Welsh Authority and S4C could take to support a Broadcasting Commission for Wales, without in any way diluting or undermining its present statutory remits as set out in the 2003 Communications Act.

The Authority/S4C could provide:

- premises to house the Commission's staff. Currently S4C has some spare capacity in a building that was formerly used to accommodate S4C International. (The department has since been disbanded and S4C's International sales are now handled by a private company, under contract with S4C.)
- transmission and play-out facilities. S4C has channel management and broadcasting facilities at its centre in Parc Ty Glas. It has in the past provided similar channel management services to other broadcasters.
- backroom office and administrative support. S4C's finance, legal and human resources departments could provide valuable administrative support to the Commission, thereby helping to keep down its costs.
- audience research support. S4C has built up considerable experience and expertise in this area that could be shared with the Commission. For example, S4C currently operates a booster panel to support the BARB panels that operate in Wales, in order to accurately measure Welsh speaking television audiences. A similar approach could be developed by the Commission, in relation to English language programmes screened specifically for audiences for Wales, with support provided by S4C.

- opportunities for Co-Commissioning. This could involve back to back production of Welsh and English language versions of the same programme or series on occasions. Whilst this opportunity should not be over estimated, such an approach could work, for example, with some prestige drama projects.

Members recognise that it would also be possible for BBC Wales to provide similar back office and transmission support to the Commission. However, as the aim is to secure plurality of PSB provision in competition to that provided by the BBC, Members considered it preferable for the new organisation to be based at S4C's premises. However, it would be possible for the Commission to form partnerships with the BBC in which facilities and equipment could be supplied to independent producers for the production of programmes and content. This represents another way in which costs could be reduced.

3) *Do you agree with our analysis of the future potential for local content services?*

The ACW is keen to see local television services develop within Wales, for example, through the use of spectrum acquired under digital dividend review auctions or band manager allocations. It would be very welcome to see a vibrant local news and information culture develop in this way, bringing additional plurality to viewers in Wales. However, such a provision can not be seen as a substitute for the fundamental need to ensure that PSB content is provided for the whole of Wales in competition with the BBC.

## **Section 6: Funding**

1) *Do you agree with our assessment of each possible funding source, in terms of its scale, advantages and disadvantages?*

2) *What source or sources of funding do you think are most appropriate for the future provision of public service content beyond the BBC?*

The ACW agrees with Ofcom's detailed analysis of the various funding sources. In principle, the availability of the digital switchover excess licence fee appears to be the best available option for funding PSB content in the nations. It is the view of the ACW that the issue of plurality in news and non-news programming in the nations, especially in Wales, is the most urgent priority to be faced in this PSB review. It goes beyond broadcasting and raises issues of citizenship and participation in the democratic process. It is not known at this stage how much funding will be available in its entirety to meet the funding gap for PSB provision across the UK, but we believe that ensuring plurality of media provision should be the first call on any funding which is available. The impact of devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has created a democratic imperative which is currently not the case in the regions of England. In addition, it is likely that the market will provide local television services in the more populated towns and cities in England without the need for any public intervention.

It is our submission that the £130 million per annum of the licence fee used for facilitating digital switchover should be divided between Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Whatever the source of funding, the ACW estimates that broadcasting for Wales in English will require a minimum of £40 million per annum to secure and sustain a sufficient range of high quality output.

In addition to the actual cost of programme production, the Commission will need sufficient funding to promote its programming and secure prominence for its output in a digital environment where there will be potentially hundreds of other competing channels. The Commission will need this extra funding because it will have to find new ways to reach viewers in sufficient numbers. This will be particularly important as the Commission will not have the facility of the ITV Network which is currently able to secure reach and impact for its programmes for Wales by screening them in peak and by scheduling them immediately after popular network programmes such as soap dramas. In our view, substantial additional funding would also be required to cover marketing costs to promote the Welsh Broadcasting Commission's programmes. Our suggested figure of £40 million also approximately equates to the £42 per household per annum (or £3.50 per month) indicated by Ofcom's research<sup>1</sup> that viewers would be prepared to pay on top of the existing licence fee in order to secure plurality of PSB programming in competition with the BBC (if applied to the 1.2 million of households in Wales.)

However, timing is a crucial issue. A source of funding will almost certainly have to be found before 2012 as the deficit in PSB content for Wales could become apparent as early as 2009/10, for example to secure plural coverage of the general election, to cover the Assembly Elections in 2011 and at some point a possible referendum on law making powers for the National Assembly.

Currently, broadcasting is not a devolved matter, and the ACW is not currently advocating that broadcasting be devolved to the National Assembly. It is constitutionally most appropriate for funding decisions and arrangements to lie with the tier of government which has political and legislative responsibility, and it is therefore appropriate that central government and the DCMS continue to be responsible for funding broadcasting in Wales. While S4C is funded from Westminster, it would be anomalous for any funding of English-language broadcasting in Wales to be dealt with differently.

The same argument applies to the issue of the accountability of a Broadcasting Commission for Wales. Such a Commission should be accountable to the DCMS, or any intermediate body nominated by the DCMS. But it would be wrong to ignore the realities of devolution. Thus, while appointments to the Board of the Broadcasting Commission for Wales should be made by the DCMS, with Ministers answering to Parliament at Westminster, the appointments should be made in consultation with the Welsh Assembly Government. Equally, the Broadcasting Commission for Wales should report to the DCMS and Parliament, but should be required to keep the Welsh Assembly Government and the National Assembly informed about their work. Such requirements should be written into any new Communications Act.

3) *Which of the potential approaches to funding for Channel 4 do you favour?*

See our answer in 4(3).

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<sup>1</sup> See paragraph 3.72, page 40, Ofcom's second PSB Review, *Phase Two: Preparing For The Digital Future*

## **Section 7 and annex 1: Matters for short-term regulatory decision**

*Do you agree that our proposals for 'tier 2' quotas affecting ITV plc, stv, UTV, Channel TV, Channel 4, Five and Teletext are appropriate, in the light of our analysis of the growing pressure on funding and audiences' priorities? If not, how should we amend them, and what evidence can you provide to support your alternative?*

It is clearly a matter of regret that Ofcom has felt obliged to reach its current set of regulatory decisions for the short-term. The political reaction to the proposals has indicated the importance attached to the issue of plurality of PSB services in Wales and the extent to which this has now become an issue of 'citizenship'. What has hit particularly hard is the proposed reduction in the average weekly minimum of non-news programming to just 90 minutes per week. This is likely to mean a reduction in staffing at ITV Wales to a level which makes continued quality programming very much harder to sustain.

However, the ACW accepts in broad terms Ofcom's analysis of the costs and benefits to ITV of retaining its PSB licence and is aware of the financial pressures on ITV. We accept that it is important to maintain those services in peak time which Welsh viewers most value. The Phase 2 review suggests that this regulatory settlement will now last until the end of ITV's licence period in 2014. But that assertion looks increasingly doubtful. There is a significant risk that ITV could decide to hand back its licence before any alternative PSB settlement can be put in place. It would be unacceptable if a general election were to take place in 2010 and Assembly elections in 2011 without an alternative supplier of news and current affairs to the BBC in Wales.

ACW therefore urges Ofcom to factor these risks into their planning, and urges the DCMS to bring forward a Communications Act so that alternative arrangements can be put in place in time to meet any such eventuality.

**Ofcom ACW  
December 2008**

## ANNEX 1

### The Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI)<sup>2</sup>

The BCI is an independent statutory organisation, established on 1st September 2001 and its key functions include the licensing of independent broadcasting services including the additional licensing of television services on digital, cable, MMDS and satellite systems; the development of codes and rules in relation to programming and advertising standards and the monitoring of all licensed services to ensure that licence holders comply with their statutory obligations and terms of their contracts.

**Sound and Vision** is a grant scheme designed operated by the Commission to support the production of new television and radio programmes in the areas of Irish culture, heritage and experience and adult literacy. The Scheme is the result of the [Broadcasting \(Funding\) Act, 2003](#) and is funded by 5% of the television licence fee.

In 2007, 622 applications were received and assessed by the fund and just under €21million was allocated to radio and television programmes covering the general themes of Irish culture, heritage, adult literacy and programmes in the Irish language. In all, since the Scheme's inception, €46.2m has been allocated in funding, for the production of 490 radio and television projects, which meet the criteria of the scheme.

Documentary programmes continue to be the most popular genre for television, with almost 60% of funding allocated to documentaries during 2007, addressing the themes of history and heritage, music, nature, the arts, biography and culture.

In 2007 funding decisions of the *Sound & Vision* scheme provided €1.3m of funding support for the production of animated programming. The film sector was also strongly supported through the Scheme, with seven of the fifteen proposals received during the year receiving funding support in excess of €2m; 15% of the total allocation across two rounds, in 2007.

34% of the television programmes funded were bi-lingually or in the Irish language, which is a very positive development and marks an increase on 2006 while, at the same time, broadening the appeal of the language through quality programme making. An interesting development during 2007 has been the steady increase in the number of broadcasters accessing the fund, with a total of eight broadcasters providing letters of commitment for 100 programmes which received funding support. These programmes have been, and will be, available on a free-to-air basis for Irish viewers.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: BCI Sound and Vision Annual Report, 2007.

**Table 1 – Funding for Television**

Television	Applications Received	Funding Sought	Successful Applications	Funding Awarded
Round 3	131	€47.8m	45	€9.49m
Round 4	121	€34.7m	55	€8.7m
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>€82.5m</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>€18.19m</b>

The radio industry continued to engage strongly with the scheme in 2007 submitting a total of 370 applications. Documentaries accounted for 75% of the total number of projects funded. The high demand for this genre is primarily due to its fit with the objectives of the Scheme and the schedules of broadcasters. The balance of the remaining applications included radio drama, factual and children's programmes. Overall, radio productions received 13% of all funding awarded in 2007. In general terms, the ratio of television to radio funding per round has averaged out at approximately 9:1. This reflects the costs associated with production in each sector and is linked to the budget proposals received for projects.

**Table 2 – Funding for Radio**

Radio	Applications Received	Funding Sought	Successful Applications	Funding Awarded
Round 3	137	€3.23m	75	€1.14m
Round 4	116	€2.23m	70	€954k
Round 5	117	€2.02m	60	€706k
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>€7.48m</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>€2.8m</b>

The Broadcasting Funding Scheme also makes provision for the funding of Special Schemes, outside of regular Sound & Vision funding rounds. Special Schemes funding has been in place since September 2006 and initiatives funded must meet with a range of objectives. These include the provision of programming which is in accordance with the primary Sound & Vision scheme. There is also an emphasis on building strong links with the broadcasting sector and with other public service agencies, while fostering industry development. A final objective of the Special Schemes funding is that it contains sufficient flexibility in order to respond effectively to the needs of the broadcasting sector. 5% of the total Sound & Vision fund per year is available to support Special Schemes.

To date five Special Schemes have received funding via the Broadcasting Funding Scheme:

- UAIR, a joint TG4 and Bord Scannán na hÉireann/Irish Film Board initiative, was established to develop three television drama projects suitable for production as a single hour film in the Irish language, and the full production of one of these programmes.
- Catalyst, a joint initiative of FÁS Screen Training Ireland (FÁS STI), Bord Scannán na hÉireann/the Irish Film Board and Film Base, in association with TV3, was launched in March. Screenwriters, producers and first time directors attended a series of master classes in micro budget film production. Three projects arising out of this initiative will go into production in Spring/Summer of 2008.
- Splanc!, a series on contemporary literature in the Irish language, was co-funded by Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge (Irish Language Books' Board), TG4, and the BCI.
- Féith is a co-production model consisting of a young adult drama series centering on the lives of a group of performing arts students at a college in Belfast. The initiative provided training opportunities while, at the same time, developing new talent and was broadcast over the past few months on TG4 and on BBCNI, under the title 'Seacht'.
- Dramarama is an initiative for radio broadcasters and independent production companies, run in conjunction with BCI and Learning Waves. This Special Scheme will involve a series of 2 day workshops and a follow-up seminar on writing for radio, drama production, and applying to the Sound & Vision scheme.