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Firstly, I find it concerning to say the least, that we are invited to respond to an invitation which appears in both English and Welsh but not in Scots Gaelic. Why only these two languages, especially in a consultation which is focused on the BBC Scotland channel and therefore the interests of viewers in Scotland?

It would be better were Gaelic and Welsh to be treated as equals in processes as well as funding and status and Ofcom really should do better in this regard.

2

While I have much sympathy with and do support the proposals, there needs to be some closer attention to operational and strategic issues if this development is to become the success we all seek.

Having Reporting Scotland on BBC One at 1830 and then a BBC Scotland news programme on Channel Nine at 1900 could be said to be a revival of the ideas for a BBC Six from the 1990's which were so well articulated by the then BBC Scotland Controller John McCormick.

It is clear that the arguments for this provision have not gone away.

3

It follows that there is a news agenda problem present in this proposal. and especially if there is an thirty minute extension, as envisaged on some dates, to the Rep Scot programme

How are the differences between the two programmes to be defined and presented and understood by viewers?

Will the second half hour be largely a repeat of the first Rep Scot offering? How will it differ and what is the rationale for the difference? What would viewers of the 1990 programme receive to entice them to watch or is it mostly matter of time shifting ?

What will the budget for the seven be, bearing in mind the funding cuts at the BBC and will it be enough to provide distinctive content?

We already have, to the evident distaste of viewers in Scotland, an issue with repetition . If a news item is deemed to be of national UK interest, it appears on the UK Six then on Rep Scot and presumably then it might be repeated for a third time on this new news programme at 7. This would be too much but one can easily see how the salience of a news report and tight budgets could produce such a result.

Moreover, there were some sceptics who considered that the now redundant Nine news offering was deliberately placed at that time to ensure failure> One would not wish the new Seven to be subject to similar criticisms

Have BBC and BBC Scotland and Ofcom staff watched or read James Robertson's analysis and taken account of the implications?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhL57cjN8xY>

4

Add in the BBC's continuing propensity to 'parachute' in London based staff.

When we had the recent First Minister resignation and then the announcement of John Swinney standing as a replacement, both Chris Mason and Nick Robinson were rushed up to Scotland to provide their input. This practice is no way to restore or increase support from viewers in Scotland and is no way to treat BBC Scotland staff and staff development or provide an authentic voice for Scotland on the UK network. You do not have to be Scottish to broadcast from or about Scotland but it helps if the journalists have a deeper understanding of the nuances present in the Scottish polity.

5

Therefore, it seems axiomatic that BBC Scotland should use the same editorial and production team to produce and broadcast both programmes and ensure that there is a high degree of attention to viewer interests as well as co-ordination in and across the items chosen and the priorities given.

Moreover, the opportunity should be taken to include and use staff from BBC Alba's news operations to broadcast the perspective as well as the news from Gaeldom to the wider society.

If adopted, these suggestions have the merit of reducing costs as well as increasing diversity and inclusivity, all of which are requirements on a BBC which have severe funding challenges as well as the need to continue building trust in and across diverse communities.

Ofcom should approve the proposals but with recommendations in line with the above and closely monitor the resulting output.

Professor Robert Beveridge
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