

Changes to BBC Radio Foyle and BBC Asian Network

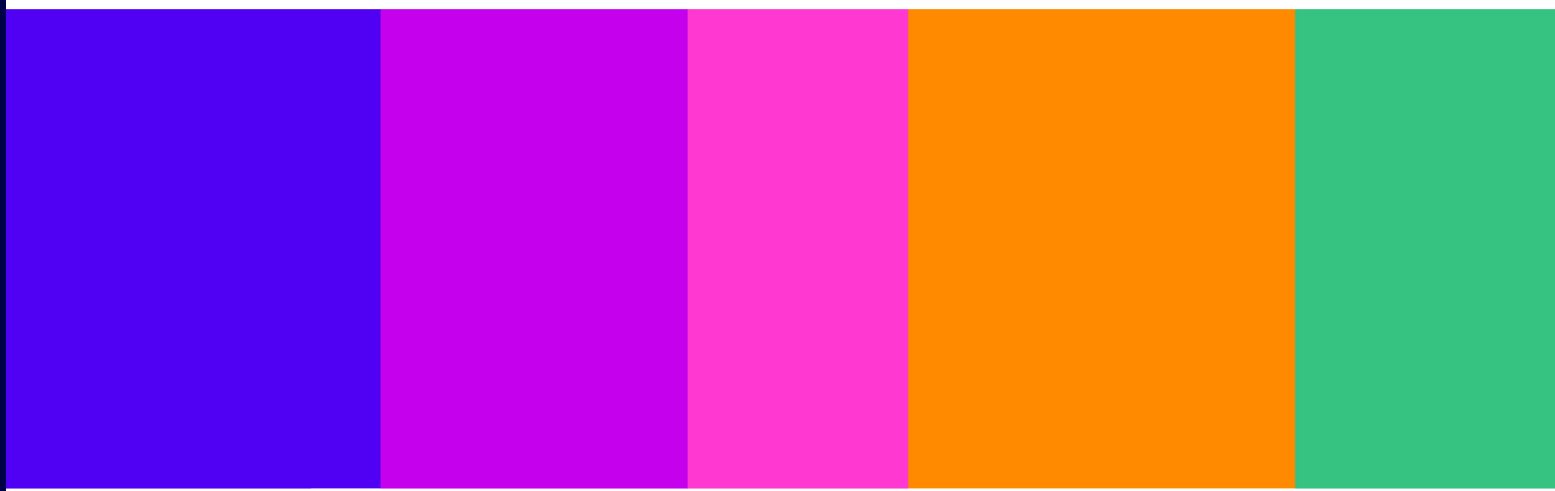
Consultation on BBC's requests to change its Operating Licence

Consultation

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1. Overview

- 1.1 This consultation sets out Ofcom’s provisional view on the BBC’s request to make two changes to its Operating Licence. It has requested that the news and current affairs quota for BBC Radio Foyle be reduced from 1,043 hours to 710 hours each financial year. It has also requested a reduction in the news and current affairs quota for BBC Asian Network from 1,224 hours to 675 hours per year. In both cases, the BBC has explained the changes are driven by it seeking to better serve audience needs and as a result of investing more in online and digital services at a time of significant financial constraints.
- 1.2 The BBC is required under Public Purpose 1 to provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them. As audience habits continue to develop, it is important that the BBC is able to deliver news and current affairs output where audiences are most likely to find it and in ways that resonate with them.
- 1.3 Audiences of all ages, and particularly those under 35, are continuing to migrate online, relying less on traditional broadcast TV and radio services. Trends in Northern Ireland are no different and although local radio remains a key source for news and information, online platforms are now cited as one of the primary ways (alongside TV) that audiences access news in Northern Ireland. British Asian audiences mirror these trends. At the same time the audience age profile for the BBC Asian Network station, which targets audiences under 35 years old, has risen. Within this context, the BBC has requested changes to its Operating Licence conditions for BBC Radio Foyle and BBC Asian Network.
- 1.4 For **BBC Radio Foyle**, the BBC [announced](#) savings and reinvestment plans for its services in Northern Ireland in November 2022. This included replacing BBC Radio Foyle’s two-hour breakfast programme with a new 30-minute show. We considered these changes, as well as wider local radio changes, in early 2023 alongside our [Operating Licence review](#), recognising changing audience habits and the BBC’s plans to invest more online to meet these needs. It initially implemented the BBC Radio Foyle changes in May 2023 and subsequently increased the breakfast show to one hour in January 2024. At the time, the BBC told us these plans would not require a change to its Operating Licence. However, the BBC informed us in June 2024 that it had made an error in not requesting a change and, as a result, had breached its news and current affairs condition 4.66.2 for 2023/24. It noted in its [Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#) that it would be requesting an amendment to change the condition.
- 1.5 In respect of **BBC Asian Network**, the [BBC has announced](#) a number of proposed changes to its schedule aimed at refocusing the station to better serve younger audiences, particularly those aged 25-34. If implemented, the changes would mean that the BBC would be unable to meet its news and current affairs quota. The proposed changes are to:
 - a) Decommission the *Ankur Desai* show (currently broadcast Monday to Thursday from 3-6pm) and its associated titles, *60 Minutes* and *Asian Network News Presents*.
 - b) In its place, commission a new, two-hour news and current affairs programme on Monday evenings and broadcast additional simulcast (with BBC Radio 1 and BBC Radio 1 Xtra) drivetime *Newsbeat* bulletins Monday to Thursday (currently the extended drivetime *Newsbeat* is only broadcast on BBC Asian Network on a Friday).
 - c) Deliver an additional 10-20 hours of standalone current affairs programming annually.

- 1.6 The BBC has also proposed other changes that are relevant to our consideration of the BBC's request, but do not require any variation to the Operating Licence. This includes commissioning a new music-focused programme to support new British Asian artists broadcast on weekday afternoons to replace the *Ankur Desai* show, and plans to retain its business programme, *The Everyday Hustle*.
- 1.7 In considering the BBC's requests we have assessed, among other factors, the potential impacts of the changes on the BBC's delivery of its Mission and promotion of the Public Purposes, including ensuring that audiences in Northern Ireland and British Asian audiences are well-served with news and current affairs output.
- 1.8 We have also considered the potential impact of the BBC's changes on fair and effective competition.

What we are proposing

We propose to approve the BBC's requests to reduce the news and current affairs quotas on BBC Radio Foyle and BBC Asian Network. We consider that the amended quotas would be appropriate for requiring the BBC to fulfil its Mission and promote its Public Purposes and the changes have the potential to meet audience needs given changing viewing habits.

We would expect the BBC to monitor the impact of any changes on audience engagement, to ensure that where necessary it continues to adapt to better serve audiences. To hold the BBC to account, as well as ensuring compliance with its quotas, we would continue to assess performance. This would include how the BBC delivers news and current affairs to audiences across all of its services, including monitoring audience satisfaction, and reporting on this as part of our Annual Report. We also note our ongoing ability to step in should concerns arise about the BBC's performance.

We are now seeking views from interested or affected parties on the proposals set out in this consultation by 26 June 2025.

The overview section in this document is a simplified high-level summary only. The proposals we are consulting on and our reasoning are set out in the full document.

2. Background

The BBC's request

- 3.1 In April 2025, the [BBC submitted a request](#) to Ofcom for changes to be made to its Operating Licence ("the Request"). In summary, it has requested the following changes:
- a) A reduction in the amount of news and current affairs it is required to deliver on BBC Radio Foyle during each financial year, from 1,043 hours to 710 hours.
 - b) A reduction in the amount of news and current affairs it is required to deliver on BBC Asian Network during each financial year, from 1,224 hours to 675 hours.

Our approach

- 3.2 Our role is to ensure the BBC is delivering for all audiences and to hold it to account for fulfilling its Mission and promoting its Public Purposes. We also regulate the BBC's editorial standards and complaints processes, and work to protect fair and effective competition.
- 3.3 As part of our regulation of the BBC, we are required under the [BBC Charter](#) and [Agreement](#) to set an Operating Licence for the BBC. The Operating Licence contains a series of regulatory conditions which we consider appropriate for the BBC to fulfil its Mission and Public Purposes, secure the provision of distinctive output and services, and secure that audiences across the UK are well-served. We issued the first Operating Licence in 2017, which was subsequently amended on several occasions.
- 3.4 In March 2023, we published a [new BBC Operating Licence](#). The new licence sought to modernise our regulation of the BBC by providing it with more flexibility to adapt and innovate to respond to audience needs, including on its online services, while safeguarding important content, like news and current affairs. We retained news and current affairs quotas to ensure a substantial amount of this content is provided on broadcast TV and radio, and set new conditions to make it easily discoverable on BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds. Further details on the legal and regulatory framework are set out in Annex 1.
- 3.5 We have the power to amend the Operating Licence following consultation with the BBC and any person(s) we consider appropriate. The Operating Framework for BBC regulation includes the [Procedures for setting and amending the Operating Licence](#) ("the Procedures") which explain how we set and administer the Operating Licence regime, including setting out the considerations we take into account when varying the Operating Licence, and the procedures to be followed.
- 3.6 As well as requesting a reduction to the news and current affairs quotas, the BBC's submission also outlines broader changes including scheduling and editorial changes. We have taken these plans into account, but note that scheduling and editorial decisions are not a matter for Ofcom under the BBC Charter and Agreement. The BBC Board is responsible for ensuring the BBC delivers its remit and for setting its strategic and creative direction. It is also solely responsible for all editorial, budgetary and scheduling decisions.
- 3.7 In reaching our provisional view, we have considered how the BBC's proposals might impact audiences and the BBC's delivery of the Mission and Public Purposes. We have also considered the impact on fair and effective competition. Proposals that negatively affect fair and effective competition can result in reduced investment and/or firms leaving or not

entering the market. Such outcomes can disadvantage audiences by leading to reduced choice and quality.

- 3.8 Section 7 of the Communications Act 2003 requires us to carry out and publish an assessment of the likely impact of implementing a proposal which would be likely to have a significant impact on businesses or the general public, or when there is a major change in Ofcom's activities. Our assessment of the impact is set out in this consultation and in particular in sections 3 and 4.
- 3.9 We have also carried out an equality impact assessment, set out in Annex 3.

This consultation

- 3.10 We have considered the Request and set out our initial assessment and proposed variations to the Operating Licence in this document (should we approve the Request). We are seeking stakeholders' views on our initial assessment and the proposed changes to the Operating Licence and invite responses by 26 June 2025. Please see Annex 4 for further information about responding to this consultation.

4. BBC Radio Foyle's news and current affairs quota

Background

- 4.1 BBC Radio Foyle is an FM opt-out service¹ of BBC Radio Ulster that provides news and current affairs content, as well as programming that reflects community life for audiences in the North West region of Northern Ireland. BBC Radio Foyle is also available on DAB across Northern Ireland and on BBC Sounds. The BBC's Operating Licence requires it to deliver 1,043 hours of news and current affairs each year (condition 4.66.2).
- 4.2 In recent years, the BBC has made a series of changes to its breakfast programming and hourly news bulletins on BBC Radio Foyle. In November 2022, the BBC [announced](#), as part of a wider announcement on closing a number of job posts in Northern Ireland, editorial decisions to replace its two-hour breakfast show on BBC Radio Foyle with a 30 minute breakfast news programme (*North West Today*) and to reduce the hours of news bulletins on the service.
- 4.3 Following the announcements about planned changes to BBC local radio services in England and in the nations, [Ofcom wrote to the BBC](#) in February 2023. We agreed that the BBC needs to adapt and modernise its services to reflect changing audience consumption habits, but outlined it was important the BBC continued to deliver for all audiences as it changed its local content and news. In [its response](#), the BBC told us that, following feedback from stakeholders, it had decided that its 30-minute weekday news programme on BBC Radio Foyle (*North West Today*) would be broadcast 08:30-09.00, rather than in the previous lunchtime slot. We acknowledged the changes to content on BBC Radio Foyle (and BBC Radio Ulster) in our [Modernising the Operating Licence statement](#) in March 2023.² The BBC then made this change in May 2023. It did not request a change to the Operating Licence.
- 4.4 In a further [announcement](#) in November 2023, the BBC said that from early 2024, the *North West Today* programme would be extended to an hour following a successful pilot. Separately, it said that it intended to retain the hourly news bulletins on BBC Radio Foyle until 3pm each weekday. In addition to this provision on radio, the BBC noted that there would be enhanced news coverage for audiences in Northern Ireland on its online services, including the area served by BBC Radio Foyle.

Operating Licence breach

- 4.5 In June 2024, the BBC notified us that it had not met its quota for news and current affairs programmes on BBC Radio Foyle, having only delivered 651 hours.³ The BBC told us that due to an internal miscommunication, non-opt news programming (i.e. programming broadcast on BBC Radio Ulster) was erroneously included when calculating its output for BBC Radio Foyle, meaning it incorrectly believed it would still be able to meet its quota for

¹ An opt-out service is a national or regional variation of a BBC channel or station. A service can 'opt-out' of the main channel or station to provide specific content to audiences in different geographic locations.

² Ofcom, [Modernising the BBC's Operating Licence](#), p.48.

³ BBC, [Annual Report & Accounts 2023/24](#), p.135.

this condition. It did not therefore submit an Operating Licence change request at the time it had announced its plans. The BBC told us that once the error was realised, it informed Ofcom that it should have requested a licence change when the changes were announced.

- 4.6 The [BBC has now submitted a request](#) to Ofcom for changes to be made to its Operating Licence in relation to its provision of news and current affairs on BBC Radio Foyle.

The BBC's request

- 4.7 To reflect the BBC's previous announcements about changes to BBC Radio Foyle, and its current output levels given the changes have already occurred, the BBC has requested a reduction in its news and current affairs quota for the service from 1,043 hours to 710 hours each financial year. These changes are set out in Annex 2.⁴
- 4.8 The BBC notes that the changes to BBC Radio Foyle were in line with changes across its newsrooms. It added that these included the rebalancing of available staff and financial resource to deliver locally-focused, high-quality and widely accessible services including on new platforms.⁵ The BBC also says that the shorter duration of *North West Today* and the reprioritisation of resources to support an enhanced news presence for Foyle-related stories on its digital news platforms means that the existing quota is no longer achievable.

Context

- 4.9 This section examines the broader context surrounding the BBC's proposal, noting its financial circumstances and the evolving media consumption habits of audiences. In forming our provisional view, we have carefully assessed these factors to determine how the proposed changes would affect audiences and the potential implications for fair and effective competition.

The BBC is facing considerable financial constraints

- 4.10 The BBC overall has faced significant financial pressures. Its income reduced by 30% in real terms between 2010 and 2020, followed by two years of flat funding, equating to a loss of over £1 billion annually. [The BBC has said](#) that this has necessitated major reforms to maintain value for licence fee payers, including reducing staffing levels by over 1,800 people and cutting more than 1,000 hours of content on television.
- 4.11 This has also impacted the BBC in Northern Ireland and it is in this context that the BBC made its November 2022 announcement involving the cost-saving and reinvestment plans outlined above. It explained that it planned to modernise its local services by reducing expenditure on its broadcast services, through increased content sharing between local radio stations, and by reinvesting this saving into its digital and online services. It [stated](#) that this would enhance the reach, impact and value of its news services for BBC audiences in the North West of Northern Ireland.

⁴ Condition 4.66.2 of the Operating Licence requires that in each Financial Year, at least 1,043 hours (including repeats) are allocated to news and current affairs on BBC Radio Foyle.

⁵ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#).

As audience media habits continue to change, the BBC must adapt its services

- 4.12 Audiences' news consumption habits continue to change. In 2018, TV was the most used platform for news among audiences in Northern Ireland (78% of adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland said they use TV for their news), followed by online (excluding social media) (51%), social media (41%) and radio (40%). The latest data shows that similar proportions of people now get their news from online sources (65%) as broadcast TV (64%), followed by radio and social media (both 46%). Among those aged 55+ (one of the largest listener age groups to BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle) broadcast TV remains the most mentioned platform for news (91%) followed by radio and online (both 52%).⁶
- 4.13 A high proportion of audiences in Northern Ireland (96%) say they are interested in local news and information and the BBC remains a key source of this content. It currently reaches 65% of news audiences in Northern Ireland across TV, radio and online, and the proportion of adults in Northern Ireland naming BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle as a main source for news remains steady at 23%.⁷
- 4.14 BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle is also the fourth most popular source for local news, which contrasts with other BBC local radio services in the rest of the UK, which sit outside the top 10 sources for local news.⁸ We also see that in Northern Ireland, BBC Online continues to grow, increasing by 26% since 2018, with 19% of adults now saying they use it for news.⁹

Limited data is available for measuring audiences to BBC Radio Foyle

- 4.15 BBC Radio Foyle serves an adult population of 136,000 and only the Crown Dependencies of Jersey and Guernsey are smaller in terms of the areas served by BBC local/national radio stations. As a result, the BBC says that monitoring the performance of BBC Radio Foyle is difficult as its listening figures are too small to be published on RAJAR and are instead combined with BBC Radio Ulster.¹⁰ The BBC's analysis shows that the combined reach of both radio stations was 454k in Q4 2024, having declined by around 60k since Q4 2021.¹¹ The average age of listener is 59. Limited comparisons can be made between listening to BBC Radio Ulster and BBC Radio Foyle using BBC Sounds data, which we set out below.¹²

Our assessment and provisional view

Impact on audiences

Reduction of the news and current affairs quota

- 4.16 Our role in assessing this request is to consider whether a reduction in the quota is appropriate for the BBC to continue to meet audience needs and contribute to the BBC's delivery of its Mission and Public Purposes. The BBC's submission also refers to other

⁶ Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2018 and 2025

⁷ Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2025

⁸ Ofcom Local News and Media Survey 2025. It is not possible to isolate BBC Radio Foyle responses separately due to sample sizes.

⁹ Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2018 and 2025

¹⁰ Link to BBC submission, page 17, paragraph 3.3

¹¹ Latest RAJAR data for Q1 2025 indicates the average weekly reach is now 439k adults aged 15+.

¹² [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.17.

changes (such as to online news) which we have considered, but do not require a variation to the Operating Licence.

- 4.17 While limited data is available, the BBC says that performance of BBC Radio Foyle has fallen in relation to BBC Radio Ulster, and that it considers Foyle's performance is consistent with the general trend (of declining radio audiences). We note however that it is not possible to say whether the reduction in news and current affairs output on BBC Radio Foyle has contributed to these changes in listening.¹³
- 4.18 Our analysis shows that older audiences tend to rely more on linear broadcast services than younger audiences and, as we noted above, there is an older audience profile for BBC Radio Ulster/ Foyle. As a result, any impact the reduction in the BBC's news and current affairs output is having, is likely to have a greater effect on these older audience groups. However, these audiences are not reliant solely on radio for getting their news; they cite TV as their most important news source and are also increasingly migrating online. We also note that the overall audience numbers for the station are low and therefore the scope for negative impacts for audiences or on delivery of Public Purpose 1 is likely to be very limited.
- 4.19 The BBC is also required to serve all audiences, including younger audiences that rely more on output delivered online. These audiences are also interested in local news and current affairs in Northern Ireland and it is important that the BBC is able to deliver this content to audiences where they are. As set out, the BBC has been subject to significant financial constraints and it has outlined that to be able to deliver more services online, it has needed to reduce spend on linear services to be able to reinvest online.
- 4.20 The BBC says that this reinvestment (discussed further below) has improved its online offering and has also benefitted audiences on BBC Radio Foyle. In 2023 we asked the BBC to explain the approach it had taken to the changes. It told us that targeting some of BBC Radio Foyle's journalistic effort and resource on a news programme about stories in its transmission area would provide added editorial value, and avoid duplication with its region-wide news programme. It said that at the time (i.e. before the changes were made) that many of the same stories were covered by *Good Morning Ulster* (on BBC Radio Ulster) and BBC Radio Foyle's *Breakfast on Foyle* programme. Its analysis showed that the range of purely local stories from inside the Foyle area carried only on *Breakfast on Foyle* typically accounted for only 2-15% of items on any weekday.¹⁴ Its aim was to maximise the impact and value of BBC news services from, for and about from the North West region of Northern Ireland.
- 4.21 Following the changes, the BBC states that on average, it broadcast 1.1 more local stories per hour on *North West Today* than it did on *Breakfast on Foyle*. It also broadcast more stories overall per hour on *North West Today* compared with *Breakfast on Foyle*.¹⁵ We consider this as evidence that this change has the potential to benefit audiences and contribute to the promotion of Public Purpose 1 .

¹³ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.18. The BBC makes this comparison using BBC Sounds data and the proportion of requests for Radio Foyle content vs those made for Radio Ulster/Foyle overall.

¹⁴ BBC response to Ofcom questions, 06 February 2023.

¹⁵ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.18. Analysis of OpenMedia data. The data compares stories broadcast on *Breakfast on Foyle* from January to March 2023 to stories broadcast on *North West Today* from January to March 2025.

Consideration of the other changes to the BBC's news and current affairs output

- 4.22 The BBC previously said that part of the reason for the changes was to improve coverage of the North West of Northern Ireland area on the BBC News Northern Ireland website. Additionally, [the changes](#) aimed to expand and modernise the remit of its news gathering operation in Derry/Londonderry with the aim of delivering more news items from the area and the North West of Northern Ireland more generally for the website and for BBC Radio Ulster.
- 4.23 The BBC notes in its submission that these changes appear to have been successful, as it has seen an increase in take up on the BBC Northern Ireland news website from BBC Radio Foyle following making more content available. It says that in 2024/25, the total number of Foyle stories published increased to 449 (8% increase from 2023/24 and 15% increase from 2022/23). It further highlights that this coincided with a rise in average weekly traffic to 217k (up from 178k in 2023/24 and 160k in 2022/23).¹⁶
- 4.24 In addition, the BBC outlines that the proportion of news stories specifically about the Foyle area compared to the total number of stories covering Northern Ireland as a whole has slightly increased. It says this is also the case for the average Foyle online weekly traffic as a proportion of all Northern Ireland average weekly traffic. It believes that this indicates its strategy to convert audiences from broadcast to digital is working.
- 4.25 We consider that the BBC delivering more local news content online, whilst at the same time delivering focused local news on BBC Radio Foyle, has the potential to benefit audiences now and in the longer term and contributes to the BBC's promotion of Public Purpose 1.

Holding the BBC to account for delivering to all audiences in Northern Ireland

- 4.26 We recognise the importance of ensuring that the BBC effectively serves all audiences across Northern Ireland by providing relevant local news and current affairs. Should the request be approved, we would expect the BBC to continue to monitor the impact of these changes and gather audience feedback to confirm it is meeting their needs. We would expect the BBC to report on performance with its Annual Report. We also note that in its submission, the BBC said it will monitor the performance of the changes to BBC Radio Foyle and its digital news offerings through its standard reporting processes.¹⁷
- 4.27 We are encouraged that the BBC has already shown that it is routinely assessing the impact of its changes, listening to audiences and adapting accordingly, which is reflected by the change the BBC made to increase programming to one hour from January 2024. The BBC told us that this change was in response to listener feedback and development work by the BBC team involved.¹⁸
- 4.28 Our own analysis for the year to March 2024, when the changes had just been implemented, showed that weekly BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle listeners were significantly more satisfied with the BBC than the average adult in Northern Ireland. However, when asked to rate the BBC on '*news coverage of what is going on in my local area*', audiences in Northern Ireland, including listeners to BBC Radio Foyle, rated this element less satisfactorily

¹⁶ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.18.

¹⁷ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.19.

¹⁸ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.16.

compared to other aspects of the BBC's news output.¹⁹ We expect the BBC to reflect on this as it assesses its performance and we will continue to monitor this going forward.

- 4.29 Existing transparency requirements included as part of the Operating Licence will support our monitoring of the BBC's performance. These requirements mean that the BBC must publish, at the same time as it publishes its Annual Plan, the steps it plans to take to provide content of interest and relevance to audiences in Northern Ireland.²⁰ Should we require further information from the BBC to enable us to monitor and assess performance more broadly, we will request it.

Impact on competition

- 4.30 We note that since the changes were implemented, stakeholders have not raised any potential competition concerns with us. In its submission, the BBC states that it does not believe the changes have had any impact on competition. In addition, given the low levels of listening, we would not expect there to be any effects on fair and effective competition.

Provisional conclusions

- 4.31 The BBC needs be able to make changes to its radio and online services as audiences' media habits continue to evolve. This is particularly important given the context of the BBC's financial constraints and that it is required under the Charter and Agreement to deliver to all audiences.
- 4.32 Given the low estimated audience figures to BBC Radio Foyle and the fact that audiences increasingly get their news and current affairs content online, we propose, subject to consultation, to agree to the BBC's request.
- 4.33 We also note that following the changes, BBC Radio Foyle audiences now benefit from an increase in the number of local stories available to them per hour in the new breakfast show. We therefore consider the overall changes have the potential to better meet audience needs.
- 4.34 If we approve the changes, we will closely monitor the BBC's performance in Northern Ireland as set out above.

Our proposed changes to the licence

- 4.35 We are therefore proposing to reduce the hours of BBC Radio Foyle's news and current affairs quota from 1,043 to 710 hours each financial year and for this change to take effect from 1 April 2025.
- 4.36 The exact amendments that we propose, in light of the Request and our assessment, to make to the Operating Licence are presented in Annex 2.

Do you agree with Ofcom's provisional assessment and its proposed changes to the Operating Licence for news and current affairs on BBC Radio Foyle? If not, please explain why, providing appropriate supporting evidence where possible.

¹⁹ Ofcom, BBC Performance Tracker 2022-24

²⁰ [Operating Licence for the BBC's UK Public Services](#), conditions 4.67 and 4.68.

5. BBC Asian Network news and current affairs quota

Background

- 5.1 BBC Asian Network is a radio station providing music, news and entertainment tailored to British Asian audiences available on DAB+ and BBC Sounds. The BBC is required, under Condition 1.16.1 of the Operating Licence, to deliver at least 1,224 hours of news and current affairs on BBC Asian Network each financial year.
- 5.2 In its [Annual Plan 2024/25](#), the BBC set out how it was continuing to review options for clarifying the station brand of Asian Network and refocusing elements of its programming to ensure maximum audience impact for British Asian audiences. It previously noted that the proposed changes may require amendments to its Operating Licence.²¹

The BBC's request

- 5.3 In April 2025, the BBC submitted its request to Ofcom seeking changes to the Operating Licence for its news and current affairs provision on BBC Asian Network. It proposed a reduction in its required broadcast quota from 1,224 hours to 675 hours in each financial year. The proposed change is set out in Annex 2 of this consultation.
- 5.4 The BBC told us that its request has been driven by two main factors: a need to make cost savings, while also aiming to better serve its target audience of young British Asians. It states that, like all parts of the BBC, Asian Network is required to make savings whilst continuing to provide audiences with both value for money and offering news and current affairs programming that is informative, relevant and engaging. It also sets out how a decline in radio listening among younger people necessitates a change in programming to better engage these audiences, who are increasingly turning to on-demand content and digital platforms.²²
- 5.5 The BBC says that reducing the amount of news and current affairs content would allow further investment in more distinctive content, including new music and high-impact speech content. It states in order to meet audience demand, it needs to offer more continuous music from new, UK-based British Asian artists in key slots, offering a distinctive brand of music that audiences can connect with. It says that while it is proposing to reduce the amount of news and current affairs programming, it would implement changes to its news output to make it more impactful and engaging for audiences.²³
- 5.6 The BBC says that BBC Asian Network is an important part of its radio portfolio, in that it provides “implicit representation” for a minority ethnic group in the UK, reporting from and for the community and providing cultural inclusion for audiences across the UK. However, the BBC argues that the station needs to adapt to changing listening habits to remain

²¹ [BBC Annual Plan 2023/24](#), p.43-44.

²² [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.2. and p.3.

²³ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.7. and p.12.

relevant and impactful. It says it needs a schedule which takes advantage of key listening opportunities and delivers content to audiences at times which suit them, as well as programming that can be adapted into formats which support digital listening.²⁴

- 5.7 While only changes impacting the BBC's delivery of its Operating Licence conditions would require approval by Ofcom, the BBC sets out that the reduction in the quota would enable it to make a range of other editorial and scheduling changes, designed to maximise audience impact for British Asian audiences. In summary, and subject to Ofcom agreeing to reduce the news and current affairs quota, the BBC intends to:
- a) Decommission the *Ankur Desai* show (currently broadcast Monday to Thursday from 3pm to 6pm) and its associated titles, *60 Minutes* and *Asian Network News Presents*;
 - b) Commission a new Asian Network talk show, featuring topical and breaking news discussions, in-depth analysis and audience participation, broadcast on Mondays from 8pm to 10pm;
 - c) Maintain regular news through simulcasting news bulletins across the week and *Newsbeat* bulletins tailored for younger listeners at lunchtime (12.45 to 13.00) and drivetime (17.45 to 18.00pm);²⁵
 - d) Commission a new music-focused programme to support new British Asian artists, broadcasting Monday to Friday from 15.00 to 17.45; and
 - e) Retain the business programme, *The Everyday Hustle*.
- 5.8 The BBC also plans to introduce some standalone current affairs programmes on the station. This would not be part of the regular schedule but would contribute around 10 to 20 hours of current affairs / topical speech programming annually.

Context

- 5.9 This section explores the context around the BBC's proposal, including the shift in audiences' media habits. As set out above, the BBC's income has been significantly reduced and it needs to work with less budget while continuing to fulfil its obligations to serve all audiences.

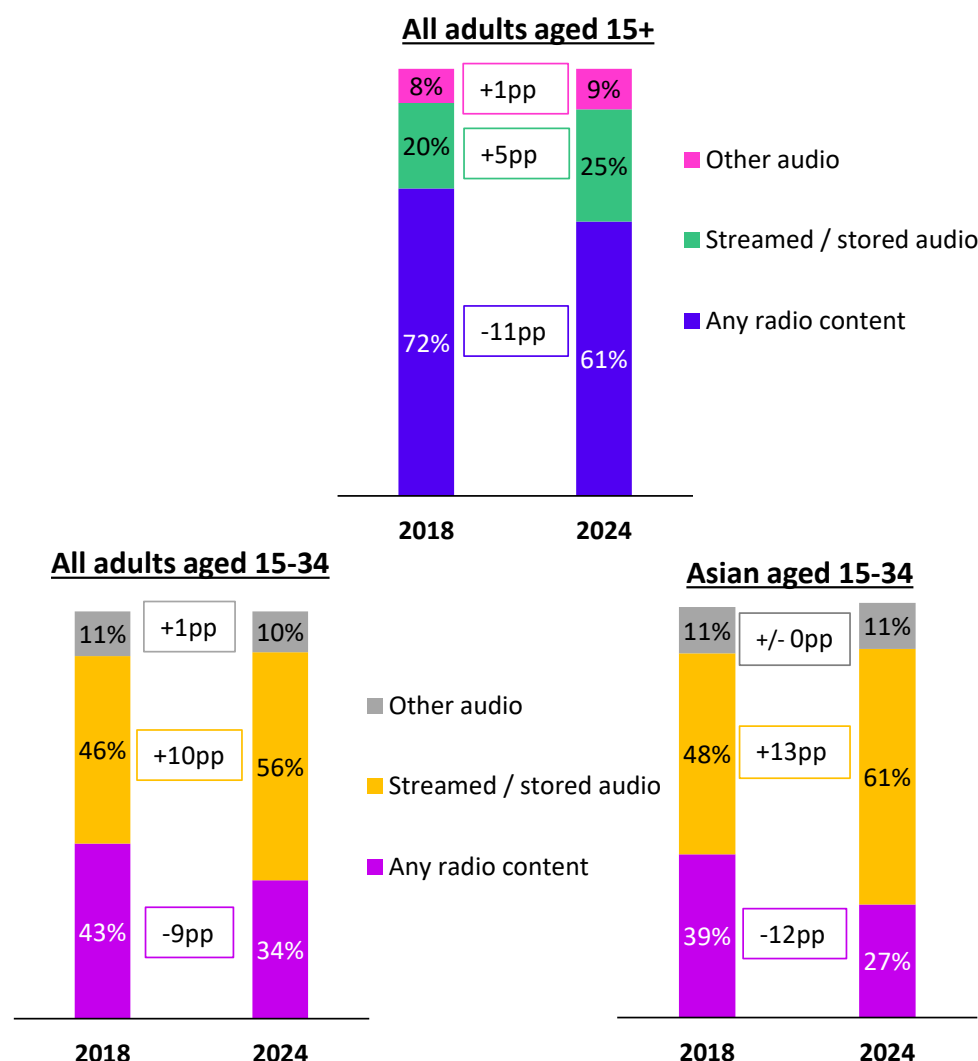
Audience habits continue to evolve: younger audiences in particular are spending less time with live radio

- 1.1 With a continued shift from traditional broadcast platforms to online and on-demand, the BBC must respond by adapting its services to engage audiences where they choose to consume content. Our analysis shows that among 15-34-year-olds, listening to any radio content (as a share of all audio listening) has declined nine percentage points since 2018, while listening to streamed/stored audio has grown 10 percentage points. The figures for younger Asian audiences show a similar direction of travel - listening to radio content fell from 39% in 2018 to 27% in 2024, while listening to streamed/stored audio grew by 13 percentage points, from 48% to 61%.

²⁴ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.12. It also says that outside of Asian music, it says audiences are unaware of what else the station has to offer in terms of speech output, both on linear radio and on BBC Sounds. (BBC Submission, page 4 – research from BBC Virtual In Person audience sessions, December 2022).

²⁵ *Newsbeat* bulletins are simulcast with BBC Radio 1 and BBC Radio 1Xtra. Currently the extended drivetime *Newsbeat* bulletins are only broadcast on Fridays. Under these plans, the BBC would add additional extended drivetime bulletins on Mondays-Thursdays.

Figure 1: Share of weekly audio time by key demographic groups: 2018 vs. 2024



Source: IPA TouchPoints SuperHub 2024

Note: Radio includes live radio on any device, on-demand radio and radio podcasts; Streamed/stored audio includes music streaming, stored digital music and non-radio podcasts; Other audio includes music video used for background listening, music on CDs, vinyl or cassettes and audiobooks

Listening to BBC Asian Network has remained broadly stable among 25-34 year olds but older listeners now account for more of the station's audience

5.10 RAJAR data shows that listening to the station has grown overall since Q1 2022.²⁶ In Q1 2025 it was listened to by an average of 569,000 adults each week, with Asian adults comprising 79% of the audience. Reach among adults aged 25-34 has been relatively stable, although it has fallen among the broader 15-34 age group.²⁷

²⁶ Note: RAJAR suspended fieldwork after Q1 2020 due to lockdown restrictions and resumed in Q3 2021. However, as our analysis applies a 12-month weighting, some diaries included in Q1 2022 figures will be from the pre-Covid period rather than the actual 12 months to the end of Q1 2022.

²⁷ RAJAR. Note that while the BBC sets out that the stations' strategic target audience is 25-34 year olds, we also include analysis for a wider definition of younger audiences (15-34s), given that changes in radio listening are also relevant for young audiences more generally.

- 5.11 Overall, while listening levels can fluctuate among different demographic groups, generally the increase in listening has come from older audiences (see Figure 2). Listeners aged 35+ now account for 63% of the station's audience, compared with 57% in Q1 2022.

Figure 2: Trends in overall weekly reach (000s) of BBC Asian Network

	Q1 2022	Q1 2023	Q1 2024	Q1 2025	Change Q1 '25 vs Q1 '22
Adults 15+	532	458	513	569	7%
... Adults 15-34	230	180	199	210	-9%
... Age 15-24	129	76	110	111	-14%
... Age 25-34	101	105	89	99	-2%
... Age 35-54	228	206	234	280	23%
... Age 55+	74	72	80	79	7%
Asians 15+	418	349	433	452	8%
... Asians 25-34	78	86	70	80	2%

RAJAR Q1 2022 to Q1 2025, 12 month weight.

Younger audiences are more likely to access news through online platforms

- 5.12 Our research also shows that younger audiences, including those aged 25-34, are less likely to get their news through radio listening compared to TV and online. Younger adults are most likely to access news on online platforms, including social media, used by 81% of 16-24 year olds and 80% of 25-34s year olds. At the same time, only 28% of 16-24s and 32% of 25-34s get news through the radio.²⁸
- 5.13 The main news and current affairs programme on the BBC Asian Network, the *Ankur Desai* show, was launched in October 2021 as part of a number of other schedule changes.²⁹ Overall, audiences for that slot are up compared to the first full year of RAJAR data for the new programme, now listened to by an average of 169,000 adults each week, but these audiences are still below those seen prior to this change.³⁰
- 5.14 The BBC also notes in its submission that findings from small-scale qualitative research it conducted in December 2022 suggested that while younger Asian audiences identified BBC Asian Network as a station aimed at them, beyond its Asian music selection, the station's full range of offerings—both on linear radio and BBC Sounds—remained largely unknown, particularly its speech content.³¹

Our assessment and provisional view

Impact on audiences

Reduction of news and current affairs quota

- 5.15 As set out above, the BBC has requested to reduce its Operating Licence quota for news and current affairs on BBC Asian Network as its plans to decommission its weekday (Monday-

²⁸ Ofcom News Consumption Survey, 2025.

²⁹ It is broadcast Monday-Thursday, 15.00-18.00.

³⁰ RAJAR, 12 month weight. It was listened to by 142,000 adults in Q4 2022, the first full year of data since the changes, down from the average of 193,000 in Q3 2021.

³¹ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.4.

Thursday) afternoon news/current affairs programme (*Ankur Desai Show*) and associated titles. The other programming described at paragraph 4.7 would contribute to fulfilling the proposed reduced quota in its place, including a new current affairs slot on Monday evenings. Our role is to assess whether a reduction in this quota would still enable the BBC to serve audiences and contribute to the BBC's delivery of its Mission and Public Purposes.

- 5.16 The BBC aims to increase the appeal of BBC Asian Network to younger audiences, given they are increasingly turning away from radio. Recognising the different habits of younger people, the BBC says it needs to make changes to the station schedule to remain relevant. While listening levels to the station overall have grown versus 2021/22, having recovered from a decline in the interim, increases in listening have tended to come from older listeners.
- 5.17 The proposed slot for the new current affairs programme (20:00-22:00 on Mondays) has lower listening levels than the current daytime slot.³² The BBC states that this newly proposed time slot is a more effective period for long form news and current affairs discussions, that would establish an "appointment to listen" among audiences.³³ While scheduling decisions are a matter for the BBC Board and not Ofcom, we expect the BBC to ensure that it continues to deliver current affairs output to these audiences.
- 5.18 The BBC plans to retain some news during the weekday afternoon slot from 15:00 to 18:00, with a new *Newsbeat* simulcast slot being broadcast each weekday evening during drive time (17:45-18:00). The BBC says that with the younger base of BBC Asian Network listeners, it is important that it maintains a steady news offer that delivers news to audiences strategically. It says this would meet the mood and needs of modern listeners and build retention for the station.³⁴ While this output would not be specifically tailored to the BBC Asian Network audience, it would still provide news focused on serving younger audiences which would contribute to the station's delivery of Public Purpose 1.
- 5.19 We also note that the additional standalone current affairs programmes have the potential to reach additional audiences. The BBC states that this would include scope for investigative reporting through standalone content pieces, requiring long-term planning and investment not currently offered within the standard BBC Asian Network *Newsbeat*. The BBC notes that programming featuring major cultural events has led to performance spikes on BBC Asian Network, illustrating the value of curated content and special broadcasts.³⁵ We think the inclusion of this programming is important as an additional way to serve British Asian audiences with culturally relevant content. It may also have the potential to contribute to increasing satisfaction levels with BBC Asian Network for these audiences.
- 5.20 The reduction in news and current affairs output on BBC Asian Network would mean there would be less news and current affairs output made specifically for British Asian audiences. While the BBC does provide a wide range of news content, including increasingly on online platforms, Asian audiences and minority ethnic audiences overall are less likely to use the BBC for news.³⁶ Given this reduction in output specifically for British Asian audiences, we

³² Listened to by an average of 20,000 adults each week. RAJAR, Q1 2025, 12 month weight.

³³ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.8.

³⁴ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.11.

³⁵ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.11-12.

³⁶ News Consumption Survey 2025, 56% of Asian audiences and 60% of people from minority ethnic groups consume any BBC news - significantly lower than the proportion of white adults (68%). Note, the Asian audiences figure includes Chinese and other Asian participants in addition to those identifying as South Asian.

would expect the BBC to monitor how it is serving these audiences more broadly with its news and current affairs offerings. If the BBC, or Ofcom in its performance monitoring, finds that these audiences become less satisfied with news and current affairs output, we would expect the BBC to make plans to address this.

Other proposed changes to BBC Asian Network

- 5.21 In addition to making the changes outlined above which would impact the amount of news and current affairs output contributing towards its quota, the BBC plans to introduce a new afternoon/drivetime show for BBC Asian Network to replace *Ankur Desai*. It states that this would feature new British Asian music and provide opportunities for UK talent, and would contribute to the delivery of Public Purpose 3.³⁷ This proposal does not require a variation to the Operating Licence given it is an editorial change. However we agree that the BBC needs to continue to find distinctive ways to deliver content which resonates with all audiences.

Holding the BBC to account for delivering to BBC Asian Network audiences

- 5.22 If we were to approve the BBC's proposals, we would expect the BBC to keep under review the impact of the changes and measure audience reaction to ensure it serves BBC Asian audiences with News and Current Affairs output. We would monitor the impact of the changes as part of our BBC performance programme and should we require further information from the BBC to enable us to assess performance in these areas, we would request it.

Impact on competition

- 5.23 In assessing whether to approve changes to the BBC's Operating Licence, we are required to consider the potential impact of the changes on fair and effective competition.
- 5.24 The BBC states in its Request that it does not consider that the proposed changes to BBC Asian Network's schedule would significantly impact other radio stations. It states that there are five major commercial radio stations targeting Asian audiences. These are part of two groups: Sunrise Radio and Lyca Radio.
- 5.25 The BBC notes that BBC Asian Network is the only UK radio station for British Asians that prominently features new British Asian music, whereas Sunrise Radio (available across the UK) and Lyca Radio (serving London audiences) focus on Bollywood music. It notes that Sunrise Radio does not offer standalone news and current affairs programming and Lyca Radio has a single hour of standalone programming for news and current affairs, with the rest of the schedule featuring news and entertainment bulletins.³⁸
- 5.26 The BBC sets out that it views the proposed changes as routine scheduling decisions and adjustments to the genre mix, which do not significantly alter the station's overall character. As a result, the BBC considers these changes to fall outside the scope of further materiality assessment.³⁹ Our view is that reducing the news and current affairs quota on

³⁷ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.12.

³⁸ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.14. It sets out that Sunrise Radio also recently launched Sunrise Smooth in London, while Lyca Radio also broadcasts London-based Lyca Gold, focusing on popular and classic Bollywood songs, with a daily gossip show and news bulletin, but no standalone news and current affairs programmes. In 2023, Lyca expanded to Greater Manchester by acquiring Asian Sounds Radio. This rebranded to Lyca Radio – Greater Manchester in April 2024.

³⁹ [BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), p.15.

BBC Asian Network itself is unlikely to have an adverse effect on fair and effective competition, especially given the differences in output of BBC Asian Network compared with other providers.

Provisional conclusions

- 5.27 We are mindful of the need to ensure that the BBC serves the diverse communities of the UK, that its services are distinctive and that it provides news and information. We have also considered the potential impact of the BBC's proposed changes on fair and effective competition.
- 5.28 We agree that the BBC needs be able to make changes as listening habits continue to evolve, in order to continue to deliver to audiences. This approach also supports the objectives outlined in the Operating Licence, which emphasise the need for greater flexibility in delivering content to audiences where they want to watch and listen. Given the ongoing shift in broadcasting trends towards online platforms — especially among younger audiences and those from minority ethnic groups — based on the assessment set out above, we are minded to approve the BBC's request to reduce the news and current affairs quota for BBC Asian Network, recognising changing audience habits.
- 5.29 If we were to approve these changes, we would closely monitor the BBC's plans for delivering news and current affairs to BBC Asian Network's audience in its Annual Plans and how it reports on performance as part of its annual reporting, including how it delivers news online to British Asian audiences more generally.

Our proposed changes to the licence

- 5.30 In light of the above, we propose to reduce the hours of BBC Asian Network news and current affairs quota from 1,224 to 675 hours each financial year and for this change to take effect from 1 April 2025.
- 5.31 The exact amendments that we propose, in light of the Request and our assessment, to make to the Operating Licence are presented in Annex 2.

Do you agree with Ofcom's provisional assessment and its proposed changes to the Operating Licence for news current affairs on BBC Asian Network?

If not, please explain why, providing appropriate supporting evidence where possible.

A1. Legal Framework

- A1.1 Ofcom's power to regulate the BBC is derived from the Communications Act 2003 (the Act),⁴⁰ which sets out that for the purposes of the carrying out of regulation of the BBC, we will have such powers and duties as may be conferred on us by or under the Royal Charter for the continuance of the British Broadcasting Corporation (the Charter)⁴¹ and the Agreement between the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and the BBC (the Agreement).⁴²
- A1.2 Ofcom's general duties under section 3 of the Act also apply to the exercise of our functions in relation to the BBC.⁴³ These include our principal duty to further the interests of citizens in relation to communications matters, and to further the interests of consumers in relevant markets, where appropriate by promoting competition. In performing our duties, we must have regard to the principles under which regulatory principles must be proportionate, consistent and targeted only at cases in which action is needed. The Act also requires us to have regard, as appropriate, to certain other principles we consider relevant. We consider the following principles in the Act to be relevant to this consultation:
- a) The desirability of promoting the fulfilment of the purposes of public service television broadcasting in the UK;
 - b) The needs of persons with disabilities, of the elderly, and those on low incomes;
 - c) The opinions of consumers in relevant markets and of members of the public generally; and
 - d) The different interests of persons in the different parts of the UK, of the different ethnic communities within the UK and of persons living in rural and urban areas.⁴⁴
- A1.3 Under the Charter, Ofcom is required to have regard, in carrying out its functions in relation to the BBC, to such of the following as appear to us to be relevant in the circumstances:⁴⁵
- a) The object of the BBC to fulfil its Mission⁴⁶ and promote the Public Purposes;
 - b) The desirability of protecting fair and effective competition in the UK; and
 - c) The requirement for the BBC to comply with its general duties.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Section 198 of the Act.

⁴¹ [The Charter](#).

⁴² [The Agreement](#).

⁴³ Article 45(1) of the Charter.

⁴⁴ Section 3(4) of the Act.

⁴⁵ Article 45(2) of the Charter.

⁴⁶ The BBC's mission is to act in the public interest, serving all audiences through the provision of impartial, high-quality and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain (Article 5 of the Charter).

⁴⁷ The BBC's general duties are set out at Articles 9 to 18 of the Charter and include, amongst others, the duty to promote technological innovation, including by focusing on technological innovation to support the delivery of the UK Public Services. The Agreement also imposes certain general obligations on the BBC. These include, at Clause 61, a requirement for the BBC to do all that is reasonably practicable to ensure that viewers, listeners and other users (as the case may be) are able to access the UK Public Services that are intended for them, or elements of their content, in a range of convenient and cost effective ways which are available or might

- A1.4 Out of the five Public Purposes,⁴⁸ the following are particularly relevant to this consultation:⁴⁹
- Public Purpose 1: To provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them;
 - Public Purpose 3: To show the most creative, highest quality and distinctive output and service; and
 - Public Purpose 4: To reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom's nations and regions and, in doing so, support the creative economy across the United Kingdom.
- A1.5 We note that, by virtue of Article 20(3)(d) of the Charter, the BBC is required to set performance measures (and targets for those measures where appropriate) and to collect such information as is necessary to assess the performance of the UK Public Services⁵⁰ in fulfilling the mission and promoting the public services.⁵¹
- A1.6 Separately, by virtue of Article 46(4) of the Charter, Ofcom may set performance measures (further to those set by the BBC), and may collect such information as is necessary, to assess the performance of the UK Public Services in fulfilling the mission and promoting the public purposes.⁵² In addition, Ofcom may require the BBC to collect such information as we consider necessary for the performance measures.⁵³
- A1.7 In addition to setting performance measures, we are required to set an Operating Licence (the Operating Licence) containing a set of regulatory conditions with which the BBC must comply.⁵⁴ The Charter states that the Operating Licence must contain regulatory conditions Ofcom considers appropriate for requiring the BBC to:
- a) Fulfil its Mission and promote the Public Purposes;
 - b) Secure the provision of distinctive output and services; and
 - c) Secure that audiences in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and England are well served.⁵⁵
- A1.8 Schedule 2 of the Agreement contains some further rules regarding the regulatory conditions that Ofcom must impose through the Operating Licence.

become available in the future. These could include (for example) broadcasting, streaming or making content available on-demand, whether by terrestrial, satellite, cable or broadband networks (fixed or wireless) or via the internet.

⁴⁸ Article 6 of the Charter.

⁴⁹ The BBC's delivery of its fifth Public Purpose, reflecting the UK to the world, will be achieved primarily through the BBC World Service and BBC Worldwide. The second Operating Licence does not cover the BBC World Service; responsibility for setting a Licence for the BBC World Service lies with the BBC (clause 34 of the Agreement).

⁵⁰ The UK Public Services are set out in a list maintained and published by the BBC: [List of the UK Public Services](#).

⁵¹ Clause 14(1) of the Agreement.

⁵² Clause 14(2) of the Agreement.

⁵³ Clause 14(4) of the Agreement.

⁵⁴ Under the Charter and the Agreement, Ofcom is required to set an Operating Licence for the BBC's UK Public Services.

⁵⁵ Article 46(3) of the Charter.

- A1.9 We may amend the Operating Licence following consultation with the BBC and any person we consider appropriate.
- A1.10 In addition to setting an Operating Licence, we are also required to publish an operating framework.⁵⁶ The operating framework is a series of documents that cover the full range of our regulatory duties in the three areas of content standards, competition, and performance. The operating framework for BBC regulation includes the 'Procedures for setting and amending the Operating Licence' (the 'Procedures')⁵⁷ which explain how we set and administer the Operating Licence regime and the procedures to be followed.
- A1.11 The Procedures set out considerations to which Ofcom will have regard when setting or amending the Operating Licence, including the relevant legal framework, enforceable nature of Operating Licence conditions and the desirability of ensuring that regulatory conditions are clear and capable of enforcement in the event of non-compliance.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Article 46(2) of the Charter and Clause 5(1) of the Agreement.

⁵⁷ Ofcom, [Holding the BBC to account for delivering for audiences: Procedures for setting and amending the operating licence](#), 2017.

⁵⁸ [The Procedures](#), paragraphs 1.11 to 1.20

A2. Proposed amended Operating Licence conditions

A2.1 This Annex sets out the existing Operating Licence conditions concerning news and current affairs on BBC Radio Foyle and BBC Asian Network; and contrasts this with the proposed amended conditions.

BBC Radio Foyle

A2.2 The existing condition **4.66.2** in the Operating Licence reads as follows:

- a) [the BBC must ensure that] in each Financial Year at least **1,043 hours** are allocated to news and current affairs programmes (including repeats) on Radio Foyle.

A2.3 We propose to amend the condition so it reads as follows:

- a) [the BBC must ensure that] in each Financial Year at least **710 hours** are allocated to news and current affairs programmes (including repeats) on Radio Foyle.

BBC Asian Network

A2.4 The existing condition **1.16.1** in the Operating Licence reads as follows:

- a) [In respect of BBC Asian Network], the BBC must ensure that at least **1,224 hours** are allocated to news and current affairs programming in each Financial Year.

A2.5 We propose to amend the condition so it reads as follows:

- a) [In respect of BBC Asian Network], the BBC must ensure that at least **675 hours** are allocated to news and current affairs programming in each Financial Year.

A3. Equality Impact Assessment

- A3.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the “2010 Act”) imposes a duty on Ofcom, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct related to protected characteristics under the 2010 Act.⁵⁹ The 2010 Act also requires Ofcom to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share specified protected characteristics and persons who do not.
- A3.2 Ofcom has separate but complementary duties under Northern Ireland’s equality legislation.⁶⁰ This requires Ofcom to screen policies for their impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations in each of the nine equality categories identified for Northern Ireland.
- A3.3 To help us comply with our duties under the 2010 Act and the 1998 Act, we assess the impact of our proposals on persons sharing protected characteristics and in particular whether they may discriminate against such persons or impact on equality of opportunity or good relations.
- A3.4 While the BBC’s proposals would reduce the amount of News and Current Affairs on BBC Asian Network and BBC Radio Foyle, these changes are driven by the BBC seeking to better serve audience needs and as a result of investing more in online and digital services at a time of significant financial constraints. We consider that overall, the proposals are likely to have a neutral to positive impact on audiences of BBC Asian Network and BBC Radio Foyle for the reasons set out in this consultation.
- A3.5 We consider that some older audiences may be potentially adversely impacted given some older audiences prefer to obtain their news from radio services. However, we consider this potentially negative impact is likely to be mitigated. The majority of older audiences consume news via TV and are increasingly migrating online. This would lessen the impact of the changes.
- A3.6 It is possible that the proposals may have a positive impact on some audience groups. For example, the changes to BBC Asian network are designed to better deliver for younger audiences by creating more distinctive content, remixing the schedule so that British Asians can connect with this new content when is most appropriate for them, and delivering that content on platforms that are most appropriate for them.
- A3.7 In respect of the BBC Radio Foyle proposals, we note that the changes the BBC has made have already led to increases in the number of stories about the north-west of Northern Ireland on the service. We consider that the BBC delivering more local news content online, whilst at the same time delivering focused local news on BBC Radio Foyle, has the potential to benefit audiences and may help promote good relations between people from different communities.
- A3.8 We expect the BBC to review the impact of any changes on audiences, to ensure that where necessary it continues to adapt to better serve them. We would continue to assess

⁵⁹ These protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

⁶⁰ Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

the BBC's performance and report on this as part of our Annual Report on the BBC. We would welcome responses to our consultation on the potential equality impacts.

- A3.9 Ofcom can provide information in a variety of formats on request, e.g. accessible PDF, large print, easy read, audio recording or braille. If you let us know what information you require and in what format, we will consider the request and respond within 21 days.

A4. Responding to this consultation

How to respond

- A4.1 Ofcom would like to receive views and comments on the issues raised in this document, by 5pm on 26 June 2025.
- A4.2 You can download a response form from <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/public-service-broadcasting/changes-to-bbc-radio-foyle-and-bbc-asian-network>. You can return this by email or post to the address provided in the response form.
- A4.3 If your response is a large file, or has supporting charts, tables or other data, please email it to BBCOLChanges@ofcom.org.uk, as an attachment in Microsoft Word format, together with the cover sheet. This email address is for this consultation only and will not be valid after 26 June 2025.
- A4.4 Responses may alternatively be posted to the address below, marked with the title of the consultation:
- Content Policy Team
Ofcom
Riverside House
2A Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA
- A4.5 We welcome responses in formats other than print, for example an audio recording or a British Sign Language video. To respond in BSL:
- > send us a recording of you signing your response. This should be no longer than 5 minutes. Suitable file formats are DVDs, wmv or QuickTime files; or
 - > upload a video of you signing your response directly to YouTube (or another hosting site) and send us the link.
- A4.6 We will publish a transcript of any audio or video responses we receive (unless your response is confidential)
- A4.7 We do not need a paper copy of your response as well as an electronic version. We will acknowledge receipt of a response submitted to us by email.
- A4.8 You do not have to answer all the questions in the consultation if you do not have a view; a short response on just one point is fine. We also welcome joint responses.
- A4.9 It would be helpful if your response could include direct answers to the questions asked in the consultation document. The questions are listed at Annex X. It would also help if you could explain why you hold your views, and what you think the effect of Ofcom's proposals would be.
- A4.10 If you want to discuss the issues and questions raised in this consultation, please contact BBCOLChanges@ofcom.org.uk.

Confidentiality

- A4.11 Consultations are more effective if we publish the responses before the consultation period closes. This can help people and organisations with limited resources or familiarity with the issues to respond in a more informed way. So, in the interests of transparency and good regulatory practice, and because we believe it is important that everyone who is interested in an issue can see other respondents' views, we usually publish responses on the Ofcom website at regular intervals during and after the consultation period.
- A4.12 If you think your response should be kept confidential, please specify which part(s) this applies to and explain why. Please send any confidential sections as a separate annex. If you want your name, address, other contact details or job title to remain confidential, please provide them only in the cover sheet, so that we don't have to edit your response.
- A4.13 If someone asks us to keep part or all of a response confidential, we will treat this request seriously and try to respect it. But sometimes we will need to publish all responses, including those that are marked as confidential, in order to meet legal obligations.
- A4.14 To fulfil our predislosure duty, we may share a copy of your response with the relevant government department before we publish it on our website.
- A4.15 Please also note that copyright and all other intellectual property in responses will be assumed to be licensed to Ofcom to use. Ofcom's intellectual property rights are explained further in our Terms of Use.

Next steps

- A4.16 Following this consultation period, Ofcom plans to publish a statement in XXXX 20xx.
- A4.17 If you wish, you can register to receive mail updates alerting you to new Ofcom publications.

Ofcom's consultation processes

- A4.18 Ofcom aims to make responding to a consultation as easy as possible. For more information, please see our consultation principles in Annex x.
- A4.19 If you have any comments or suggestions on how we manage our consultations, please email us at consult@ofcom.org.uk. We particularly welcome ideas on how Ofcom could more effectively seek the views of groups or individuals, such as small businesses and residential consumers, who are less likely to give their opinions through a formal consultation.
- A4.20 If you would like to discuss these issues, or Ofcom's consultation processes more generally, please contact the corporation secretary:
- Corporation Secretary
Ofcom
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA
Email: corporationsecretary@ofcom.org.uk

A5. Ofcom's consultation principles

Ofcom has seven principles that it follows for every public written consultation:

Before the consultation

1. Wherever possible, we will hold informal talks with people and organisations before announcing a big consultation, to find out whether we are thinking along the right lines. If we do not have enough time to do this, we will hold an open meeting to explain our proposals, shortly after announcing the consultation.

During the consultation

2. We will be clear about whom we are consulting, why, on what questions and for how long.
3. We will make the consultation document as short and simple as possible, with an overview of no more than two pages. We will try to make it as easy as possible for people to give us a written response.
4. When setting the length of the consultation period, we will consider the nature of our proposals and their potential impact. We will always make clear the closing date for responses.
5. A person within Ofcom will be in charge of making sure we follow our own guidelines and aim to reach the largest possible number of people and organisations who may be interested in the outcome of our decisions. Ofcom's Consultation Champion is the main person to contact if you have views on the way we run our consultations.
6. If we are not able to follow any of these principles, we will explain why.

After the consultation

7. We think it is important that everyone who is interested in an issue can see other people's views, so we usually publish the responses on our website at regular intervals during and after the consultation period. After the consultation we will make our decisions and publish a statement explaining what we are going to do, and why, showing how respondents' views helped to shape these decisions.

A6. Consultation coversheet

Basic details

Consultation title:

To (Ofcom contact):

Name of respondent:

Representing (self or organisation/s):

Address (if not received by email):

Confidentiality

Please tick below what part of your response you consider is confidential, giving your reasons why

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| > Nothing | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| > Name/contact details/job title | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| > Whole response | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| > Organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| > Part of the response | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you selected 'Part of the response', please specify which parts:

If you want part of your response, your name or your organisation not to be published, can Ofcom still publish a reference to the contents of your response (including, for any confidential parts, a general summary that does not disclose the specific information or enable you to be identified)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Declaration

I confirm that the correspondence supplied with this cover sheet is a formal consultation response that Ofcom can publish. However, in supplying this response, I understand that Ofcom may need to publish all responses, including those which are marked as confidential, in order to meet legal obligations. If I have sent my response by email, Ofcom can disregard any standard e-mail text about not disclosing email contents and attachments.

Ofcom aims to publish responses at regular intervals during and after the consultation period. If your response is non-confidential (in whole or in part), and you would prefer us to publish your response only once the consultation has ended, please tick here.

Name

Signed (if hard copy)

A7. Consultation questions

Please tell us how you came across about this consultation.

- ☐ Email from Ofcom
- ☐ Saw it on social media
- ☐ Found it on Ofcom's website
- ☐ Found it on another website
- ☐ Heard about it on TV or radio
- ☐ Read about it in a newspaper or magazine
- ☐ Heard about it at an event
- ☐ Somebody told me or shared it with me
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Question 1: BBC Radio Foyle

Do you agree with Ofcom's provisional assessment and its proposed changes to the Operating Licence for news and current affairs on BBC Radio Foyle? If not, please explain why, providing appropriate supporting evidence where possible.

Question 2: BBC Asian Network

Do you agree with Ofcom's provisional assessment and its proposed changes to the Operating Licence for news current affairs on BBC Asian Network? If not, please explain why, providing appropriate supporting evidence where possible.