



An Equity Response to the consultation on the new BBC Digital Service
Application (BBC THREE)

1. Equity, as the union representing 37,000 actors, singers, dancers and other performers working in the UK, we have a strong interest in the proposals outlined in the BBC's application for BBC Three as it will have a direct effect on the work available for our members.
2. After considering the application in full, Equity largely welcomes the outlined proposals. However, we would welcome confirmation that the new channel will not lead to a deterioration of the range and quality of programming on BBC 1 and 2 as a result of this new commitment to BBC Three. We cannot but have some doubts that the BBC is able to afford to resource these new channels without some detrimental affect on the two terrestrial channels. While the majority of viewers choose not to switch to digital, it is important to maintain investment in programming on those channels not specifically digital.
3. We note that the channel will be primarily targeted at young adults, principally those aged 25 – 34, although it is expected to also attract viewers at either side of that age range, and that it is to replace evening schedule on BBC Choice. Equity welcomes the decision to make the channel almost a wholly entertainment and drama based channel (only 15% of scheduling will be taken up by other factual genres), and that 90% of the output is homegrown in the UK and around 80% is newly commissioned for the channel. As you are sure to be aware, this type of programming is a significant source of employment for our members and we are encouraged by this decision.
4. Additionally, Equity welcomes the BBC's continued commitment to high quality, original programming that will be incorporated into its outside London and the South East commitment.
5. Equity is particularly interested in the commitments made to developing new talent as part of the original, high quality and innovative programming planned for the channel. A commitment to "promoting new talent with risk taking and innovative programming" is certainly encouraging. Equity welcomes any decision taken by the BBC producing new, innovative and homegrown entertainment and drama programmes using both established and new on screen talent. Our members are mainly likely to be involved in the entertainment and drama programming which, we note, will constitute 85% of the programming.

6. We acknowledge the commitment in the application that entertainment programmes will focus on creating new shows and on genres rarely tackled by commercial channels, such as homegrown scripted comedy. This decision not to recycle archive material and focus on developing new programmes will ensure that new performers are given the opportunity to establish themselves. This is recognised in the application by the proposal for BBC Three to act as a showcase for on screen new talent.
7. The drama programming outlines are similarly welcome. Our members will benefit from the commitment to high quality, well-funded (p28), original and challenging drama. We note with interest the commitment for the channel to act as a forum for established stars to try new things as well as to work alongside new talent. However, we believe this proposal should not be restricted only to BBC Three and should extend to all BBC channels.
8. While Equity largely welcomes the proposals, we do have concerns about the vagueness of these commitments and would request that the BBC provide detailed plans outlining how these aims will be met. We note that the proposals identify six areas for talent development (writing, film making, presenters, animation, comedy and R&B music), as part of their annual talent initiative. While the development of on screen talent is mentioned elsewhere, this specific annual initiative makes no mention of performers. Page 38 (5.7) of the proposal does identify actors and presenters amongst the new talent, but we are concerned that the BBC has not outlined how they intend to develop and support established and new performers. The application makes a significant commitment to new drama and entertainment and we would therefore argue that it is essential for specific entrance and training schemes for performers to be identified by the proposals.
9. We also note that the commitment to recruiting new talent from all backgrounds (p42). Equity hopes this will not only mean regardless of race, sex, age or sexuality, but also from across the United Kingdom as a whole. As the programming for BBC Three will be multi-ethnic, multicultural, representative of the nations and regions, this should transcend to those supported as new, or established, on screen talent. Again, we believe this commitment should not be unique to BBC Three and should apply to all BBC channels.
10. We understand from page 21 that *Oliver & Ohlbaum Associates* estimate that a short-term injection of more than £80m is needed to support UK independent production, which could in turn increase the amount of indigenous programme supply to the market. Equity believes that this investment (if provided by BBC Three) should include a recognition of the contribution of on-screen talent to programming, and that that recognition should be included in any calculations made for investment.
11. Finally, Equity would welcome the commitment from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport that, if the proposals are accepted, BBC Three is evaluated in a year's time against the aims set out in their application. The plans are ambitious, but welcome and it is therefore important that the BBC

meets its commitments, especially in the absence of greater details in their original application.

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