

1. Do you agree that securing plural sources of impartial news for the Nations, locally and in the regions should be a key priority?

Yes	x
No	
Don't know	

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

Trinity Mirror is one of Britain's biggest originators of news for the nations, locally and in the regions, with five national titles, more than 120 local newspapers and 400 websites.

The group owns the best-read newspapers in Scotland - the award-winning Daily Record and Sunday Mail. In Wales, key titles include the South Wales Echo and the Western Mail. And in the English regions we publish iconic newspapers such as the Liverpool Echo, the Newcastle Chronicle and the Birmingham Mail. In the majority of our print markets we reach over 70% of British adults each week.

Online, we are at the forefront of our industry, launching websites to complement our newspaper titles, engaging with our loyal audiences using the latest social networking tools, and embracing citizen-journalism with our pioneering hyperlocal news sites.

We agree that it is essential for audiences to have plural sources of impartial, independent news, across print, TV, radio and online.

A commitment to high quality, independent, news that informs and engages our audiences is central to what we do. Our newspapers and websites are at the heart of their communities and play a vital role in strengthening democracy. Our journalists investigate the issues that matter to people and represent their interests. Their reporting holds institutions to account - whether it is the Scottish Government or the local town council.

Plurality requires an active and vibrant commercial news sector. Without it, our democracy would be weakened. For example, local authority publications which masquerade as newspapers are no replacement for the real thing. They do not perform the vital role of a free press, that of investigating and holding to account. We are disappointed that the Audit Commission has said that it must limit the scope of its enquiry into this practice and believe that urgent action is required to address the issue.

Similarly, it cannot be in the public interest for one taxpayer-funded organisation, the BBC, to be the sole provider of local television news across the country. We value the BBC as a national treasure, but it cannot be left as the only guardian of local PSB news in the UK.

If the Channel 3 licensees are released of their local news obligations, they are likely to cease production and the BBC will be left as the sole local TV news provider. We believe this loss of plurality would be detrimental to our democracy. It would also be highly unpopular, as illustrated by the strength of public anger in the Scottish Borders region, where Channel 3 local news is now provided by ITV in the North of England.

We agree securing plural sources of impartial television news is fundamental to local democracy and a key priority for the Government.

2. Do you agree that sustainable, impartial news in the Nations, locally and in the regions is likely to require some top-up public funding?

Yes	x
No	
Don't know	

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

Trinity Mirror welcomes the proposal to award contracts to Independently Financed News Consortia (IFNC) to provide local news and we are actively involved in conversations with potential partners. We look forward to working with other media companies with complementary skills and abilities and mining a rich seam of local news which reaches across TV, online and in print and grabs the attention of our local audiences.

We agree that the new IFNCs will require top-up public funding. Television news is an inherently unprofitable activity which will only be undertaken by the commercial sector if compelled to do so (as is currently the case under the terms of the Channel 3 licences) or if there is public subsidy to cover the extensive costs of production. We believe it is critical to support the IFNCs with public funding, while enabling consortia to run on a commercial basis to encourage innovation and the development of commercial revenue streams.

As the Government has noted, the commercial media sector is under intense pressure caused by declining advertising revenues and changes in audience behaviour, and this is already leading to a loss of plurality in news provision as media companies are forced to scale back their operations. Clearly, the newspaper industry has been hard hit by the recession. A contributory factor has been the loss of public notice advertising and competition from local authority publications, and we believe that urgent action is required to address these issues.

However, we do not advocate state aid to newspapers or taxpayers' money being used to bail out failing companies or fund non-PSB services. Due to the actions taken by our management team to restructure our business, and continued investment online, we believe in the resilience of our business model. But in the absence of any viable business model for regional television news, public funding will be essential to support the IFNCs.

3. Do you agree that the Television Licence Fee should be used to support impartial news in the Nations, locally and in the regions in addition to BBC services?

Yes	
No	
Don't know	x

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

Trinity Mirror supports the proposal to award contracts to IFNCs for the provision of local television news, and we agree with the Government that IFNCs will require public funding. We would have no objection to the use of the Television Licence Fee to support IFNCs.

4. Do you agree that any funding within a contained contestable element of the television licence fee not required for impartial news should potentially be available to fund other forms of essential public service content, or should such funding be limited to news?

Yes	
No	
Don't know	x

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

Trinity Mirror supports the proposal to award contracts to IFNCs for the provision of local television news, and we agree with the Government that IFNCs will require public funding. In the event that the public funding originates from a contained contestable element of the Television Licence Fee, we would have no objection to the use of leftover funds for other purposes.

5. Are there alternative funding mechanisms that you believe would deliver the above objectives more effectively?

Yes	
No	
Don't know	x

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

Trinity Mirror supports the proposal to award contracts to IFNCs for the provision of local television news, and we agree with the Government that IFNCs will require public funding. We do not have any alternative funding mechanisms to propose.

6. Do you agree with the proposal to set a maximum percentage of Television Licence Fee revenue which could be set aside as a contained contestable element?

Yes	
No	
Don't know	x

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

Trinity Mirror supports the proposal to award contracts to IFNCs for the provision of local television news, and we agree with the Government that IFNCs will require public funding. As long as the IFNCs are adequately funded for the duration of the contract we would have no objection to the above proposal.

7. Do you agree that amending the BBC Agreement could provide the necessary protection to the BBC's future funding and independence?

Yes	
No	
Don't know	x

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

Trinity Mirror supports the proposal to award contracts to IFNCs for the provision of local television news, and we agree with the Government that IFNCs will require public funding. In the event that the funding originates from a contained contestable element of the Television Licence Fee, we do not see how this would jeopardise the BBC's future funding and independence.

8. Do you agree that the use of any contained contestable element within the Television Licence Fee should be restricted to the public purposes set out in the BBC Charter?

Yes	
No	
Don't know	x

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

Trinity Mirror supports the proposal to award contracts to IFNCs for the provision of local television news, and we agree with the Government that IFNCs will require public funding. In the event that the funding originates from a contained contestable element of the Television Licence Fee, we would not object to the use of this funding falling under the governance rules of the Public Purposes, as long as this does not conflict with the commercial status of the IFNCs.