

RADIOCENTRE RESPONSE TO BBC TRUST SERVICE REVIEW OF NATIONAL SPEECH RADIO SERVICES
(RADIO 4, RADIO 4 EXTRA, RADIO 5 LIVE, RADIO 5 LIVE SPORTS EXTRA)

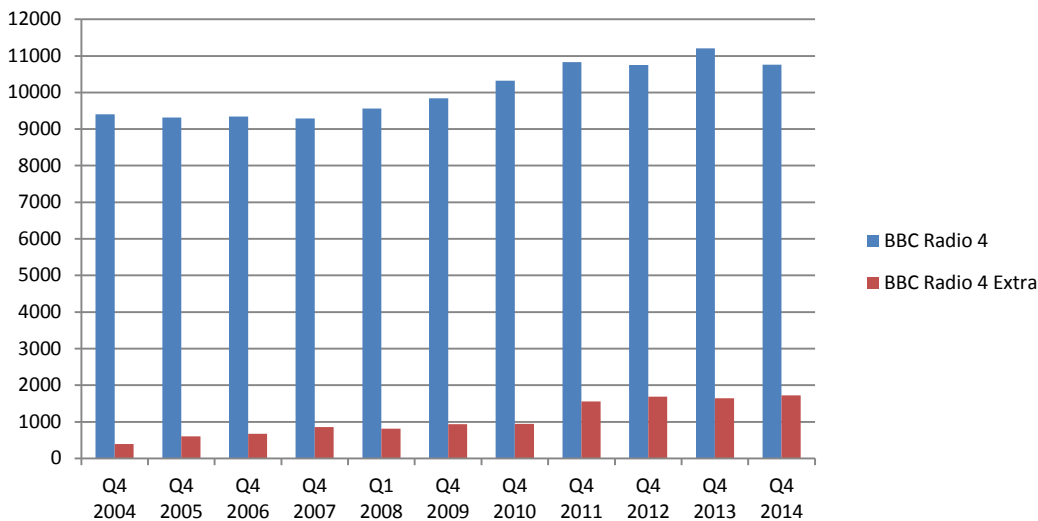
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1. The BBC makes a vital contribution to speech radio in the UK.** Its services generally deliver a high degree of public value and provide world leading journalism, sport and arts coverage. The range and quality of this output is good for listeners and good for radio.
- 2. The BBC's dominance in UK speech radio means that it has a responsibility to be distinctive.** BBC services still account for around 80% of listening to national speech radio services, despite the recent strong performance of commercial news talk station LBC and the growth of talkSPORT. When compared to commercial radio it has access to vastly superior funding and resources, as well as national spectrum and cross promotional opportunities. It should use these advantages responsibly and continue to focus on areas where it adds most value and is truly distinctive, such as national and international newsgathering, drama, comedy, investigative journalism and a broad range and depth of sports coverage.
- 3. Currently most of the content on Radio 4 and 5 Live remains distinctive from the wider radio market.** In general the day-to-day output of these stations, as well as their style and tone, is different to the approach adopted by most commercial stations. This means that licence-fee payers are well served for speech radio. When BBC services use the funding made available to them to produce public service content, it strengthens the quality of the radio industry as a whole. We would urge the Trust to ensure that this remains the focus of these services.
- 4. The performance of these services should be measured primarily by delivery of the BBC's public purposes not the size of the audience.** Radio audiences will always fluctuate, whether due to short term factors (schedule changes, new presenters) or growing competition from commercial radio and on-demand audio. BBC speech radio must be focussed on producing content of the highest possible standard for the long term. In the case of Radio 4 this means ensuring the highest standards of journalism, arts and culture output. For 5 Live it requires high quality news, current affairs and sport coverage, rather than adopting more populist approaches in the pursuit of larger audiences.
- 5. The BBC could do more to clarify the roles of (and need for) separate digital-only services.** While Radio 4 Extra has grown in popularity it appears to be focussed increasingly on repeats rather than original content. 5 Live Sports Extra was conceived as a spill over service for sports commentaries and should remain as such.
- 6. The BBC should examine ways of enabling its speech content to be re-used, either by other BBC networks or by commercial broadcasters.** There is a wide variety of content that has been broadcast previously on Radio 4 or 5 Live (and potentially Radio 4 Extra) that could be re-purposed and featured on other BBC radio stations. In addition we would support efforts to make BBC speech content available so it could be re-broadcast on commercial radio or online.
- 7. The strength of BBC speech radio output provides an opportunity to drive digital listening.** Both Radio 4 and 5 Live have relatively high digital audiences. For 5 Live this has even prompted a discussion about the possibility of setting a target date for relinquishing its AM frequency. For Radio 4 there is a question about whether it could make better use of its resources to grow online listening.

RADIO 4 AND 4 EXTRA

8. Despite increasing competition for listeners' attention, Radio 4 continues to be an essential part of the UK cultural landscape. It makes a disproportionately high contribution to the BBC's overall mission to inform, educate and entertain. Its high audience reach and regular awards hauls are testament to this success.
9. Radio 4 is the most expensive radio station to operate in the UK, with a content budget of £90m. However Radio 4 does provide extensive news, journalism, documentaries, drama and comedy – all of which are expensive to produce. It also appears that it is a successful investment, as it continues to sound unlike any other radio station and reports Appreciation Index (AI) scores that are higher than the average for BBC radio¹.
10. The variety available on both Radio 4 and 4 Extra continues to attract significant combined audiences of around 11 million each week. This has grown significantly in recent years and it is worth considering the extent of the changes in audience reach over the past ten years (below).

Figure 2: Audience reach of Radio 4 and 4 Extra 2004-2014 (000's)



11. This increase in reach means that the total audience for Radio 4 was around 10.8 million in Q4 2014 compared to 9.4 million in Q4 2004. In addition 4 Extra has grown strongly since its rebrand from BBC 7 in 2011 and is one of the biggest digital only stations in the UK with 1.7m listeners, compared to less than a million only four years ago. Radio 4 also remains the most listened to in the highly competitive London market (with 15% share) and last year the audience for the *Today* programme moved ahead of the *Radio 1 Breakfast Show* for the first time in 10 years². Both Radio 4 and 4 Extra also continue to feature prominently in the UK podcast charts.
12. While these audience figures appear to demonstrate an enduring appeal for the unique output provided by Radio 4 and 4 Extra, it is also important to emphasise that **the performance of BBC radio services should not be measured primarily on audience reach and share**. Instead it should focus on the delivery of the BBC's public purposes and the service licence conditions.

¹ BBC, [Audience Information](#), July – September 2014, p. 8.

² Alasdair Glennie, 'Radio 4 pulls in more listeners than Radio 1 as Today programme thrashed Nick Grimshaw in breakfast battle', [The Daily Mail](#), 24 October 2013.

Sustaining citizenship

13. **Radio 4 continues to represent a reliable source of news and current affairs in the best traditions of public service broadcasting.** It delivers high quality, distinctive news programming which would be extremely difficult for the commercial sector to replicate. It continues to strive to break ground with new content and features the very best broadcasting talent.
14. The *Today* programme is the flagship of Radio 4's news offering. It not only reports the news but often sets the news agenda. The BBC has a duty to report matters of national and international importance, consistently and objectively. Radio 4 fulfils this role very effectively overall and programmes such as *Today* continue to excel in providing this high quality content.
15. Radio 4 must ensure that it maintains its world-class reputation for high-end, distinctive and intelligent journalism. Therefore it is important that any budget cuts required by BBC News are derived from efficiency savings as much as possible. This commitment to quality should also be built on impartiality and compliance with the BBC's editorial guidelines. As recent research for the BBC Trust revealed, impartiality in news and current affairs remains a high priority for licence fee payers with 86% agreeing that this is important³. **News reporting on Radio 4 must continue to uphold these principles and not rely too heavily on opinion pieces or listener contributions.**

Stimulating creativity and cultural excellence

16. Radio 4 and 4 Extra are able to play a major role in expanding the cultural horizons of their audience. The wide range of drama output on these networks (including plays, serials and adaptations) are an important element of the overall theatrical output on the BBC. Many of the shows and talent featured have gone on to be world renowned. Radio 4 must continue this investment in original content, providing support for drama, book readings and comedy.
17. Radio 4 broadcasts more than 180 hours of original comedy each year, ranging from quizzes and panel shows to stand-up, sketch shows and sitcoms. The station is rightfully seen as the home of comedy on the BBC, and shows such as *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue* and *Friday Night Comedy* are staples of British comedy culture which have enduring appeal. *Friday Night Comedy* is the most downloaded UK podcast in history⁴. This is a remarkable feat considering the range of podcasts available, including those promoted by the BBC's national music stations.
18. **There is an opportunity to use 4 Extra to push the creative boundaries further, by featuring more new and original speech output.** The station has grown in popularity and audience since it started to benefit from cross promotion and marketing support after changing its name from BBC 7 in 2011. However, the nature of its public service role could be clearer, supported by a move away from broadcasting repeats to more original content.
19. 4 Extra should be a station where audiences know they can find new talent which is able to experiment and develop, before progressing to national stations like Radio 4 and Radio 2. This model would be similar to the way in which television comedy has progressed from BBC Three to BBC 1 or BBC 2. As well as providing a valuable nurturing environment for new shows and talent, this relationship would also strengthen established ties between national networks which only currently exist in the scheduling of the BBC Comedy Awards⁵.

³ ICM Unlimited, [Future Priorities for the BBC: An Audience View](#), February 2015, p. 7.

⁴ Tom Eames, 'Chris Moyles, The Archers among BBC's most-downloaded podcasts', [Digital Spy](#), October 15 2014.

⁵ Roy Martin, 'Radio 2 encourages listeners go digital', [Radio Today](#), 23 May 2013.

20. In our response to the BBC Music Radio Review, RadioCentre highlighted Radio 2's failure to meet its considerable comedy commitments effectively. In audience research conducted for RadioCentre, only 11% of the Radio 2 audience associated the station with comedy⁶. Much of this is down to a lack of creative risk taking to shake up an established schedule, particularly when audience numbers are higher during peak times.
21. We understand that introducing small fixed comedy 'shorts' into the prime-time Radio 2 schedule would be a radical step for the station, but any perceived risk could be reduced by allowing this content to first be tested on 4 Extra before it is edited and repackaged for mainstream audiences elsewhere.
- 22. More could be done to adapt high quality Radio 4 content for use on other BBC stations.** Comedy is really only one example of how content from Radio 4 (or 4 Extra) could be used more effectively across the BBC's networks. It is not difficult to see how extracts from news programmes, documentaries or particular types of radio drama could also be re-packaged and used effectively on other stations (whether Radio 1 and Radio 2) to help broaden the range and distinctiveness of those services.
- 23. The BBC should do more to facilitate the release of archive radio content.** In the last review of the station we highlighted to the Trust the potential interest from commercial operators for content in the BBC archive. At that time BBC management were told by the Trust to explore "every opportunity" to make its archive available to commercial operators. This seemed to have little impact initially⁷, although there have since been some examples of the BBC making content available for commercial radio operators⁸. We hope these experiences (and changes to the terms of trade for radio producers) will mean that this process is simpler in future.

Recommendations:

- The Trust should introduce a restriction on amount of repeats on Radio 4 and 4 Extra
- 4 Extra should become the home of new creative content on the BBC and a fixed percentage of content on the station should be 'new'
- The Trust should seek a commitment from the BBC Executive to review opportunities for sharing content across other BBC radio networks
- The BBC Trust should facilitate discussions for the release of content that has been broadcast previously on BBC radio, so that it can be re-used by commercial partners

Promoting education and learning

24. Radio 4 has a proud record of producing and commissioning programmes that are ambitious and can make complex subject matter accessible as well as interesting. It should also be commended for its ability to promote thematic seasons amongst the audience and use its programming to further examine issues at the centre of British life.
- 25. Radio 4 makes programming which does not exist elsewhere on UK Radio** and forms part of British cultural consciousness. *How Britain Went to War*, broadcast recently, is the kind of radio programme only the BBC can and will do⁹. In partnership with the British Museum, historian

⁶ BDRC Continental, [BBC Radio 1 & 2 Audience Research](#), October 2014.

⁷ John Plunkett, BBC criticised over children's archive, [The Guardian](#), 24 September 2013.

⁸ Stef Lach, 'TeamRock Radio to air Bruce Dickinson show', [Classic Rock](#), 3 December 2014.

⁹ Gillian Reynolds, 'The BBC must learn that big isn't always beautiful', [The Daily Telegraph](#), 30 July 2014.

Peter Hennessy recounted a gripping and complex story from original source material where the primary object was to educate and inform, not simply to grow audience reach. Similarly, programmes such as *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (which was broadcast in 100 instalments over 20 weeks in 2010) and the new 60-part series *A History of Ideas* presented by Melvin Bragg are examples of public service radio which is of the highest quality.

26. There are many other examples of outstanding educational programming broadcast recently on Radio 4, including the Shakespeare season¹⁰ and re-examination of James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* in 2012¹¹ and more recently the 10 hours of *War and Peace* broadcast on New Year's Day 2014 (pausing only for the news and *The Archers*)¹². This appears to demonstrate a welcome commitment to enriching national culture ahead of chasing ratings.
27. While this content is relatively expensive to produce in radio terms, it is worth noting that this sort of high quality output can be produced for a fraction of the cost of public service programming in television. Therefore we would emphasise that these sorts of ambitious projects provide relatively good value for the BBC overall.

Reflecting the UK's nations, regions and communities

28. Radio 4 programming plays a key role in reflecting national events. As highlighted above it regularly broadcasts programming of historical and cultural significance, often timed to coincide with historical anniversaries or important cultural dates¹³. However, there continues to be an impression that the station is mainly focussed on a specific demographic of more privileged white middle England.
29. **Radio 4 continues to underserve audiences located outside the south of England.** The country has lop-sided listening habits when it comes to Radio 4, with a 20.1% reach in UK as a whole but 24% in London (where it is the biggest station). Listening in the north of England and in the Nations is significantly lower, reaching 12.7% in Scotland, 17.1% in Wales and 9.1% in Northern Ireland.
30. **Radio 4 continues to underserve non-white audiences.** Listeners from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds make up 14.3% of the UK population but only 7% of the Radio 4 Audience is non-white. In London, where Radio 4 is strongest in appeal, is 40% of the population is BAME; but only 14% of the Radio 4 audience in London is non-white. When Lenny Henry guest edited *Today* recently he ensured many more production staff were from BAME backgrounds and the programme reflected a more diverse range of issues. Regular editor Jamie Angus also commented that the programme must do more to employ people from diverse backgrounds¹⁴.
31. **More needs to be done to appeal to non-white audiences and those outside the South of England.** Radio 4's inability to appeal to ethnic minority audiences or those outside the M25 has been a longstanding problem. Previously the Trust identified that the station needed to develop more diverse presenter and writing talent to tell stories which are of interest to a more diverse audience¹⁵. We do not believe that this action has been undertaken to the required level.

¹⁰ Media Centre, 'Shakespeare season on BBC Radio', [BBC Online](#), 5 April 2012.

¹¹ Alex Clark, 'A whole day of James Joyce on Radio 4? Blooming brilliant', [The Guardian](#), 3 June 2012.

¹² Hannah Furness, 'Radio 4's cure for the New Year hangover? 10 hours of War and Peace', [The Daily Telegraph](#), 27 November 2014.

¹³ Roy Martin, Radio 4 marks 40 years of being in Europe, [Radio Today](#), 3 January 2013.

¹⁴ Alexandra Chapman, 'Today editor hoping to boost team's diversity', [Broadcast](#), 2 October 2014.

¹⁵ BBC Trust, [Service Review BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 4 & BBC Radio 7](#), February 2011, p. 55.

32. **Radio 4 should strengthen ties with other stations in the BBC Radio portfolio.** We have already commented how Radio 4 content could be repackaged for Radio 2. The same could also occur for Radio 1, 1Xtra and Asian Network, all of which would benefit from increased commitment to drama, comedy and news. A reciprocal relationship could prove mutually beneficial, with Radio 4 also benefiting from journalism produced by (and for) minority audiences which originates at these stations. There may also be an opportunity to make greater use of stories from BBC Local and National Radio, repurposed for Radio 4 in order to increase regional coverage on the station. This would be more consistent with the Trust’s view that the BBC must resonate better with local communities and better reflect their interests.

Recommendations:

- Radio 4 and 4 Extra should explore ways of featuring talent which is outside their core audience profiles
- Radio 4 should consider ways to share more content with national and local BBC radio services (and how its output could be used by these services)

Bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK

33. Radio 4 must continue to ensure that the news it features is objective, of the highest quality and relevant to the licence-fee payer. The international reporting and coverage currently on Radio 4 meets these requirements on a daily basis, whilst regular programmes such as *From Our Own Correspondent* do much to fulfil the service licence requirement to explore international issues.

34. There is occasional criticism that the station sometimes focuses unduly on international issues – which are covered in detail by a plethora of multimedia news outlets – rather than providing more in depth coverage of national or regional content. However, RadioCentre believes that on the whole the style and approach of BBC radio news remains distinctive. The increasing availability of Radio 4 content online (and on the World Service) also provides an excellent showcase for the BBC’s high quality journalism around the world.

Emerging communications

35. Radio 4 is available in a variety of ways digitally both live and through catch-up services. Currently Radio 4 has 39.8% of its listening hours on digital platforms (slightly higher than the industry average of 37.9%). This is driven primary by relatively high levels of DAB listening, as its share of listening online is a relatively disappointing 3.1% (compared to 6.1% for all radio). Over the next few years the station will start to phase out its Long Wave¹⁶ frequency and therefore should see increases in digital audiences as a result.

36. Radio 4 should consider ways of promoting greater use of the BBC’s online resources and online listening. The current low level of online listening to Radio 4 is likely to be partly due to the demographic of its audience. However, the BBC has responsibility to maximise the public value impact of its output by providing its high quality and distinctive content as widely as possible, and ensuring that its listeners are aware of these opportunities to listen.

Recommendation:

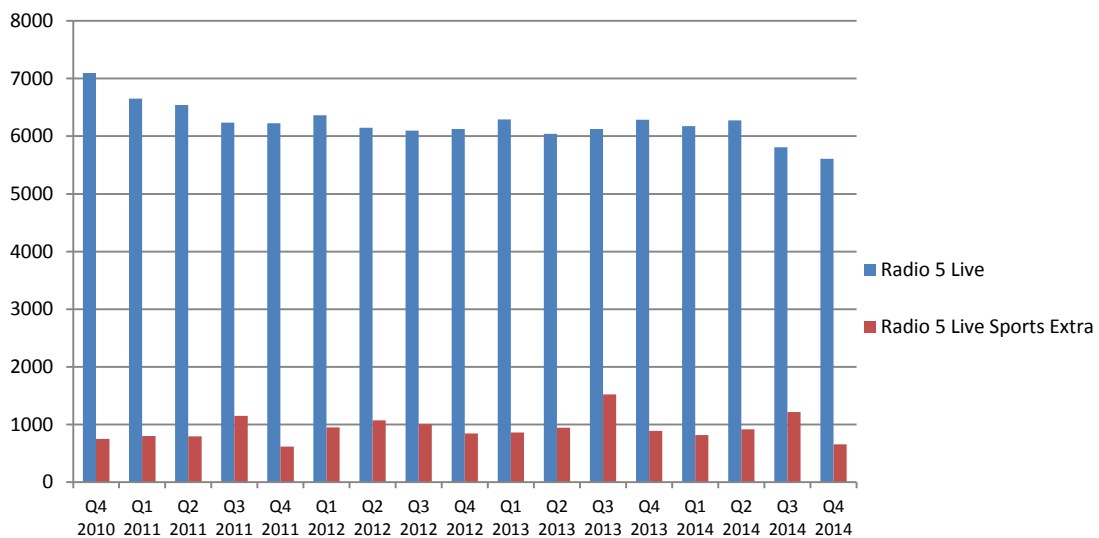
- Radio 4 should publish targets for growth in digital listening for each platform - including DAB, DTV and online.

¹⁶ Dan Sabbagh, ‘Radio 4’s long wave goodbye’, [The Guardian](#), 9 October 2011.

RADIO 5 LIVE AND 5 LIVE SPORTS EXTRA

37. It has been less than three and a half years since the last service licence review of Radio 5 Live and Radio 5 Live Sports Extra which is relatively short in context of the Trust’s usual 4-5 year service review cycle. Yet in that time Radio 5 Live in particular has undergone some very significant changes which have had some impact on the fortunes of the station.
38. In 2011 the station moved to Salford and a new controller was appointed in 2013. Following these organisational changes there was been a fairly radical shake-up in the daytime schedule and presenter line-up in 2014. As a result Victoria Derbyshire, Shelagh Fogarty and Richard Bacon all left the station, while Peter Allen has moved from the drive-time slot to mid-mornings for three days a week. It is worth pointing out that these changes followed on from the very successful coverage of the London 2012 Olympic Games and Radio 5 Live being named Station on the Year at the Radio Academy Awards in 2013.
39. Changing a radio station schedule is always fraught with difficulty and is likely to lead to a churn in audience. The fact that the recent changes have occurred following a tumultuous period in the history of 5 Live, is likely to have compounded the impact. Therefore it is unsurprising that there were falls in audience reach for 5 Live during 2014, as demonstrated in the graph below.

Figure 3: Audience reach of Radio 5 Live and 5 Live Sports Extra (000's)



40. Inevitably the Trust will consider total audience size when reviewing the performance of 5 Live or 5 Live Sports Extra, but we would emphasise again (as we have with Radio 4 and 4 Extra) that this must not be the primary measure of success. The service licences for these stations are structured around the delivery of the BBC’s public purposes. Therefore the bigger issue is whether they are meeting these requirements effectively during this period of transition.
41. Our overall assessment is that the long term performance of these stations remains strong. There is room for some modifications and changes in approach in some areas, as well as some opportunities to provide greater public value for listeners, but neither the Trust nor BBC management should be alarmed by fluctuations in audience or seek to make radical changes at this point in the development of the station(s). The recent changes to 5 Live will need time to take effect. It would be unfortunate if some of the recent falls in listening were used as justification for changes that diluted the public value and distinctiveness of 5 Live and 5 Live Sports Extra.

Sustaining citizenship and civil society

42. At its best the news output across Radio 5 Live is exemplary public service broadcasting. However, BBC services must continue to offer something different in the face of increased competition in journalism and changes in the way people now access news (as highlighted in the recent *Future of News* report by the BBC). This requires BBC radio to remain distinctive from other media providers, including commercial radio.
43. There are a limited number of providers for radio news in the UK, with LBC being the only commercial news talk station outside the BBC at present. LBC and other commercial stations tend to use different approaches to meet the needs of their audiences, partly because they have significantly fewer resources than BBC services. Therefore it is important for listeners and for the plurality and choice in UK radio that stations like 5 Live do not seek to adopt similar approaches to programming.
44. In particular **we would be concerned if 5 Live sought to change its approach to news coverage simply as a means of attracting more listeners**. For example, it would be unfortunate if 5 Live began to feature an increase in phone-ins and discussions based around political opinion, in the way that LBC has been doing so successfully in recent years. If it were to prioritise this sort of programming in an attempt to boost popularity this would narrow choice for listeners and potentially shift the focus of the station.
45. 5 Live is not simply 'talk radio' station focussing on opinion and chat. If it was it would not require a content budget of £ 49.2 million per year to invest in original journalism. This latter point has particular resonance due to the station's recent move to Salford. With a smaller pool of analysts and specialists available on the doorstep of the 5 Live studio, we understand there may be a temptation to include more phone-ins during programming. We believe that the resources in Media City and throughout the wider BBC News division mean this is unnecessary. The number of phone-ins on 5 Live should therefore be monitored, and reduced where necessary.
46. 5 Live's key service licence requirement is that three-quarters of content should be 'news'. RadioCentre previously queried the delivery of this news commitment. We felt that a significant amount of subject matter being discussed on 5 Live and considered as news could not always be described as such. Therefore we asked that the Trust ensure that discussions and features should have an obvious link to news or topical issues, a position which The Trust supported¹⁷.
47. **5 Live should aim to cover even fewer stories that deal primarily with entertainment and celebrity**. 5 Live should seek to remain a beacon of excellence in delivering the BBC's priority of providing the best journalism in the world. We understand that it can be challenging to achieve an 'accessible tone'¹⁸ in news programming coupled with maintaining a commitment to prescribed 'hard' news content (such as political debates). However, we believe it is well within the capabilities of talented journalists and editors within the station with the right focus and guidance for the station overall.
48. There may also be opportunities to make more of the journalistic resources 5 Live has at its disposal, by diversifying current affairs output on the station. For example, the rolling news output on 5 Live could give way to a **regular commitment to documentary output in peak-time (covering current affairs or investigative journalism)**, which would allow for content even more

¹⁷ Stuart Clarkson, 5 live 'should be clearly driven by news', *Radio Today*, 30 January 2012.

¹⁸ BBC Trust, *Radio 5 Live Service licence*, April 2014, p. 2.

fitting of the BBC's public purposes. This type of public service content works well on BBC television with long running programmes such as *Panorama* providing in depth analysis of important issues in peak time. However, there are few example of such ambitious content being featured on daytime radio and 5 Live would be well placed to provide such output.

Recommendations:

- The volume of public participation in debates on 5 Live (through phone-ins) should not exceed the contributions of expert commentators
- Trust to monitor programming changes to ensure that they meet the highest level of distinctiveness
- 5 Live should introduce a documentary or investigatory strand in peak-time weekdays

Reflecting the UK's nations, regions and communities

49. Radio 5 Live's move to Salford will undoubtedly have had an impact on the way that it covers much of the news, sport and discussion across the station (and was no doubt part of the rationale for moving the station out of London in the first place). However, it has not altered the ability of the station to provide top quality news and sports coverage across a range of areas.
50. For sport in particular, 5 Live and 5 Live Sports Extra are widely recognised as the BBC's main channels for coverage, analysis and sports commentary, which is a considerable achievement considering they are networks based principally on audio output. This reputation was only strengthened by the Olympic Games, which demonstrated the corporation's public service role in bringing large audiences from across the country together for a major event.
51. 5 Live and Sports Extra have taken steps to ensure the legacy of the Olympics continues on the stations, primarily through a focus on sports which previously received little coverage. 5 Live Sports Extra was the first UK radio station to broadcast commentaries on water polo and taekwondo in preparation for the Games¹⁹, and weekly discussion shows like *5 live Extreme* and *Bespoke* highlight and increased recognition of minority sport on the station²⁰.
52. **5 Live should maintain and enhance its commitment to minority sports still further.** As the BBC has retained the broadcast rights to the Olympic Games until the end of the decade – at a cost of £60m²¹ – it makes sense to continue this relationship in preparation for 2016 and beyond, with coverage and discussion on a full range of Olympic sports.
53. RadioCentre continues to query the BBC's purchase of exclusive rights for sports which could also be broadcast by commercial organisations. The Trust previously said Radio 5 Live should cut the amount of money it spends on sports rights²², but we note that since the last service review *Test Match Special* coverage of England's home cricket internationals has been secured until at least 2019²³ and the BBC renewed its Premier League package until 2016²⁴. Instead, cuts were made to more cost efficient rights such as horse racing, darts and snooker coverage: all of which are much more difficult for other broadcasters to cover than Premier League football or international cricket.

¹⁹ Roy Martin, BBC radio airs water polo and taekwondo, [Radio Today](#), 4 May 2012.

²⁰ These are [Extreme Sports](#) and [Cycling](#) summary shows respectively.

²¹ Owen Gibson, 'BBC scores rights to next four Olympic Games', [The Guardian](#), 18 July 2012

²² John Plunkett, 'BBC Radio 5 Live urged to do more for more minority sports', [The Guardian](#), 30 January 2012.

²³ Mark Sweney, 'Test Match Special secure on BBC radio until 2019', [The Guardian](#), 26 January 2012.

²⁴ Roy Martin, 'Absolute, talkSPORT, 5live retain deals', [Radio Today](#), 9 April 2013.

54. **There is evidence that 5 Live could broadcast more live minority sport to meet audience demands.** As the audience appreciation scores for Sports Extra highlight, live sport commentary is event listening that is appreciated and targeted by listeners. Thirteen of the twenty most popular programmes consumed on the BBC iPlayer's radio service in 2014 were cricket commentaries on Test Match Special. Also in the radio top 10 was Carl Froch's super middleweight title fight win over George Groves at Wembley on 31 May. 83% of this iPlayer Radio usage was live listening²⁵.
55. Arguably sports rights on BBC Radio are not being exploited to their full potential. It appears strange that the BBC holds live rights to a plethora of sports, and fails to renew more cost efficient rights, only to feature summary shows and discussion programmes on those same sports. There is an opportunity for 5 Live to feature more live audio commentary on weekday evenings instead of relying on football debate, and **we encourage the BBC to look at featuring more live commentaries from minority sports in evenings.**
56. **5 Live Sports Extra has higher audience appreciation scores than any BBC Radio service and should remain as a spill-over commentary service.** It should continue to broadcast commentaries in parallel with 5 Live – also providing a greater range of live sports commentaries in weekday evenings (featuring sports other than football).

Recommendation:

- 5 Live should feature more live commentary of minority sports in weekday evenings

Bringing the UK to the world to the world to the UK

57. When major international stories break, Radio 5 Live is one of the main radio destinations for on the spot coverage and analysis. The station is not afraid to make brave choices in the search for a story, and uses the BBC's large complement of worldwide journalists to ensure that the quality of news coverage of world events is in line with BBC targets. The recent coverage of the tragic Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris, and subsequent arrests, is a case in point.
58. The high standards of 5 Live's international news reporting are not always upheld consistently when the station reports UK issues. We have in the past commented that the station has not taken advantage of local radio news resources as much as it could have. This has not been significantly improved by relocation to Manchester. Indeed, much as Radio 4 suffers from being overly Southern and broadsheet in content style, there is a danger that 5 Live could risk being seen as Northern and tabloid as a result.
59. **5 Live could do more to reflect the lives of female listeners.** Already dubbed "Radio bloke" by critics, 5 Live only reaches 5.9% of women in the UK each week²⁶. Clearly the vast majority of women cannot find content or presenters to identify with on the station. Indeed, at one point late last year the station was left with only one weekly programme fronted solely by a woman, with Eleanor Oldroyd presenting *The Friday Sports Panel*²⁷.
60. 5 Live has a history of award-winning female presenters that have become renowned throughout the radio industry. Unfortunately female presenters who become household names

²⁵ Media Centre, 'record-breaking 2014 on BBC iPlayer', [BBC Online](#), 21 January 2015.

²⁶ [RAJAR](#) Q4 2014

²⁷ Ruth Barnes, 'Is Radio 5 Live's future blokey? Unfortunately it's looking that way', [The Guardian](#), 2 July 2014.

on the channel do tend to leave with alarming regularity. Both Victoria Derbyshire and Shelagh Fogarty departed in 2014. To lose one award-winning female presenter might be regarded as misfortune. To lose two appeared strategically misjudged, considering recent research that shows women make up only 20% of solo radio broadcasters which has added pressure on the BBC to improve its gender quotas on air²⁸.

61. **The BBC has a special duty, through the universality of the licence fee, to lead the way on gender equality.** We are therefore pleased to see the good work being undertaken at Local Radio level; where BBC Director-General Tony Hall has said he wants to have half of the breakfast shows on Local Radio stations presented by women.²⁹ While we note 5 Live's tendency to use male-female co-hosting to meet similar gender quotas, we would urge the station to develop new talent and examine opportunities for female-only shows to provide greater balance on its schedule.
62. Despite explicit reference to appealing to all cultures and ethnicities in its service licence, 5 Live also currently underperforms significantly in reaching ethnically diverse audiences. Indeed, it reaches fewer non-white listeners than Radio 4³⁰. As we highlighted when discussing diversity issues above, we believe the station should do more to reflect black and Asian talent so that the voices on the station better reflect wider BBC policy regarding promoting ethnic and gender diversity.

Recommendation:

- 5 Live management should be required to report gender and ethnic diversity data of production staff and on-air voices on a regular basis

Stimulating creativity and cultural excellence

63. As a rolling news and sport service 5 Live is not widely noted for its cultural content. However, we would highlight that when the 5 Live schedule is shaken up, and the station produces distinctive speech content that deviates from the 'news chat' zoo format which exists for the majority of the broadcast day, it is highly appreciated by listeners.
64. Arts programming on 5 Live continues to receive awards as well as attract live and listen again audiences. Of particular note is the *Kermode and Mayo Film Review* which has a 585,000 average audience on Friday afternoons but picks up 241,000 extra listeners on podcast and a further 230,000 via its YouTube channel, which is where the show turns visual. Since it became multiplatform the show has had over 50 million downloads, and lies second only to national institution *The Archers* in the most recent monthly podcast charts.³¹

Promoting education and learning

65. The 5 Live service licence states that it should play its part in the BBC public purpose of education and learning by 'offering in-depth analysis, documentaries and specials on a wide range of subjects across the news and sports agendas.'³² While news and in-depth analysis on 5

²⁸ Lisa O'Carroll, 'Women make up only 20% of solo radio broadcasters, research reveals', [The Guardian](#), 12 July 2013.

²⁹ Roy Martin, 'More women at breakfast, says Tony Hall', [Radio Today](#), 22 August 2013.

³⁰ [RAJAR](#), Q4 2014.

³¹ Based on August 2014. John Plunkett, Simon Mayo and Mark Kermode: 'Everybody thinks we'd be great on TV', [The Guardian](#), 9 November 2013.

³² BBC Trust, [Radio 5 Live Service licence](#), April 2014, p. 6

Live consistently is of the highest quality, documentaries and specials are relatively rare (particularly in daytime).

66. 5 Live should invest in more educational content and documentaries, underpinned by a requirement to broadcast a minimum number of documentaries each year. We have already noted above about how the 5 Live schedule currently lacks a range of format types. A new current affairs documentary slot would enrich the daytime output by providing content which is clearly targeted to audiences and in line with public purposes.

Recommendation:

- 5 Live should be required to broadcast a minimum number of documentaries each year

Emerging communications

67. 5 Live has a higher share of digital listening than any of the BBC national radio stations also broadcasting on AM or FM. Around half (48.8%) of its live listening hours were on digital platforms in Q4 2014. These high digital listening figures are perhaps not surprising given that its main broadcast platform is Medium Wave/ AM (which provides significantly poorer sound quality).
68. However, the extent of its digital listening hours and the high level of DAB coverage it has as part of the BBC's national network (due to reach 97% of the population very shortly) will inevitably prompt a discussion about whether 5 Live could be the first station to set a target date for relinquishing its analogue frequency entirely. The Government's criteria for considering the potential switchover of services to digital only is listening reaching 50% and FM equivalent coverage. The fact that 5 Live appears to be on the cusp of meeting these criteria should lead to serious consideration of whether it might lead the way and switch first.
69. The BBC continues to use digital radio as a platform for specialist content. In the past three years it has launched three pop-up DAB stations based around specific events, most notably 5 Live Olympics that broadcast digitally alongside 5 Live and 5 Live Sports Extra in 2012. In practice, these stations have little impact on digital listening overall, with minimal listening figures or popular recognition. **5 Live should consider setting an aspirational target date for being the first national station to relinquish its analogue frequency.**

Recommendations:

- 5 Live should consider setting a target date to cease analogue broadcasting and become a digital-only station
- The BBC should consult on the impact and necessity of pop-up DAB stations prior to launch

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