



TYNWALD COURT OFFICIAL REPORT

**RECORTYS OIKOIL
QUAIYL TINVAAL**

PROCEEDINGS

DAALTYN

(HANSARD)

SELECT COMMITTEE OF TYNWALD ON THE TELEVISION LICENCE FEE

**BING ER-LHEH TINVAAL MYCHIONE
LEAGH KIED-ÇHELLVEEISH**

Douglas, Tuesday, 20th July 2010

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**PP118/10
TTLF, No. 2**

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Members Present:

Chairman: Mr G D Cregeen, MHK
Mr D A Callister, MLC

Apologies:
Hon. P A Gawne, MHK

Clerk:
Mr J King, Deputy Clerk of Tynwald

BUSINESS TRANSACTED

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Ms Barua was called at 10.29 a.m.

Evidence of Ms A Barua 42

Ms Dow was called at 11.12 a.m.

Evidence of Ms L Dow 52

Mr Ferguson, Mr Le Prevost, Mr Smith and Mr Wint were called at 11.37 a.m.

Evidence of Mr G Ferguson, Mr D Le Prevost, Mr G Smith and Mr A Wint 56

The Committee adjourned at 12.14 p.m.

Select Committee of Tynwald on the Television Licence Fee

*The Committee sat in public at 10.04 a.m.
in the Millennium Room,
Legislative Buildings, Douglas*

[MR CREGEEN *in the Chair*]

Procedural

The Chairman (Mr Cregeen): Good morning, and may I welcome you to this sitting of the Select Committee of Tynwald on the Television Licence Fee.

The Committee was established by Tynwald on 18th November 2009. The motion establishing the Committee was:

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‘That Tynwald appoints a Committee of three Members with the powers to take written and oral evidence pursuant to sections 3 and 4 of the Tynwald Proceedings Act 1876, as amended, to investigate the feasibility and impact of withdrawal or amendment of the agreement under which the residents of the Isle of Man pay a television licence fee; and to report.’

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Today with me I have David Callister MLC, Jonathan King is the Clerk to the Committee and Clive Alford from *Hansard*. Could I please ask everybody to switch off their mobile phone, rather than put it on silent, because it still interferes with the recording. Mr Gawne, who is another Member of the Committee, unfortunately is unwell today and unable to attend.

15

Today we are planning three discussions. First, we will be taking evidence about the BBC Audience Council. This is a structure put in place by the BBC to act as a link between the BBC Trust and the public. We are looking forward to learning from Helen Corlett about how well the structure works in the Isle of Man context.

20

Second, we will be talking to what the BBC does in the Isle of Man. We heard, on 24th March 2010, from representatives of the BBC senior management, people with an interest in the Isle of Man but who themselves are based in England. Ariane Barua will be able to speak about her work as one of the very small number of BBC employees based here in the Isle of Man.

25

Our third discussion is with other people working in the media in the Isle of Man. Any change to BBC activities could have consequences for others in the broadcasting and wider media economy. In March we heard from Manx Radio. Today we will hear from Energy FM, Three FM and isleofman.com.

EVIDENCE OF MS H CORLETT

Q113. The Chairman: Helen, could you please introduce yourself and explain your role in the BBC Audience Council.

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Ms Corlett: Yes, my name is Helen Corlett. I represent the Isle of Man on the BBC North West Regional Audience Council. The Audience Councils are independent bodies made up of viewers, listeners and online users who volunteer their time to comment on BBC programmes, services and policies. Members are drawn from all ages, life experiences and locations to reflect the widest possible range of views and interests. Membership is open to anyone, except people holding political office above Parish Council levels, employees of a BBC supplier and other media organisations.

35

Q114. The Chairman: How effective do you think the mechanism of the Audience Council is?

40 **Ms Corlett:** Extremely effective. I have managed some very positive results for the Island to
put our voice forward and it does go forward. The points raised at the Regional Audience Councils
are minuted. They then go forward to the Audience Council England, which is attended by all the
45 chairmen of the Audience Councils – the regional ones – and this then goes forward to the Trust.
So, yes, very positive results and very effective.

Q115. Mr Callister: You say positive results there. Could you give us a few examples of
those?

50 **Ms Corlett:** Do you want just a light one? For example, when they changed the weather
forecasting system on the BBC News, (a) the presenter was standing in front of the Isle of Man,
and (b) they omitted the wind speeds. I brought this up at the Audience Council and within one
week the wind speeds were put on and the person was standing in a different position. This may
sound little but actually if we did not have this voice on the Audience Council it would be far more
55 difficult to get this sort of result.

Q116. Mr Callister: While you are talking about the BBC weather forecasts, then, I have
noticed that we frequently find that the forecast temperatures given by the BBC are much lower
than we find on our own Ronaldsway forecasts. Is that a matter that you have either noticed,
60 concerns you, or has it been brought up at any meetings?

Ms Corlett: It has been brought up by yourself at the private meeting that we had recently. This
was taken up and moved forward via Louise Hall and also with my public accountability manager,
Carole Webster. I have been led to understand that they were getting in touch with you and that
65 this was going to be monitored and looked into. So there should be a result coming along the line
somewhere.

Mr Callister: I look forward to that.

70 **Ms Corlett:** Yes, I will follow this up for you again.

Q117. Mr Callister: You report to the BBC Trust –

Ms Corlett: Eventually, yes, not personally.

75 **Mr Callister:** No, not personally. How effective are they then?

Ms Corlett: Well, I look after the Isle of Man and I see that as my prime concern, my prime
rôle on the Regional Audience Council. If I can get the Isle of Man mentioned in the minutes at
each meeting, then these minutes go forward and it keeps the Isle of Man in their mindset.
80

Q118. Mr Callister: Do you see the minutes on the Trust?

85 **Ms Corlett:** Oh, they are probably somewhere but, no, they do not get sent to me. I see the
Audience Council England minutes.

Q119. Mr Callister: So you do not see how any complaints, and so on, are actually progressed
to the BBC? It seems a cumbersome sort of system this, whereas you could have Councils
reporting directly to somewhere in the BBC, rather than to the Trust.

90 **Ms Corlett:** Well, no. It is a process of the Regionals reporting then to Audience Council
England, which is the head of the region, and they then report to the Trust and if the Trust have
any concerns they then speak to the Director General and the Governors of the BBC.

95 **Q120. Mr Callister:** How are the members of the Audience Council chosen?

Ms Corlett: It is a selection process that will... My term is ending this coming year, so they will
advertise online, in newspapers, television, via the media, for another representative who then
replies or sends in for an application form, fills it in and then there is a selection process to fit the
BBC's criteria.
100

Q121. Mr Callister: What qualifications do they ask for in their advertisements: do they ask for any at all?

105 **Ms Corlett:** Well, they do not. It is like it says, it is very diverse. Anyone can apply as long as you do not hold a political office above Parish Council level.

Q122. Mr Callister: In general terms, then, on the Council that you are in, do the BBC try to get a representation of every kind of person that might fit their listener profile or viewer profile?

110 **Ms Corlett:** Yes.

Q123. Mr Callister: What is their viewer profile?

115 **Ms Corlett:** Oh gosh, I am not involved in the selection process, so I really could not answer that. You would have to ask the people who do the selection –

Q124. Mr Callister: I guess it would be complicated, anyway.

120 **Ms Corlett:** I would imagine so because it is very diverse. They have to cover all sorts of... I think it is laid down in the Charter but I am not sure.

Q125. Mr Callister: So you could not say whether the Isle of Man's perfect viewer is anything like the UK's perfect viewer, then, in terms of their profile?

125 **Ms Corlett:** Really, it is whoever they choose, whoever comes forward. When I put in my application there were only two from the Island.

Q126. The Chairman: When you have your meetings with the public to get their views, is there a set criteria for those people that you go to look to, or is –

130 **Ms Corlett:** Yes, we are given programmes to watch or preview, radio programmes to listen to, things online just to take note of and then we feed back to the Audience Council.

Q127. The Chairman: But when you have fed back through there, do you not see that there is a missing link because you have started a process off and you do not actually see where it is going through to the BBC, so you may have a concern about one area and it may not have been brought up in the minutes of the Trust further along and you might lose that track, whether your point has been made and whether they are going to do anything –

140 **Ms Corlett:** Oh, no, if the point is important then I shall persevere and if I have not had a result, as I will with Mr Callister, you persevere and you will eventually get an answer because they have to answer you as a member of the public and a licence fee payer ... they are responsible towards you.

145 **Q128. The Chairman:** And if you have no success through the first stage, do you have another responsible person who you can get a decision?

Ms Corlett: Yes, the chairman of my committee. I also have the public accountability manager, I can go through her and also then her superior who is the accountability manager for the English regions. So yes, there are various people I can call on if I have not received a satisfactory result to a legitimate question.

Q129. The Chairman: How do you find the effectiveness of the BBC video journalist here? Does that feed back through you, as well?

155 **Ms Corlett:** No, I have nothing to do with that whatsoever.

Q130. The Chairman: So if it is accurate or if you do not feel... If people come to you and say, 'We don't think this is right', you have no means of reporting back.

160

Ms Corlett: No-one has ever come to me and said they do not think it is right; it would be my personal opinion.

165 If something was very wrong and the only instance I can think of was when we were... the public Health Agreement and the report for BBC North West was not actually on 'North West Tonight' that night but it was on Granada and that was brought up at the meeting with the producer of that programme, the Head of Regions, and he was taking it further to find out why it was not.

170 I have not followed that up any further because it is past now, but it is minuted and he was aware that we are watching and we expect an important thing like this to be on 'North West Tonight'.

Q131. Mr Callister: On 1st July, I think it was, the Audience Council came to the Isle of Man and held a meeting here, not a public meeting as such, but it was for invited persons. How many people would have been invited to that?

175

Ms Corlett: We had an outreach event to which yourselves were invited as observers –

Mr Callister: Yes, unfortunately I could not get there –

180 **Ms Corlett:** – and there were between 30 and 40 people invited. We expected a good half of those to fall by the wayside, which in fact they did and so there were about 20 to 25 people that were there.

Q132. Mr Callister: What is the process for inviting them and how do you go about that?

185

Ms Corlett: It was left up to myself in the end because I looked for a diversity of people on the Island who I felt had opinions and wanted to be heard and I asked yourselves for anyone that you would like, or thought would have a useful opinion. Dr Brian Stowell came along and he was extremely vociferous and we had a very, very good outreach event. There were very strongly opinionated people there.

190

Q133. The Chairman: And some of the opinions that were given at that event, can you give us an insight?

195 **Ms Corlett:** Oh gosh, it was 'What do you think of the BBC's performance on the Island' and it was pretty well 'rubbish'.

You know, it was extremely vociferous. People do not think they are getting the support that they ought to be getting; they just wanted to be included in the loop, I suppose. All this has been minuted and will be going forward.

200

We have another meeting in Manchester in September and then it is going... All the Regional Audience Councils were doing a similar outreach event and then all this information will be compiled and go forward again.

Q134. The Chairman: I just wondered, you were saying that they thought the BBC service to the Isle of Man was 'rubbish'. You must talk to other colleagues in a similar position as yourself. Is that across the whole of the UK or would you say that the comments here were –

205

Ms Corlett: I do not really do that, to be honest, because we all cover different parts of our region and everyone has their own interests in their own region and their own responsibilities in their own region. The Isle of Man is different and it has to be looked at in a different light and that is my prime objective, really.

210

Q135. The Chairman: So will you get feedback from other regions so as to find out how we compare to everybody else when you have these outreach events?

215

Ms Corlett: It does not really... They are getting an overview, that is my opinion. I will read the minutes when they come from this and the review from this outreach event but, like I say, there were some very, very positive points put in there as well of what the BBC is doing on the Island but, overall, they want more. The public want more.

220 They want more input, more interest, and they feel the Island has a lot more to give towards programming, whether it is BBC filming on the Island, whether it is in the news, whatever: there are a lot of interesting things here that could be covered.

225 **Q136. Mr Callister:** At that meeting was the subject of the TV licence raised, the cost of it or the necessity for it?

Ms Corlett: No, not particularly, I would say. It was not on the agenda. However, there was paper there for you to write any question that you had that you felt had not been covered and that you would like raised at some point there.

230 **Q137. Mr Callister:** So the minutes that will come from that, as a result of that meeting, first they do not go in the public domain, presumably, but they will go to the BBC Trust and the BBC Trust will use them in whatever way they want to feed that back to the BBC?

235 **Ms Corlett:** Yes, to say that maybe or not you ought to look at this area... it needs more attention.

Q138. Mr Callister: So it does not go into specifics, then, does it, really, I suppose?

240 **Ms Corlett:** I have no idea. I have never done anything like this before, so –

Q139. Mr Callister: You have not seen them?

245 **Ms Corlett:** No, I have not.

Q140. Mr Callister: You could probably get them under freedom of information in the UK, actually –

250 **Ms Corlett:** I really do not know.

Q141. Mr Callister: Can I just bring another point up and it may have arisen at the meeting, that the BBC... You are talking about being a Regional Council and the BBC thinks in terms of regions, but it does not seem... it plants the Isle of Man into a region, it does not recognise it as a nation in its own right, does it?

255 **Ms Corlett:** We are part of the Regional Audience Council. That is not my decision –

Q142. Mr Callister: Do you think the BBC recognise the Isle of Man as a nation in its own right?

260 **Ms Corlett:** Not as much as they ought to, no.

Q143. Mr Callister: How do we get over that?

265 **Ms Corlett:** Make them more welcome on the Island. (*Interjection*) You asked the question! The BBC are over here quite frequently but it is not publicised. I do not know... that is not within my remit, really.

270 **Q144. Mr Callister:** You said also that the consensus, perhaps, was that the BBC was rubbish. (*Interjection by Ms Corlett*). I think it is the wrong word maybe to you, but I was going to say –

Ms Corlett: Yes, it is. ‘Left wanting’ is probably –

275 **Q145. Mr Callister:** Do you get that sort of view from other areas that you visit? Is it general or is it just the Isle of Man?

280 **Ms Corlett:** No, different people on the Regional Audience Council have different views of their areas. For instance, the Asians want to see more Asian programmes; the disabled people would like to see more disabled people in programmes; the blind people would like better access; the deaf people...

It is so diverse that I just concentrate on the provision for the Isle of Man and if there are any points that I feel we are severely lacking on then I try and put those forward, even if they are relevant to the discussion or not because there is any other business and there are burning issues at the end of each meeting.

285

Q146. The Chairman: Do you also cover BBC radio services on the Island and their content and the quality of their reception, because one of the things we have mentioned before is that BBC Radio 5 has very poor reception here?

290

Ms Corlett: I have in the past. I have worked with Carmel McLaughlin with this and put forward that the coverage of digital radio is sporadic, to say the least, on the Island. This has been moved forward and is being looked into and, at the moment, that is the best answer I have.

295

Q147. The Chairman: So there is nothing to do with the analogue service on the radio. They are just solely focused towards a digital provision, not improving any other provision, as in content or quality?

300

Ms Corlett: I think they are always looking to improve, as far as I can gather. We do not have a BBC radio station over here so it is not looked at maybe as closely as the Channel Islands or something like that but they are willing and hence the video journalist over here.

Now they are looking at co-operating more and sharing news items and things like that. It is there, we just have to grab... All the services are there, it is just saying, 'We want this, please come.'

305

Q148. The Chairman: Would you say that the Communications Commission are forceful enough with the BBC to say, as part of our –

Ms Corlett: I am on the Regional Audience Council, that has nothing –

310

The Chairman: Because they are a body that talks with the BBC regarding the services on the Island.

315

Ms Corlett: They do and it is completely separate to what I am. I am the volunteer so it is only because I feel it is in the best interest, if Carmel McLaughlin and myself are both pushing in the same direction and if we can do a two-pronged fork then sometimes that is more effective than just one voice.

320

Q149. Mr Callister: Yes, well we were brought together to discuss the TV licence fee and radio comes into that to some extent, as well. To what extent does the TV licence fee and the cost of it figure in any of your discussions or meetings and feedback from the public? Is it an issue, in other words?

Ms Corlett: No.

325

Q150. Mr Callister: It is not an issue with people saying, 'It is too expensive. We should not be paying it now. We can get it from other means' and so on?

Ms Corlett: It has not been brought up, to my knowledge, as a separate item on the agenda.

330

Q151. The Chairman: Value for money has been brought up by this.

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Ms Corlett: Yes, it is. There is the strategy review going through and that is whether the BBC is providing value for money and yes... So we are discussing it, but not discussing the level of the licence fee, just whether it is providing value for money.

340

Q152. Mr Callister: I think you said earlier that the BBC asked you to look at specific programmes and comment on them. Could you give us a few examples of those that they may have asked about recently?

Ms Corlett: Oh gosh, some of them are quite off the wall. *Gavin and Stacey* was one. At the moment they are looking at radio in particular, so it is Radio 3 and 4 and it just depends... What

they will tend to do is just send a DVD of a specific series that needs looking at and I will watch the DVD and comment on those actual programmes, which could be an overview so it is quite varied, really.

345

Q153. Mr Callister: So is that sent to you from the Audience Council itself or directly from the BBC?

350

Ms Corlett: No, the Audience Council. Yes, it does.

Q154. Mr Callister: So you are giving your views to the Council, rather than directly to the Corporation?

355

Ms Corlett: Oh yes.

360

Q155. Mr Callister: I remember in the 1960s, certainly as far as the radio is concerned, they had listening panels and presumably when television grew they probably had viewing panels, as well. Do you know if they still have those where people actually are asked to specifically listen to a particular programme, or a particular television show, and then send their comments back directly to the BBC? Are you aware of this?

365

Ms Corlett: My understanding is that that all ended with the Charter because they used to have the local radio, as you did yourself, Mr Callister. This now comes under the Regional Audience Council, as opposed to the local Audience Council.

Q156. Mr Callister: So there is not a local Audience Council on the Island?

Ms Corlett: Not at the moment.

370

Q157. Mr Callister: Are the Channel Islands part of this Audience Council system?

Ms Corlett: I really do not... I have not looked into it at all. I would assume so.

375

Q158. The Chairman: As part of our reporting process, do you think there is anything in our report that we can put in that will help you support better services for the Isle of Man?

380

Ms Corlett: I cannot think of anything off the top of my head. I do what comes up and what I feel is best for the Island at the time or if there is any burning issue I will bring that up, however diverse it is. So there is not anything set that you can say.

Q159. The Chairman: Or a direct access to a higher priority person through the BBC, that that sort of access – if we were to put in a recommendation that we should have a higher access through the BBC – would that help?

385

Ms Corlett: Not for me as a volunteer on an Audience Council. It is a bit like Mr Callister said, you just listen to programmes and you gain views and put them forward.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. Is there anything else you want, Jonathan?

390

The Clerk: No thank you, Mr Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

Ms Corlett: Okay. Thank you very much.

Ms Barua was called at 10.29 a.m.

EVIDENCE OF MS A BARUA

395 **Q160. The Chairman:** If you would like to introduce yourself and explain what you do for the BBC on the Isle of Man.

Ms Barua: My name is Ariane Barua and I work as a broadcast journalist for the BBC on the Isle of Man.

400 **Q161. The Chairman:** What do your duties entail for the BBC? Do you go out and get ordinary stories or do they give you an agenda of what they would like you to cover.

Ms Barua: It all starts in the morning with a circuit meeting with the editors of Radio Cumbria, television in Manchester, Radio Manchester, basically all the regions get together, and we are considered one of them.

We will describe our prospects for the day, i.e. the news stories that have come up at that point in the day, and then we will have a commission or not from television to go and cover it and that is the beginning of our day. If it has been deemed newsworthy by the television in Manchester, we will go and cover it as a package. If we have got the manpower and we think it is relevant for the Isle of Man, of public interest, and it has not been commissioned by television, then we will try and cover it on the web as a written piece, but we cannot put any video on the website that has not been commissioned by television.

415 **Q162. The Chairman:** So they have the ultimate say of what they think is a newsworthy story. So when you have spoken to them in the morning and if they say, 'Well, we think this is newsworthy', that is what they will put. So you are, in one way, guided to what they think is going to be newsworthy for them. So if there was a good news story for the Isle of Man and they did not think it was apt for them to put over they may not commission you to do it, but you could put it on the website as a written story?

Ms Barua: Yes, basically. If it has not got that regional impact then it can go to news online to be written up as a news story, but if it has a regional impact for a television piece then it will go to Manchester.

425 **Q163. The Chairman:** Are there many stories that you thought would be a very good piece for the Isle of Man and they have said, 'No, we're not going to let you do this because we don't think it's newsworthy for the region'?

430 *Ms Barua:* That is a really good question. I think in the early days of the project, BBC Isle of Man, yes. Less and less so now, (1) because our technology is better and the exchange of material back and forth between Manchester and the Isle of Man is much quicker, so we can do a lot more; and (2) because this sort of project has evolved in such a way that we now are working every single day on behalf of BBC Isle of Man to say to people in Manchester, 'Listen, this is important here.' We are completely free to say this: 'This is important here and we want it commissioned', even if it is a short news piece, if it is not worthy of a package, then a short news piece on the breakfast bulletins or the lunchtime bulletins. We have much more say, really, in what happens now.

440 Also, it is a process of education. We have needed to understand the pressures that they are under in Manchester, which are huge, and they have needed to understand so much more about the culture of the Isle of Man and the way things happen here, and what is relevant here that might not seem relevant there. It has been a very positive, mutual educational process and I think we really have made steps there.

445 **Q164. The Chairman:** Do you think that they were fully aware of the Isle of Man as a nation, not just a small part of the UK? At the initial stage, it was just a little bit out to one side, rather than an independent –

Ms Barua: An independent nation?

The Chairman: Yes.

455 **Ms Barua:** I think everyone I have ever worked with knows that, theoretically. However, it is very different knowing that and feeling that, and that is why it is important that there are people from the Isle of Man working for that cause.

460 As much as we are focused on the day-to-day work of the Isle of Man, we were recruited for the very reason that we can do that – we can educate people, editors within the BBC. And they want to know; they will ask all the time. They are always curious about what is happening here and the sort of background to so many stories which might seem initially a bit confusing, but when you know the history of a situation it makes more sense.

Q165. The Chairman: Do you ever have the senior managers from Manchester coming over here to become aware of what the Isle of Man is?

465 **Ms Barua:** Yes. One chap in particular, Jim Clarke, who is the newsgathering editor at Manchester, will come over on a regular basis. What he does, and what I really like about Jim, is that he will walk around the place and drive around the place. The last time he came over, he looked at the *Solway Harvester* still in the harbour and he was like, ‘Hang on, that’s a story, let’s do something on that.’

470 So yes, he is always... I would not say he is *always* over here – he has got a busy job in Manchester – but I would say, on average, he will be over once every two or three months, and if we ask him to come over for a specific reason he will be very open to that.

475 **Q166. Mr Callister:** First of all, on basics then, how many news stories for the website would you generate in a week on average, and how many for television?

480 **Ms Barua:** There are two parts to the news website which you will be aware of. There is the news website and there is the features and analysis. As you know, the news currently is written in Manchester. We can have a say in that. If there is something specifically we want them to do, we can tell them and they will respond, but I do not have editorial control over anything that happens on the news website at the moment.

Q167. Mr Callister: So the scripts are written in Manchester?

485 **Ms Barua:** For the news?

Mr Callister: For the website.

490 **Ms Barua:** Yes.

Q168. Mr Callister: On the basis of information that you forward to them?

495 **Ms Barua:** Yes. There is also an arrangement with Manx Radio, whereby they get a news feed from Manx Radio.

Q169. Mr Callister: So really, Manx Radio comes ahead of your website story, then. In effect, you are lifting it from Manx Radio. Is that right?

500 **Ms Barua:** I think what you need to say is that Manx Radio is one news feed for them in Manchester. They are obviously on all the circuit lists for the press releases that go on the Isle of Man.

505 They have also developed, over the past five years, a lot of their own contacts they can phone up at any one time and get quotes from, and of course we are another. Because we are producing news for television, we are a very important feed for news online, but we do not write it – that is my point – at the moment.

510 **Q170. Mr Callister:** Let’s get to the basic number of stories that might be on that site in a week. You have to generate them from here, essentially, don’t you? Or are you leaving it to Manchester to decide which of the stories they want on the website?

Ms Barua: Both. They will generate news across there and we will also contribute.

Q171. Mr Callister: The website, of course... One of the things I noted on it is that in that search engine, if you want to use the search engine, it does not isolate the Isle of Man stories. If you put in a name, for instance, you get everything across the whole of the BBC, virtually, with that. Is it possible to isolate the Isle of Man element of it?

Ms Barua: So you are going on the search site on the BBC website?

Mr Callister: On your Isle of Man BBC website, yes.

Ms Barua: No. What you will get is BBC wide.

Mr Callister: You will get everything?

Ms Barua: You will, yes. An easier way of doing it is to google 'BBC Isle of Man' and the name of the person you are interested in.

Q172. Mr Callister: Right, okay!

There is supposed to be this wonderful exchange of material between the Isle of Man and the UK BBC, but it seems to be a one-way traffic, rather, because we do not... One of the things – and I have already spoken to the Managing Director of Manx Radio about this... There are some ideal voices on BBC Radio which would be superb radio news cuts for Manx Radio, but we never seem to hear those. Have you had any conversations about that with Manx Radio, about getting audio feed on inter news?

Ms Barua: This is not something I am really across, but my colleague, Louise Dow, is here from the BBC, as well, and I think she will be able to give you more information on that, if you are happy to hear from her as well.

Q173. The Chairman: Can I just pick up other points. You were saying that you write some of the content that goes across to Manchester for the website.

It was one of the things that I picked up early on when there was the initial setting up of this Committee, when I put the motion to Tynwald, that the website said, 'Ministers will decide'. It was not Ministers, it would be Tynwald that would decide, and I actually phoned up the BBC. It is a strange thing that, if you have got a web content here and we are getting inaccuracies on the website, it is not particularly reporting the Isle of Man very well if you write a story and then somebody edits it before putting it onto their website. So do you think it would be better if the whole thing was actually managed here, rather than in Manchester?

Ms Barua: I think you have got a really good point here. This is one thing that I have been talking to my managers about a lot. We are now in a position where I need to do a week's training in August which will enable me to write news stories for the Isle of Man directly.

Q174. The Chairman: Because one of the other things that came up as well was... I think there was a report on the BBC and they actually had, I think, the Isle of Wight sign instead of the Isle of Man.

Ms Barua: I know, yes.

Q175. The Chairman: It is these sort of things that reinforce the myths of where the Isle of Man is in relation to the UK. What action, do you know, if any, was taken regarding that, and was that a story that people from here were involved with, or was it people from the UK who came over for that story?

Ms Barua: For that particular story, it was a crew from the UK who came over. I am completely with you. When I saw that, my heart sank because, as you know, every single day we are working to make this project work and things like that just are horrendous, absolutely horrendous, and it matters hugely.

Isle of Man Newspapers were good enough to write a story about it, so their screen grab I sent to my line manager's line manager – as high up as I could possibly imagine – and I said, 'Listen, this is not acceptable, and certainly in the light of the conversations that we are having with the BBC at the moment, please see that something is done about this.' I do not know what has

happened as a result of that, but I imagine it was someone sitting somewhere in some gallery who just did not know.

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Q176. The Chairman: You must have contacts within BBC North West now and the wider BBC. Do you get the same feeling that other areas get misrepresented similarly to the Isle of Man, or is it just us who seem to get the...

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Ms Barua: 'Misrepresented', I think, is not the right word. I think there are so many... The Celtic fringes especially, I think, have always historically fought for more recognition from the BBC about the differences in their cultures to Britain and *vive la différence* – let's have the debate.

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Q177. Mr Callister: Let's take today, for instance. Let's get back to this business of how many stories are generated. You would sit down this morning at some time to decide what you are looking for today.

Ms Barua: Yes.

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Q178. Mr Callister: What is the process for that? There are three of you, presumably, there.

Ms Barua: Yes.

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Q179. Mr Callister: I take it you are head news editor.

Ms Barua: No, we are all on an equal basis.

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Q180. Mr Callister: You are on an equal basis. So what is the actual process, then, to say, 'Well this is what we are going to do today,' because presumably everything has to be okayed by Manchester, anyway, doesn't it?

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Ms Barua: Not everything has to be okayed by Manchester, but the news for television obviously has to be commissioned by them. Once that has been decided, one of us will go and cover it for television. Then there is always... I would not say a trickle, more of a rush of other stories that we can tackle at any one time, which can be considered features or analysis, and obviously we need to be feeding Manchester news as well on various... especially if there is a breaking news issue, with photographs and copy. So, yes, basically it kicks off from that initial meeting in the morning, but also bearing in mind that we do online sport, which is time-consuming, too.

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Q181. Mr Callister: You have been in news on the Isle of Man probably from the very start when you went into journalism. What about the other two journalists who are here? Are they fully familiar with the Isle of Man, its quirks and so on?

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Ms Barua: Mark Edwards is one of my colleagues, who is a Manx guy, Castle Rushen educated, completely aware of the Isle of Man. The other person is one of the most remarkable journalists I have ever met in my life, just out of university, and she has slipped into this role in ways I could not imagine. She is Cumbrian, so she has an understanding of some of the rural issues that we have here on the Isle of Man, but her learning curve is phenomenal. I am in awe, really, of what she has done and been able to do.

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Q182. Mr Callister: Do you see, then, that the time will come when all of your stories will be generated here and do not need to have some commissioning editor somewhere else saying, 'This is okay,' or 'It is not'?

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Ms Barua: It is a tricky one, that. The BBC Trust made a decision last year, which affected the Isle of Man considerably, and that decision was to reject BBC management's plans for local video.

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The reason why they rejected it was they conducted a public value test of the proposals and they came up with the conclusion that the public value is outweighed by the market impact of the proposal, so it would have a negative market impact on other media organisations. So if, for example – (*Interjection*) Yes, I think we all felt the same way. That meant that, for the Isle of Man, let's say, we are unable to put any video online unless it is commissioned by television because it was deemed to be too dangerous commercially for newspapers and other radio stations that are

635 beginning to put video online. The competition was seen to be too great, in that it would have a negative market impact on our competition.

Q183. Mr Callister: This was a BBC Trust decision, then, was it, or a BBC head decision?

640 **Ms Barua:** This was a BBC Trust decision. The BBC management put the proposals forward and the Trust rejected them.

Q184. Mr Callister: So your hands are tied to a large extent?

645 **Ms Barua:** To putting video online, yes.

Q185. Mr Callister: There is nothing to stop you from going out and getting the video, even if you do not put it online, though. If something important happens, you must dash out with a camera, mustn't you?

650 **Ms Barua:** Absolutely, yes. There is absolutely nothing stopping us from getting that video because we can scribe a story up from it. It is great to have a record of any interview, as you know.

Q186. Mr Callister: How do you cover Tynwald?

655 **Ms Barua:** Do you mean the 5th July Tynwald?

Q187. Mr Callister: No, the sitting of Tynwald every month.

660 **Ms Barua:** I think it is fair to say it is monitored, and if there is a story that would talk to the community, if it has a real public interest, then we will talk to our editors about covering it and how we can cover it.

Q188. Mr Callister: But from the Tynwald Agenda, you would recognise, surely, things that would possibly be worth covering and have a camera person there when those debates take place.

665 For instance, last month there was a defeat of Government under one of the moves made by David Cannan, which was not reported in any of the media that I can recognise. Certainly, it was a major defeat for Government: they were extremely embarrassed about it. It was a move, by I think it was David Cannan, on providing the information for reduction of services in the future. The only way you get a story like that is having somebody there in the Chamber to see what is happening. You have not got anyone in that position, have you?

670 **Ms Barua:** No. Can I just say something about what you have raised there? I think you are coming from the point of view of having a political correspondent we can have on the case all the time. We are not in a position to be able to do that. What we are interested in, and the BBC Isle of Man team, is seeing the stories that are coming through: for example, the Civil Partnership Bill that is being discussed. We will not go to Tynwald and film you discussing it at the moment.

Mr Callister: Very wise.

680 **Ms Barua:** We will go to a gay couple in the Isle of Man whose lives are going to be impacted because of your discussions, so it is about the community for the community. Often we need a ministerial statement within there, too – we will get that as well – but as for purely political coverage of Tynwald, we just have not got the manpower to do that, or the medium to broadcast it on.

685 **Q189. The Chairman:** So how do you know a story may come along? Like Mr Callister said, it could come out of nothing. Who would report to you? If you have got nobody there, are you hoping... How do you monitor? Is that through listening to Manx Radio, or is it hoping that somebody from Manx Radio will inform you of what has happened?

690 **Ms Barua:** We get the Tynwald papers beforehand, what is coming up, so we know. Also, we are monitoring what is going on on AM Manx Radio all the time and, yes, Manx Radio is another feed. There are various ways of keeping your antennae out, and that is what we do.

695 **Q190. The Chairman:** Does the BBC hold the purse strings, as in the ability for you to go out
and film events to make news stories? Are you restricted that way at all – the additional cost of
having to go out and make all these films on what might be happening, and then not actually using
it, or putting the website news together? Do they say, ‘Well, we’ve got to fill your day up, and
700 rather than you go off and film this, we want you to stay in the office and write something up for
the website’? Is there any control by the BBC there on you?

Ms Barua: We are never concerned about filling our days up. No. We will be able to make that
judgement here on the Isle of Man.

705 **Q191. The Chairman:** You say you have your meeting in the morning about what you are
going to cover. If a story breaks in the afternoon, do you have to get approval from the BBC to
actually go out and film it, or do you just...

Ms Barua: In the early days, we probably would have phoned up first. Now I will phone up on
710 the way. You get a sense very quickly about what is going to have regional impact and what is not
and, generally speaking, any breaking news story will be used, even, like I said, if it is a minute in
the morning on the breakfast bulletins. Yes, it does get used. They are very eager to get Isle of
Man news onto the BBC.

715 Can I just take the floor for a couple of minutes? I did want to fly the flag, as it were, because
one of the missing links for me in this inquiry has been that there are three very dedicated
journalists here who are, on a daily basis, trying to get stuff on the BBC from the Isle of Man. Not
that that is difficult to do any more, because they are very eager, but when people say to me,
‘What do you do?’ and the Audience Council comes up with, ‘Well, BBC coverage is rubbish’, I
get quite passionate because we are working every single day so hard.

720 I just wanted to give you a picture of recent commissions so that you have an idea about what
we are actually getting on to the news, because it is a misconception that there is nothing about the
Isle of Man on the BBC. It is a question of whether people are watching. Very recently: Guy
Martin talking about his TT crash; Tynwald Day package – within this there was Tynwald Hill as
725 a potential World Heritage Site and the Manx language movement, which is gaining momentum;
Isle of Man Rally package; former Dr Who, David Tennant, filming on the Isle of Man – that was
a package with a wider look at the Manx film industry; basking sharks packages; the tin bath races
were covered; Mark Cavendish in the *Tour de France*, and one of our team was actually sent to
Paris last year to get the background – the family background, the Isle of Man background – on
730 Mark Cavendish within that package, which went national; local clockmaker putting his work on
exhibition in London; internment on the Isle of Man; Isle of Man Sports Awards; ex-servicemen
protesting about the end of the Reciprocal Health Agreement; cyclist, Jonny Bellis, on his
recovery and his hopes for the future; arrival of the tall ships on the Isle of Man; steam train
commuter package during TT Week; extensive coverage of the Isle of Man Bay Festival – that
735 included interviews from the bands who came over, i.e. Spandau Ballet and the local bands as
well; Matt Dawson, sports star, came over to help promote rugby here on the Isle of Man – that
was another package; extensive coverage of the TT Races – that included the Green TT race,
coverage online each day, summary package at the end of the festival, rider interviews and
interviews with each of the winners; there was a package on the opening of the Joey Dunlop
740 Centre; there was a package on health and safety concerns with the TT; interview with former
marshal, Hilary Musson; there was a package on riding through the generations with Phil Kneen,
who is a rider, and his family; and there was coverage of the TT funeral for Paul Dobbs; there was
the anchor raised from the sea bed from a Manx ship which sank during the Dunkirk landings;
there was Mick Jagger proposing using the Isle of Man as a testing ground for legalising cannabis;
there was EasyJet launching from the Isle of Man; there was a group of students embarking on a
745 relay swim from Cumbria to raise money for Africa.

I have got lists of this and I could go on, but I just wanted to say at this point that it is a
misconception that the Isle of Man is not covered on the BBC. It is a question of whether or not
people are watching.

750 **Q192. The Chairman:** Do you think that is where we probably miss out? I know in the
Channel Islands they have a set time. Do you think if the BBC gave Isle of Man news a set time
where they knew it would be on, it would be more beneficial, then? There might be a story on
from the Isle of Man and there might not be.

755 **Ms Barua:** I have never even considered that, to be honest. What I would be wary about...
Bearing in mind that everything I say is from a broadcast journalist's point of view – I have no
managerial steer in any of this – I would be reluctant to make the Isle of Man special.

760 **The Chairman:** It is.

Ms Barua: Of course it is special, but I would not want it to become a sort of 'Okay, now let's
have the Isle of Man news', because at the moment the news going onto Manchester television
stands head and shoulders with the rest of the news from the region, on an equal basis, and it is
there because of its merit, because of its interest as a news item both for the Isle of Man and
765 people in the north west of England. So having an opt-out... I do not know. It would make us a bit
special.

Q193. The Chairman: How do you think the staffing of the Isle of Man is, compared to
Jersey and Guernsey? Do you think they get a better deal out of this? Do you think you need more
770 staff here?

Ms Barua: For our brief at the moment we have adequate staffing levels. Jersey and Guernsey
have a radio station and a television station, so yes, they have more staff available, but for what we
do, three is, in my opinion, a good number.
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Q194. The Clerk: Just thinking about what you have just said, I think you said that there is a
lot of work going on and you are supplying material to the BBC about what is happening in the
Isle of Man, but people in the Isle of Man might not be watching. Certainly that is my experience.
I do not want to watch half an hour of television news about the north west of England on the off-
780 chance that there might be a story about the Isle of Man. So do you see your job as providing a
service for the Isle of Man, or providing a service for the north west of England about the Isle of
Man?

Ms Barua: Personally, I see my job as providing a service for the Isle of Man.
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Q195. The Clerk: Is it a marketing exercise?

Ms Barua: No, absolutely not. There probably should be more marketing involved in this. I
think –
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Q196. The Clerk: How does it benefit licence fee payers in the Isle of Man to have their news
seen by people in the north west of England?

Ms Barua: I do not think it does necessarily benefit the Isle of Man. We are not in the job of
795 promoting the Isle of Man – that is the job of the Isle of Man Government Tourism Department –
we are in the job of reporting impartially and balanced from the Isle of Man to the BBC, and that,
for me, is the job.

Q197. The Clerk: Is it possible to do that and at the same time to confirm and strengthen the
800 idea of the Isle of Man as an independent nation?

Ms Barua: Yes, absolutely. That happens, anyway, because we are from here, so we have a
very strong sense of that. I am not quite sure what your question is there.

Q198. The Clerk: I think it is the simple point that, in terms of the overall structure of the
broadcast landscape of the BBC, we are being treated as part of the north west of England and we
are not part of north west England.
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Ms Barua: Yes, but regionally, geographically, that is where we are, isn't it? We have to
810 accept that, and actually, what happens around us has to be of interest. We cannot just be isolated
here in the middle of the Irish Sea. What happens around us, both in Ireland and in England, is of
relevance to the Isle of Man. Also the political life – what happens in the UK is hugely important
to what happens in the Isle of Man.

Q199. The Clerk: Do we send any stories to BBC Northern Ireland?
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Ms Barua: Actually, we work very closely with BBC Northern Ireland during TT. If there is something that they pick up on our prospects that is of interest to us, then, yes, we will work with them and *vice-versa*.

820 **Q200. The Chairman:** As part of that, you were saying that as a north west region, but if you are reporting back to Manchester and somebody in Manchester is looking at story A, which is going to affect a million people in Liverpool, and there is another story that is going to affect 80,000 people in the Isle of Man, do they do the, 'Well this is a million people and this is 80,000 people, so we will put the million people ahead of the 80,000.'?

825 **Ms Barua:** No. I do not think they do, actually, because you see packages on North West Tonight about, which might only, probably, affect 12 people, but they are interesting stories, you know? So, I really do not think that that is part of their editorial process. I remember there was something very recently on canal boats not being allowed to go down a particular canal. That can only affect a few people, but looked great; it was very well reported and it had some wonderful interviews in it.

830 **Q201. The Chairman:** You see, I think some of the perception is that you will see a story on the BBC about Wirral County Council, bin collection, but when you are reporting the Government of the Isle of Man, it does not seem to have the same weight as Wirral County Council and it is trying to get the people in the BBC to understand that we are not a county council, we are more important than Wirral or any other county council. Is that a part that you have to try and force over to them about the difference between the Isle of Man and the UK?

840 **Ms Barua:** It is a thing I will say quite regularly, but I do not think I have to force it. You know, I think it is generally understood, but how it is perceived is another thing by the viewer and it is interesting to hear how you feel.

I do not know. One of the reasons I welcome this inquiry is it keeps the pressure on and that is absolutely great. It is going to make this project evolve even more.

845 **Q202. Mr Callister:** You gave us a very impressive list of TV items that have been presented.

Ms Barua: Oh, I have got more.

850 **Mr Callister:** Well, I could quite happily listen to more. Let me come to... We are talking here about tin baths and Cavendish and Mick Jagger and so on. As far as the TT was concerned, did you report on deaths?

855 **Ms Barua:** If there were deaths... It seems like a long time ago to me, now, but, yes, they would have been reported.

Mr Callister: That would have been reported?

860 **Ms Barua:** Yes.

Q203. Mr Callister: The difficulty you have, presumably, is the Isle of Man generates very little hard news. I would call it hard news; major stories. Is that a difficulty?

865 **Ms Barua:** No.

Mr Callister: It is not a difficulty?

870 **Ms Barua:** No. Not at all, because, the stories that the Isle of Man creates, the fact that we have got a world-class cyclist at the Tour de France. It is huge, and there are so many things. Who else in the world has tin bath races? Okay, I am understanding what you... It is world tin baths! We have –

Mr Callister: Tin bath races on television are pure fillers.

875 **Ms Barua:** But it is still the Isle of Man and, okay, it is very light-hearted news, but not everything can be hard news.

Q204. Mr Callister: You have not got any examples of hard news, really, in the list you gave us, I do not think.

880 **Ms Barua:** Oh, let me go on, then. We have got... Well, I do not know: Easy Jet launching flights in the Isle of Man. That is pretty good. Out of hours medical services package; how the Icelandic ash cloud affected Isle of Man flights and local business and the local ferry company. How the passing of the Civil Rights Partnership Bill will affect gay couples on the Island. We have got a package on how police deal with mephedrone on the Isle of Man; getting a work permit
885 in the Isle of Man; civil partnerships, I have said that. And the North West Constabulary drugs campaign. It is a very diverse mixture of stuff we cover.

Mr Callister: Thank you.

890 **Q205. The Chairman:** When we do our report, is there anything in our report that you think we should put in which would assist you and say, 'Well, this is where we need to go.' Anything that would concern you and do you think, if there was a recommendation to withdraw or amend the TV licence fee, how do you think that will affect?

895 **Ms Barua:** The first part of that question, I would say, in my negotiations with BBC managers it has helped me and could help you to be very specific about what you want. I think that has always been a very good tool for me to use. And then, of course, they can meet you with clarity and say, 'okay, budgetary concerns' on their side.

900 Amending: I do not know. I do not really know the answer to that question, because, this is new territory for all of us. I do not know how you could proceed with that. I would see the way forward being you continuing to talk with the BBC and to say, 'Listen, we really think this would work. What do you think and how can we make it happen?'

905 **Q206. The Chairman:** A question you can say that you do not want to answer, but would you say that the Isle of Man gets a fair deal, compared to Jersey and Guernsey?

Ms Barua: Again, that is a tricky one, is it not, because of the radio station situation. Yeah, without a BBC radio station here we are doing, I think... I think it has helped us be more creative in what we can do.

910 Do I think we get a good deal? Well, I do not know. I do not know. There are a lot more journalists working in Jersey and Guernsey. We all know that, but we get, regularly, two minutes on North West Tonight on our newsstands, together with the other regions. It has the same impact as the other regions.

915 Jersey and Guernsey get an opt out. I think –

Q207. The Clerk: Sorry, just to come in on that. You say our news has the same status as the other regions. Well, I do not think you mean regions. Do you mean something that is smaller than the North West of England or do you mean the other regions –

920 **Ms Barua:** Within the North West of England.

Q208. The Clerk: Other places within the North West of England.

925 **Ms Barua:** Yes.

Q209. The Clerk: So, if we get a really good story, it will be seen regionally, in the same way as if you are working in a region, if you get a really good story, it would be seen nationally?

930 **Ms Barua:** Yes. I mean, we can also get our stories national as well, if they are good enough. I have got a little list of those for you, too. We had Tynwald Day. I made a package on Tynwald Day last year with that buzzword, democracy, involved in it and focused on the Petitions of Grievance. That went national. That was spotted within the prospects for North West Tonight that were going out that night and News 24 said, 'Oh, we like that.' And took it for News 24.

935 Other things which have gone national were, do you remember when Douglas Council inherited some money from a man called Douglas. That was quirky enough to go national. I once got a radio package on Woman's Hour which had not gone anywhere else. It just went straight to

Woman's Hour. So, yeah, there is definitely scope and, you can hear the whoops of joy when we get something to go national in the BBC Isle of Man office.

940 **Q210. The Chairman:** Do you get much going towards radio: BBC radio?

Ms Barua: Well, for example, you were talking about the deaths in the TT. If there is somebody from, I do not know, Northumbria, who dies here, we will do a two way with them. We always do a two way with Radio Cumbria on the TT. Yeah, we will often do two ways with other regions that have somebody of interest here on the Isle of Man. Also, Radio Lancashire came over very recently – I am not sure if you are aware of that – and they did a three-day broadcast at the Villa Marina and they consulted with me about who they should have on their panels in the morning. So, yeah, that was a... It is not regular, but it does happen.

950 **Q211. Mr Callister:** Final question, from me anyway. What sort of feedback do you get from the public; either for the website or the stories that are generated on television?

Ms Barua: The feedback that I got in the past: for the website is, 'Great features and analysis, but the news was a little slow'. Television: 'Saw you on telly last night.' You know. It varies!

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Q212. Mr Callister: No huge volume of feedback, then?

Ms Barua: No, not really. I think that generally goes to the Audience Council, doesn't it?

960 **Q213. The Chairman:** One final. Do you consider the Isle of Man would be better served if we also had the satellite opt out, similar to Jersey, that we could just have a satellite slot for people to see Isle of Man news?

Ms Barua: Do you mean the opt-out situation as in North West Tonight?

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The Chairman: Then they can just... They do not have to do it over the... Just have the satellite broadcast of the Isle of Man sections of it? You could opt out. You see the BBC regional ones as you go through the satellite signals. So you have got all these regional ones. A separate Isle of Man one. Would that be something else to do?

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Ms Barua: Fill the day a bit. I do not know. I do not know. I really do not know if that would better serve the Isle of Man or not. It would just mean that what we already do, goes to a different place. It is a difficult one for me to answer.

975 **Q214. The Chairman:** Anything else you would like to tell us before you go?

Ms Barua: I have no more lists. Do not worry.

980 **Q215. The Chairman:** Earlier, you said your colleague was Louise Dow. Would she like to talk to us now, before...?

Would you like to come and give some evidence now, Louise?

Ms Dow: I do not want to gatecrash, but I might be able to help with a couple of points.

985 **The Chairman:** Yes.

Ms Dow: Okay.

Ms Dow was called at 11.12 a.m.

EVIDENCE OF Ms L DOW

The Chairman: Right. If you could just introduce yourself and explain what you do for the BBC.

Ms Dow: Okay. My name is Louise Dow. I am currently working for the Nations and Regions Division; English regions within that. My job title is, rather grandly, Business Manager, but I suppose that means that we look at a whole range of provision for radio, television and online that the BBC is making within the Nations and Regions Division.

Q216. The Chairman: I was mentioning earlier about the poor reception of some of the BBC radio stations. Is that within your remit to rectify or to have input?

Ms Dow: It is certainly something that we can have input into and it is an ongoing issue for the BBC, not just in the Isle of Man, but in other areas, as well. As you quite rightly said, there is the issue of some analogue transmissions. There is also the issue of digital radio provision. I say it is an ongoing issue, not to say I cannot give you an answer, but generally, because in terms of digital provision, the way that the licences work, Ofcom, the regulator, offers digital platforms, first of all or, actually, only to commercial radio providers and if they come forward and want to set up a digital multiplex, then the BBC can apply for a place on those multiplexes and that, I understand, was set up to make sure that the BBC does not have any sort of monopoly and is in charge of every method of transmitting.

Obviously, that means that we are very much in the hands of commercial stations as well and Ofcom and that is why, in some parts of the areas that we serve, not every area receives digital transmissions and the analogue services, as I say, is an ongoing thing that we feed into. As Helen mentioned, it is issues that it gets fed into by the Audience Council that can go all the way up to the Trust and it is an ongoing issue.

Q217. The Chairman: Do you consider that the digital roll out will continue or, as we see now, that digital listenership is actually dropping off and people are going back to analogue, that it is the way forward or –

Ms Dow: Oh. Now, that is a very good question and there are people a lot more qualified than me who are struggling with that as well. It is a very difficult one, simply because there are, as you know, problems across the entire industry, especially for the commercial sector in terms of, you know, it costs money to set up these multiplexes, these traditional multiplexes, and at a time when everybody is struggling for funding, they might decide that it is not high on their list as a priority.

If that – it is a bit of a crystal ball moment – I do not really know the answer, but if that were to continue, it may well be that digital is not seen as the way forward, not just for the BBC, but for the entire industry. But I am afraid that is something that everybody is wrestling with at the moment and I do not have an answer to.

Q218. Mr Callister: Do you know, off hand, the extent to which digital listeners exist at the moment or the percentage that have gone over to digital?

Ms Dow: I do not, but it is something –

Q219. Mr Callister: It is certainly under 50%, is it?

Ms Dow: Honestly, I do not know, but if it is something that the Committee is interested in, it is certainly something we can try to find out.

Q220. Mr Callister: It seems a bit odd to me that you are suggesting that the BBC may be backing away from this, because everything I read about it is that they are still trying to push very hard and, as a business manager, is it one of your responsibilities to try and drive it?

Ms Dow: No. I am sorry if I did not make myself clear. I am not suggesting the BBC is pulling away from it. I am saying that the industry as a whole, there are lots of question marks at the

1045 moment, especially because of the way the provision works, in terms of who comes and sets up the digital multiplex – the thing that allows you to broadcast digitally – and because of pressures and financial pressures on the industry at the moment, it is not a continual roll out. You will notice that in some areas it is almost on pause. It is on hold. So that is what I meant about nobody is really sure at the moment.

1050 It is certainly not a BBC policy that we are saying, ‘Oh no, digital is not the way forward and that is not what people should be doing.’ There are lots of very successful BBC services and non-BBC services that broadcast on digital. But I am sorry, I understand the implication of the question to be, ‘Are we all definitely going towards digital and there will be no analogue services in the future?’ That is quite tricky to answer at the moment because, as I say, in some areas, the digital take up has not happened yet. I am not saying it will not, but it has not happened yet.

1055 **Q221. Mr Callister:** You were here to hear what Ariane Barua was saying about her role for the BBC in the Isle of Man. It seems to me that, to some extent, and maybe it will change in the future, her hands are a bit tied, having to work through Manchester, rather than directly here on the Island. Any comments on that?

1060 **Ms Dow:** At the BBC we would be very worried if we thought any of our journalists felt their hands were tied.

1065 **Mr Callister:** I used the words, of course, not her.

Ms Dow: No. I understand that.

As Ariane mentioned, it is something that we are trying very hard to address, in the sense that she mentioned the training course that she has got coming up next month. That is a programme that is being rolled out, not just in the North West region, not just for the Isle of Man, but for lots of the local areas that we serve, because there is a recognition and an understanding that, of course, if your journalists are based somewhere, they know the area better than anyone else and so, if the news, whether it is in radio, television or web form, can primarily be generated from the locality, then who has a better understanding of the news and the area and the background and the context than the journalist here? That is what we are trying to move towards, hence the training course that was mentioned earlier.

1075 **Q222. The Chairman:** Do you think the staffing on the Island is adequate for possible expansion of the web-based content all being dealt with here and are there any other plans, do you know, of expanding the staffing here?

1080 **Ms Dow:** We have no plans to expand staffing imminently or coming up. I think, again, as Ariane mentioned, what is useful for us is to hear quite specific examples of the kind of content or the thing that you would like to see the BBC doing. I think you asked earlier what is the sort of feedback that you get from people and very often people say you do not do enough or we want more, but everybody’s ‘more’ is slightly different and what we need to try to do is to make sure that we are providing the right kind of content for the most number of people.

1085 So, for example, some of the light stories that you mentioned, some people might say, ‘well, why are you doing lighter stories, I want to see hard news.’ But for other people and the BBC as a whole, especially in local and regional services, a lot of people say, ‘There is quite a lot of doom and gloom in the world. Can we not have some lighter stories?’ And so, I suppose, the example that I am trying to make there is, what we need to do is to try and we would like to do is to work together to find out, if you want more coverage, what sort of coverage, because it is from that and the sort of content and the sort of coverage that you then work out your staffing levels and how best to provide that.

1090 **Q223. The Chairman:** I suppose, in one way, when you said about bad news, the Isle of Man’s point of view – and I suppose people would say that we have got our economy still growing here compared to a lot of places in Europe, our unemployment is still at a low figure and yet that does not seem to be coming across in anything about, in a positive way. People saying, ‘Yes, well you report all the bad things or the tin bath race.’ But, as in some of the Tynwald debates, where they are talking about different things that affect the economy of the Isle of Man and it is one of those areas that some people in business say, ‘Well, you do not promote as you would in other areas of, say, the North West.’

1105 **Ms Dow:** Well, actually, hearing that, that is a great example for us – and when I say ‘us’ –
 you know, day to day, that is the kind of thing that Ariane and her colleagues do need to hear,
 because we are... What we want to do is we do not want to dictate the news, as it were. Of course,
 there are really important things happening on the Island that would naturally form part of the
 1110 news agenda, but the point of having journalists here on the ground is to hear from local people
 who have got interests in a variety of things and that is the kind of thing that we want to hear,
 because we are trying.

Ariane mentioned earlier about an example of the rights for gay couples. We would cover that
 in terms of getting a statement and then looking at what Ministers might say about that, but we
 also look at it from the point of view of somebody who might directly be affected.

1115 Similarly, if there are stories about the economy, we want to reflect them in as wide a range as
 possible and that is why we have got journalists on the ground and they go out and they work
 tirelessly to go out and meet people and say, ‘Right, the economy is a huge story at the moment
 across the world, but what is it for you at the moment? Give us your points of view about it.’ So,
 we do not just want to hand down the news, we want people to tell us and then we will do our best
 1120 to cover it from a range of angles, really.

Q224. Mr Callister: I wonder if I could suggest to you that the Isle of Man clearly is not part
 of a region? It is not part of any region; it is an Island. It is self governed. It is a nation in its own
 right and it has to fit into your regionalised system of the BBC, but there does not seem to ever be
 1125 recognition that the Isle of Man is quite separate from the UK.

We sort of get lumped into it, whereas in the Channel Islands, they would probably be regarded
 rather differently and also, of course, we have established, that the Channel Islands have an annual
 financial advantage, a great advantage over the Isle of Man, which is equivalent to about £2.8
 million in the services they receive for television and for radio. So, looking at that, is there not a
 1130 case for the BBC providing more for the Isle of Man, due to the fact that we are not part of the
 UK, although we are paying the licence in the same way?

Ms Dow: Well, part of this process and other processes that are going on already, we do want
 you to tell us what else you would like. I am sorry if it feels like I am repeating myself, I do not
 1135 mean to, but we want to be quite specific about it and reach this in a partnership, because what we
 also are very conscious of doing, is not encroaching on the territory of other media providers and it
 is a bit of a balancing act and a bit of tightrope.

The BBC does not want to go into any area, whether it is the Isle of Man or anywhere else, and
 sort of stamp all over the fantastic provision that exists already and is growing up as well. We need
 1140 to try to work in partnership and that is actually one of the reasons I was here and part of my remit
 at the moment is to try to further our partnership with Manx Radio.

Q225. The Chairman: As part of that, the Isle of Man Government gives a subvention to
 Manx Radio of over £1 million per year, so there is support there, but is there any thought that,
 1145 with your national news coverage, you could give other media, as well as Manx Radio, the use of
 your news feeds as part of that?

Ms Dow: Well, when we entered discussions with Manx Radio about our news feeds, we also
 got in touch with some of the other local media and said, we are having these discussions. We
 1150 would never set out to work only with one media partner. That is not what we are about; we are
 about wider partnerships and we have been very open about that and we have said, ‘Here is what
 we are talking to Manx Radio about.’

Sometimes, it is just not a natural fit. I think there are some similarities between the style of
 news and the type of news that the BBC would provide and Manx Radio provides and that might
 1155 not be a fit with another radio station and in which case they might say to us, ‘Well, that does not
 really help us because it does not fit in with our style of news.’ And then that is the point where we
 say, we are happy to look at other partnerships. We are listening. If you would like to talk to us
 about something. We do not have all the great ideas. I will be honest. They might have thought of
 something that we had not, actually.

1160 **Q226. The Chairman:** It is very similar to you training a number of journalists up at Manx
 Radio. Have you thought about expanding that training to the other providers on the Isle of Man,
 to give them the benefit of it as well, not just Manx Radio?

1165 **Ms Dow:** Well, as I say, we are open to suggestions.

Q227. The Chairman: Has there ever been a thought of doing, like, a Crown dependencies regional TV coverage, instead of it being North West? That you do the Crown dependencies. So you could have Jersey, Guernsey, Isle of Man and it just gives it that separation, that we are not just anchored off Liverpool.

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Ms Dow: Honestly, I do not know. I cannot tell the Committee whether that is ever something that has been discussed or not. Again, I can find out for you if that would be of use.

The Chairman: Yes, that would.

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Ms Dow: I am sorry. I do not know.

Q228. The Chairman: Is there anything else that you would like to say about comments that have been made earlier on that you would like to try and clear up?

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Ms Dow: I do not know if I am clearing things up or not, to be honest. Actually, just one thing struck me when you were talking a bit earlier about provision of coverage of Tynwald. You may or may not be aware that BBC Parliament are in discussions with Tynwald at the moment about the potential for doing a regular television slot each month specifically focusing on Tynwald. That, as I understand it, has reached the point of whether Tynwald would welcome that and then we need to look at the technical side of fixing up cameras and that kind of thing.

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Again, that is the sort of thing that comes out of quite specific requests or ideas and for me that is quite a good example of us saying, we understand that the Isle of Man is saying to us we would like you to do more and we really want to listen to those views but something specific like that, that would be of value to the most number of people on the Island, that is the kind of thing that would really help us to take things forward and try to work in partnership with you.

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Q229. The Chairman: So, would that be with the BBC providing the cameras and the feeds through or would you be looking for the Government to finance everything else and you just use what we have actually got there?

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Ms Dow: Again, I do not know about... I have not been involved in those specific kinds of negotiations and I am not entirely sure whether the negotiations have got as far as getting into things like that. Again, it is something that I can find out where we have got to with that.

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It is something that we do already in other areas in the past. It is a mixture. Sometimes it is funded by the BBC; sometimes if there is infrastructure there, it is a partnership. Every case is a bit different.

Q230. The Chairman: I think, in one way, people would look at it as that it would be part of the BBC licence fee commitment to do something, rather than the Isle of Man paying similar, not to be more disadvantaged than other regions by paying more just for other people to take that feed from us. And I think that is one of the main reasons why we are seeing whether we are getting value out of the TV licence.

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From looking at what Jersey, Guernsey get, to us, there is a huge differential between what we get and what they get and whether you feel... Would you say we get value for money?

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Ms Dow: Oh, my goodness. That is a difficult question for anybody to answer.

I will be honest, it is slightly before my time in the BBC. As I understand the Jersey and Guernsey situation, it is slightly... It is different, because of what existed in the first place in Jersey and Guernsey, compared to what existed here when the BBC was rolling out some of the local services and, again, I go back to the point about not wanting to encroach and being very mindful of this. The example of the BBC Trust rejecting the proposal for local video that Ariane mentioned is a good example of that. There was some very, very strong lobbying from local newspapers and other local media providers saying, 'We are doing that already' or 'We are trying to do that. We do not feel it is right that the BBC comes along and starts doing that as well. It is not fair. It makes the marketplace more crowded.'

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As I understand it, there were elements of that to be taken into consideration when, as I say, the BBC was rolling out its local services and what existed on Jersey and Guernsey was very different to what existed on the Isle of Man and we are here to try to work in partnership and enhance the local media environment, not stamp all over it.

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1230 **Q231. The Chairman:** If, for instance, under the BBC Charter, when they are running local radio stations, there is a certain input that they had to put in locally... if the BBC was to run Manx Radio, would you consider the content any different in the future than it is now, apart from the adverts?

1235 **Ms Dow:** I am not sure that Manx Radio would want the BBC to run Manx Radio. Well, like any radio station, not just the BBC, there are service licence agreements and any radio station that the BBC runs has to meet the service licence agreements that are set by the Trust and agreed with the regulator. That would apply to any radio station or any kind of service that the BBC might run.

Q232. The Chairman: Would you think that Manx Radio's local content would be kept as is, or it would become more of a music station with the feeds from national radio stations in between?

1240 **Ms Dow:** Well, there is no suggestion that the BBC is going to run Manx Radio and so I think for me to speculate on that is just not appropriate.

1245 **Q233. Mr Callister:** I realise you have not been involved in the Tynwald discussions and so on, but what would the BBC policy be over editorial control of that material?

Ms Dow: What, in terms of who has the editorial control?

1250 **Mr Callister:** Yes. In other words, could they simply slice pieces that suited a news story. So, would we have the editorial control here? Would Tynwald have its own control over what is used or would the BBC feel that they could then be selective on anything that is on that site?

1255 **Ms Dow:** Well, the BBC, as you know, has BBC Parliament and film and we have editorial control of that. The very nature of news is that you cut things up and you slice it to tell a story. However, you know, the BBC exists and is – tolerated is not quite the right word, I hope more strongly than that – but actually, one of the founding principles of the BBC is fairness and impartiality and accuracy and no BBC journalist worth their salt would ever cut something in such a way that gave a misleading impression of something that has happened. We always retain the editorial control over any material that we may have or we may decide to transmit, but we are very careful with what we do with that material. It is a case of slicing it to fit the news agenda and make it digestible for people.

1260 We know from our audience research that however much we would all like them to, people will not sit through a stream of several hours of business being transmitted from Parliament or Tynwald or wherever. We have to make it more digestible, because people lead busy lives and they will not sit and watch it. We always retain the editorial control to do that, but within that, we are telling the story as it happened and giving a fair and accurate representation of what has happened, whether it be in Parliament, whether it be in Tynwald or wherever.

1270 **Mr Callister:** Thank you. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

Ms Dow: Thank you for letting me gatecrash. Sorry about that.

1275 **The Chairman:** Right. A few more chairs.
I would like to invite our next witnesses, please.

Mr Ferguson, Mr Le Prevost, Mr Smith and Mr Wint were called at 11.37 a.m.

**EVIDENCE OF MR G FERGUSON, MR D LE PREVOST,
MR G SMITH AND MR A WINT**

1280 **Q234. The Chairman:** Thank you. This will be a panel discussion and for the sake of *Hansard* I will just remind you and ourselves that we must not have more than one person speaking at a time. Before we start, please could you introduce yourself and which organisation you represent.

Mr Ferguson: I am George Ferguson, Director of 3FM.

Mr Le Prevost: David Le Prevost, Director at isleofman.com.

1285 **Mr Smith:** Gavin Smith, General Manager at isleofman.com.

Mr Wint: Andy Wint, Chief Executive, Energy FM.

1290 **The Chairman:** Thank you for coming today. We wrote to you last month, asking you to comment on the scenario where the Island was not within the scope of the licence fee. We will start with the scenario and I would first like to give you each the opportunity to make an opening statement.

1295 **Q235. Mr Ferguson:** I think, with regards the BBC's licence fee in the Isle of Man, it is imperative that it is maintained. I think the BBC do a remarkably good job in television and in radio and what they offer the Isle of Man cannot be replaced by withdrawing the licence fee and trying to do it ourselves. It is an impossibility.

1300 With regards television, the television could quite easily be received digitally so, therefore, removing the licence fee is not a major problem, because we would still get the television. If you removed the licence fee, the radio could quite easily be turned off, because it is transmitted via analogue transmission.

1305 However, what the BBC has to offer is *absolutely vital* for the wellbeing of the Isle of Man and the population of the Isle of Man, whether or not you believe that the content is sufficiently Manx or we get a reasonable deal. What we do get is we get a product which over 50% of the Isle of Man's population regard as theirs. Less than 50% regard what comes out of the Isle of Man as theirs. So, it is far more important to have that.

In reality, if you are going to remove the licence fee, you have to do it in such a way that it is not going to impinge upon the majority of the Isle of Man and you cannot do it.

1310 **The Chairman:** Thank you.

Q236. Mr Le Prevost: Our views are very similar to what George has said. The aspect of the television component inside the licence fee and what that provides for the Isle of Man and for Isle of Man residents is so big that I think withdrawing it would upset the local population so much that they just would not support it at all.

The Chairman: Thank you.

1320 **Q237. Mr Smith:** Likewise, I think George has hit the nail on the head and David and I share the same views, that we do not see a scenario where the licence fee currently paid to the BBC could be withdrawn without great loss to the many different types of audience profiles that the BBC serves. It was mentioned earlier that there are many different types of programming, be that radio, be that television, different types of content on website: that says many different types of audiences and there is the potential to lose that appeal if the licence fee was withdrawn.

1325 **Q238. Mr Wint:** To answer the question that, if the Island were not within the scope of the UK TV licence fee, would it be possible to put in place an alternative arrangement under which BBC services could still be made available to the Island, I think that is twofold, really. Practically, what would happen if the Isle of Man did and I think we should play devil's advocate and say, what happens if Tynwald were to give Isle of Man citizens a right not to pay the BBC licence fee? What would happen? What would the BBC do? Would they turn their transmitters off? Would they withdraw from renting sites around the Island and what impact would that have on consumers on the Isle of Man, in television and in radio? So, I think there is a great component in this equation that just has not been consulted and that is the views of listeners.

1330 I agree with the other three panellists that replacing BBC network television on a local basis is fatuous. We could not do it. People do watch BBC network television. However, the question is does the Isle of Man get value for money and I think the elephant in the room is that everyone knows it does not. So, I agree with the rest of the panellists, but I think we should play more devil's advocate.

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Q239. The Chairman: What sort of content or extra value do you think we could get from the BBC.

1345 **Mr Wint:** I think you need to put in context that a lot has been said about the Channel Islands and we need to put in context that there are two very different media landscapes. I am probably the only person on the Isle of Man who was actually in the States of Jersey Assembly in May 1979 when the decision was taken for the States of Jersey to approach the BBC to bring on local radio. It was taken in a debate whereby the States had sourced a medium wave frequency for Jersey for a high-powered commercial radio station and the view was taken that radio on Jersey would be better served – or the people on Jersey would be better served – with a BBC local radio station, rather than a high-powered commercial radio station which, in effect, would be targeting the south of England, and the media landscape in Jersey has existed subsequent to that.

1350 I think one of the things no-one has mentioned today is the fact that Channel Television has been on air in Jersey and Guernsey since the early 1960s and that is an enormously important component to the media landscape in Jersey and Guernsey, where they have a commercial television station, a BBC opt out, a BBC local radio station and one commercial radio station per Island plus, on Jersey, six editions of the Jersey Evening Post. Our media landscape on the Island is entirely different by virtue of history.

1360 Tynwald licensed Manx Radio in 1964 and Jersey got Channel Television. The Isle of Man was first out of the box with local radio and Jersey, the Channel Islands, were first out of the box with local television. You could say there is something of the tortoise and the hare about this, in that the Isle of Man was way ahead of everyone else in the British Isles with local radio and Jersey was not, but we now find ourselves in the situation where the Isle of Man does not have any local television to speak of, apart from tokenism via an editor in Manchester, and Jersey gets two. So, I think the Isle of Man should demand more from the substantial amount of money that its citizens give.

Q240. The Chairman: Okay. Anybody else any comments on...

1370 **Mr Ferguson:** I think it would be very easy to put a rosy scenario together about what we should demand and what we should expect. I have heard two different things. Why on earth do the BBC have to do anything more than they are doing? We are a nation of our own, to ourselves, externally. Does it matter? That is a question I ask. Do the BBC have to do any more? Yes, they say they do. Yes, they are always trying to improve the quality. Yes, they always want to have more local input here, there and everywhere, but how are we going to twist their arm? We will never twist the BBC's arm to do more for us as a nation by threatening to withdraw a licence fee. It would never happen. Why would they want to? They would just say, 'Thank you very much indeed. Nice idea, go away and play.' And that is what they would do to us.

1380 So, by trying to threaten to take the licence fee away is not going to work. How can you put an alternative forward. Andy was saying, let us see if we can play devil's advocate. Devil's advocate is simple. Take Manx Radio's subvention away from them and give Manx Radio to the BBC to run as a non-commercial organisation. As a commercial operator, would I not say that? What a lovely idea. We get rid of one commercial operator and I have a clearer playing field to play in, but it does not actually work like that, because as anybody knows in business, if you have to expend a certain amount of money into different areas and one of those areas disappear, you do not actually put that into the other two areas, you put it back in your pocket and you say, 'Thank you. I do not have to spend that money on advertising now.'

1385 But would the BBC want to take over Manx Radio? Why should they? What is the point? Manx Radio is doing an extraordinarily good job for a 70,000/80,000 population and what people have to realise is that Manx Radio has been doing this for 40/45 years extremely well. The Isle of Man should not underestimate the value of Manx Radio and should not underestimate the impact that Manx Radio has on the community. To ask the BBC to take it over, again, is a non-starter because of the constraints financially and because of all the rules and regulations that the BBC work under. So, again, being devil's advocate, what is the alternative? Unless you can actually come up with an alternative, there is very little point in having the discussion.

1390 **Q241. Mr Callister:** If I come to Mr Ferguson first and then Mr Wint. The question that really faces this Committee now, because I think there will be an acceptance that the BBC would be disinclined to remove any part of the licence fee, the question that remains in front of this Committee is in what ways could we, perhaps, get better services, improved services, more

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services, from the BBC? Do I get a suggestion that maybe we should be pushing for the BBC to do television from the Isle of Man?

1405 **Mr Ferguson:** Well, indeed, that is two separate questions. We have to be able to tell the BBC what we want. It is all very well saying, 'Listen, BBC lads, we would like you to do more for the Isle of Man, please.' And they will say, 'Well, what do you want?' And that is what we have heard today from the two representatives from the BBC, and quite rightly so.

1410 Do we know what we want? Do we want more information from a marketing point of view in television, in radio? Do we want it on the website, online? Do we want the videos that we are not allowed to put online because the guys have not commissioned them online? Is that a marketing exercise or do we want our own television opt out? Our own television opt out in my view is a non starter.

1415 **Q242. Mr Callister:** If the BBC were asking you what 3FM could get from the BBC, have you any thoughts that 3FM might be able to get?

1420 **Mr Ferguson:** I cannot see anything that the BBC would bring to 3FM. We have a specific brand which we utilise to reach a specific market and that brand would not fall within anything that the BBC do. So, I cannot see anything that the BBC can bring within our brand.

1425 **Mr Smith:** If I might add to that, Mr Callister, I think George makes an excellent point there, because whilst it is quite apparent that the BBC is very willing to provide its content to other content providers on the Isle of Man, the key important thing is differentiation in that content. There are several newsrooms on the Isle of Man; some at radio stations; some at newspapers; some at websites. We are all chasing the same news, essentially, but we report on that in different ways and that is important to maintain that differentiation, because if the news was the same everywhere, it makes it very, very difficult for commercial players like ourselves to make us attractive to different types of advertisers who want to reach different parts of audiences.

1430 **Q243. Mr Callister:** But from isleofman.com's point of view, you must have been quite pleased to hear that the BBC do not want to intrude too much in your kind of area now. That was something that came new to me today. I had not heard that before. Is that encouraging to you in some way?

1435 **Mr Smith:** It is not for us to dictate what the BBC do, but as we have said the way the news is carried by different places is what makes the different channels different. We can get news out there a lot quicker than the BBC because the hierarchy they have to go through is that at the moment the Isle of Man is a news gathering part of BBC in the North West of England and it is Manchester who decides what are the big stories and, as they said to us, 'If Manchester say, "this is a big story"', then they are not allowed to put it on the website if it is going to be televised.

Q244. Mr Callister: But, Mr Le Prevost, what is your news gathering process then?

1445 **Mr Le Prevost:** Well, our news gathering process here is that we are building it up. We are in an embryonic stage at the moment and, by the end of August, we will have three journalists, experienced people, on the Island, gathering the news on the Island and, being a website, we do not have to wait until the next news bulletin, we have an immediacy that helps to make isleofman.com different from the other channels.

1450 **Q245. Mr Callister:** So, you are becoming a news agency in some way, are you?

Mr Le Prevost: Yes, indeed. Yes.

1455 **Q246. Mr Callister:** And Andy Wint, now, as far as the viewers, you referred to viewers and getting their views. We have got a huge file of comment that we have had from viewers. You will probably finish up more or less 50/50 across the Island, 'Yes, we should pay this licence/No we should not.' So, I do not think you get a definitive answer from going to the public on this issue, as far as I see it. But you think we do not get value for money from the BBC?

1460 **Mr Wint:** I do not blame anyone specifically. I just think it is historically the way the media landscapes have grown up in the two jurisdictions, in that the Isle of Man was radio led and Jersey

1465 was TV led, both with newspapers in the background, but what has happened is that we are where
we are and we have heard, time and time again today, from the two BBC people, Wilf White said
it at last, 'the BBC want to know.' So, I think we are in the crucible now. We need to crystallise
our views and put them forward to the BBC. They patently want to hear what we have to say and I
do not think we should tread the same old line.

1470 We are a nation and, time and time again, we have heard – and I have sensed the mood of the
room – us being lumped in with Manchester, because patently we are not. We are closer to the
Mull of Galloway, but we are nothing to do with them, either. We are nothing to do with
Newcastle in County Down. It is the Isle of Man and the Isle of Man, constantly, we hear rhetoric
in Tynwald about the image of the Isle of Man, the place of the Isle of Man, Tynwald being the
oldest continuous parliament in the world, but I venture to suggest 90 people out of 100 do not
even know that in Cheshire and Manchester and on the Wirral in Liverpool.

1475 **Q247. Mr Callister:** If the BBC were offering you some services for Energy, are there any
that you would say, 'Yes, we would like this; we would like that; we would like something else'?

1480 **Mr Wint:** Well, they have not. Before the last meeting, I was approached at a hurried meeting
with someone from the BBC who said that they may be offering GNS services to Manx Radio and
did we mind.

Mr Callister: GNS?

1485 **Mr Wint:** Is the general news service of the BBC and did we mind? And I said as long as we
get a fair shout as well, no. It may be possible that we could get something from the BBC. To be
quite honest, it depends which part of GNS it came from and it depends how relevant it was. But,
at the moment, Energy FM gets its international news from Sky.

1490 **Q248. Mr Callister:** When you were programme controller at Manx Radio, would you have
welcomed the idea of the BBC service that we currently get, coming at that time or not?

Mr Wint: It is a hypothetical question, really.

1495 **Mr Callister:** Well, if you were confronted with a decision, shall we have and shall we not
have it, knowing what it is?

Mr Wint: Well, I would wonder what benefit it gave to Manx Radio, apart from office rental
income. Clearly, I just wonder what benefit would it have given to Manx.

1500 You see, I am a fervent believer in a national radio station for the Isle of Man. I think it defines
what the Island is; it has been a very proud servant to the Island for 45 years; first as a commercial
operator from the South Africans who came over and then from 1968 when it was brought into
Government. It has been a very faithful servant to the Isle of Man; does a fantastic job on limited
resources and I was there when the Darwin Report was compiled and went through. Manx Radio is
fine.

1505 I think the television aspect is one that needs to be focused on.

1510 **Q249. The Chairman:** Would you consider that the BBC have offered training to Manx Radio
staff and there is the option for the news service. Do you think other media, as the BBC's
commitment to the Isle of Man, like yourselves, would take up any offer to have extra training
through the BBC's resources? Would that be of benefit to your organisations?

1515 **Mr Ferguson:** I think so, without a doubt. I think it would be wrong to say that any form of
training, any form of advancement in knowledge would be welcomed by anybody, but in that area,
yes. On specific areas of broadcasting, there is not a lot the BBC can offer us, but in the training
aspects, outside of the actual broadcasting, yes, there are areas that could be, may not be.

Mr Le Prevost: It is a possibility. It depends what services they can offer.

1520 **Mr Wint:** Journalistically, I mean, Wilf White mentioned last time that Manx Radio journalists
have been given free training and Manx Radio paid the costs. We would welcome our journalists
to be given free training by the BBC.

Q250. Mr Callister: Would you pay the costs or would you prefer the BBC to pay?

1525 **Mr Wint:** Well, Wilf White said in the last Committee meeting that the BBC was here to support radio in the Isle of Man and he used the specific words. I would welcome him supporting radio in the Isle of Man in journalistic training.

1530 **Q251. The Chairman:** And about the provision of national and international news, would that be of benefit to your organisations, rather than have to go out to other organisations and pay for their –

1535 **Mr Ferguson:** As Gavin said earlier on, it is all very well to have the BBC giving us their news, but we are different organisations and if your news service is the same across every organisation then what is the point? We have to have different slants on stories *and* different stories.

1540 **Mr Wint:** I think only if there was something – if we were allowed access to it and we could pick and choose and if there was, obviously, an international story that was of relevance to the Isle of Man; let us say a Hong Kong banking collapse or something and the BBC had a correspondent there, it would be useful to be able to take that rather than wait for Sky... I have worked in organisations in the past that have sourced news from different organisations. It is often quite healthy.

1545 **Q252. The Chairman:** So, if you had a wish list of things the BBC could help you with, what would it be?

Mr Ferguson: A 50 inch plasma! (*Laughter*)

1550 **Q253. The Chairman:** As for your organisation, yes, 50 inch plasma. But realistically – do not say a 60 inch – but, realistically... and don't say 60-inch! (*Laughter*) But realistically, services, assistance. There will be recommendations that we have to make.

1555 **Mr Ferguson:** The difficulty the BBC would have, I presume, is actually offering a commercial organisation services, because their remit, unless I am wrong, or their mandate, states that they cannot operate within a commercial organisation. However, they are doing that with Manx Radio at the present moment, so therefore there are ways around everything.

1560 I think the training aspect is very important. I do not think any of the product that we use currently on our radio station, on 3FM, can be bettered by culling stuff from the BBC. If there are national events, as has already been mentioned – say, for example, the death of the monarch, and so forth – then archive material could also be utilised in stories from that area. As the BBC have the best archive in the entire world, it would be folly of us to say we do not want to use it, if we can. It is just little things like that, really, which are huge in effect.

1565 **Mr Le Prevost:** The BBC has got vast news resources. Programming is of no interest to us, so we would only be a news feed, but it would have to be one that we can pick and choose from, and I think the provision of that is highly unlikely.

1570 **Q254. Mr Callister:** Have you extended, or are you going to extend, into using video as well on your website?

Mr Le Prevost: A website does lend itself very well to video content and we do see that coming onto isleofman.com.

1575 **Mr Callister:** It is not yet, is it?

Mr Le Prevost: It is not... Well, some is there. We have proven the technology and we have done some articles on it, but it will be a year before that really starts to climb.

1580 **Q255. The Clerk:** One thing that everybody on the panel has in common is internet services. The two gentlemen in the middle only provide an internet service, and the two gentlemen on the left and right provide a radio station which has also a website. I think it would be interesting to

hear, as the BBC has put more effort into its website, whether you have noticed any impact on your websites in terms of the way the market is developing.

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Mr Wint: No, Energy FM's website continues to grow exponentially. If they have been doing anything special, we have not noticed it.

Mr Smith: I think that perhaps a limiting factor, at this current time, for the popularity of the BBC Isle of Man website – and Ariane has touched on this in detail – is that the decision-making process about what content can and cannot be posted seems to be quite a long one. The number of staff in the BBC Isle of Man newsroom is similar to ours. We know what output can be achieved when the decision-making process is short.

People in the internet environment want the immediacy of news. So, like Andy's website, ours continues to grow in traffic, continues to grow in popularity. We have not noticed, in our analysis and intelligence, that we are losing traffic to BBC Isle of Man or that it is dropping off as a cause of anything that they are doing, but I think that their own decision-making process has limited the appeal of that website, although we know that, from our own resourcing of the newsroom, they have the potential to generate an awful lot more.

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Q256. The Clerk: If the BBC Trust had taken a different decision and had agreed to allow the English regions to put video news up off their own bat – I think that was the issue – would you have been worried?

Mr Le Prevost: I would be worried for the media in the Isle of Man because a strong video presence is, I believe, the future of news, and video over the internet is going to feature far more in the future than it does now, and a very strong BBC channel with a lot of video in it would have an impact upon the newspaper websites and upon the radio station websites, and that was picked up by the BBC Trust. I fully appreciate why they said no, and I think that was the right decision.

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Mr Smith: The only thing I would like to add is that production of video generally requires a skilled operator and is an overhead that those of us sitting here on this panel cannot bear in our existing organisational structures, but is quite within the scope of BBC Isle of Man. If the decision had been – Jonathan, to answer your question – different, then they would have been able to very quickly, first of all, establish a market for quality video provision on the Isle of Man covering news, and establish an almost 100% market share, which would have made it difficult for other operators to grab a slice of that market.

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So it is reassuring, yes. It is comforting – you mentioned earlier, Mr Callister – to hear that they made the decision not to do that because of their sensitivity to the existing players in the market place; although we are commercial organisations, we are used to competition, that is what drives us forward, that is what gives the consumer choice, and that is the world in which we operate. We do not have any comfort. If we do not produce the sort of content that people want to consume and advertisers want to advertise within, then we fail as a business, we disappear, and we cannot fall back on any other means.

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Q257. Mr Callister: The thing that strikes me, then, after what David Le Prevost has just said a minute ago about the importance of video for the future, is that the vast majority of young people today seem to me to go to their televisions, or to their iPods or whatever, for their information. They do not go to watch television for news very much anyway. Isn't it most likely, then, that video or other media, rather than a TV set, is going to bring you news, and there is no real case – and I take this back to Andy as well now – to push for a television station for the Isle of Man, because its use will be overtaken by different media?

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Mr Wint: I think the debate that is surrounding the entire media industry is that of convergence and what delivery platform will gain dominance in the future. It is exercising minds far greater than these here – with respect, (*Laughter*) certainly mine – and no-one quite knows. It is like hitting a pile of soot: no-one quite knows what the landscape is going to be like when the dust settles. No-one knows whether the mobile phone is the way forward. Nobody knows.

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Internet and satellite are certainly the way forward. DAB is a hoax. They are the way forward, but no-one quite knows who is going to deliver the hardware, the software and the pricing structure to make... Of course, it is a generational thing. The kids who grew up with BBC and Apple Macs at school are far more computer literate than I am, certainly. It will depend on where

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the dice fall in the future, and as commercial operators we just hope we are one step ahead of the game.

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Q258. Mr Callister: I take it from that, then, that you would not be prepared to invest in a TV station in the Isle of Man?

Mr Wint: I would not go that far. (*Laughter*) Certainly, Energy FM, in the last General Election, produced a website with coverage of all the candidates and interviews, and we will be doing that next year as well. So there is an appetite for video. Probably there are people in this room who watch BBC Channel Islands News. I do, and I watch Channel Television on Sky as well. I enjoy it.

I think there is a great thirst. Manx Radio proves it with audience figures for their news broadcasts. The eight o'clock news in the morning is the most listened to because people want to know what is going on in the Isle of Man. I do not really think people, consumers, viewers, certainly on the Isle of Man, want the perspective of a car crash on the M62. They want to know what is happening in Colby and in Tynwald. They want to know what is happening on the beaches. We have an Island perspective and I think there is a great thirst for that on the Isle of Man. How it is delivered and by whom is another matter.

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Q259. The Chairman: I think one of the things that we are looking at is whether the TV licence is value for money. On research through the UK, the BBC iPlayer is significantly used and it is a concern that people are actually using that, rather than buying a TV licence, and getting the video content over it, and the BBC has actually mentioned that they are looking to encrypt their service as a way to protect their content.

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Mr Smith: If I might just make a suggestion, I think the Committee might need to look into the requirements for a TV licence to now operate a laptop in the home environment, because I believe that there are some changes in what you actually need because of the availability of BBC programming across the internet.

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Q260. The Chairman: I think part of that came under the rest of the money from digital switchover, that they were looking to put a charge on broadband. So that may be a way that they were looking into that, but would you consider that would affect your services that you provide if the BBC started going more towards the iPlayer and those services? Would it affect your news coverage and programming?

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Mr Le Prevost: I think one of the changes that is happening is that the viewer is time poor, and to be able to sit down at six o'clock and watch the news, or seven o'clock and watch the news, is a luxury that not many people have. One of the beauties about being able to go online is that you can see the news there and it is all printed out.

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Forty-three per cent of Americans get their news online today, and that seems to be the way that it is moving. The internet is very good at delivering news when you want it. I think that is the big difference. It is not so much the technology; it is because the viewer is time poor.

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Mr Wint: I think also it depends on broadband speed. Most people watch television to catch up with programmes that they have missed. Broadband speeds in Los Angeles, I know, are very fast and people do watch TV on broadband in California, but it is down to the infrastructure. Whether or not a stand-alone internet television station could be sustained on a commercial basis I think is, at the moment, questionable.

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Q261. The Chairman: A devil's advocate question for you here: if the BBC were to invest more in the Isle of Man and to give possibly better value for money for the licence fee payer here, do you consider it would affect your organisations, in what sort of way, adversely?

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Mr Wint: George. (*Laughter*)

Mr Ferguson: I do not think it would. We have a brand, which I mentioned before, which is specifically targeted at a specific market, which we are doing quite well in, thank you very much. We do not believe that anybody else coming in, unless they decided to target that market, which they would not do... So I do not think it would have that much of an effect.

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1705 **Mr Smith:** You have got to remember that what BBC services do not provide is a route to market for advertisers. You can only attract advertisers if you have got a circulation, and you can only attract a circulation if you have got content that is of interest.

1710 There is no doubt that an expansion of BBC services on the Isle of Man might attract a bigger audience, but from our own research what we know is that the Isle of Man population go to several different sources for their news concurrently, not one in isolation, because they do not want to miss anything. So, yes, we might put up our radar a little bit higher, but I do not think it would affect us, commercially speaking, because they do not serve the advertiser, whereas we do.

1715 **Mr Wint:** I will just precede my answer by saying I do not think they would, and also I think that we all know the Isle of Man audience and reader better than currently the BBC do, so it would take quite a few leaps in ambition and competence for the BBC to be where the people on this panel are at the moment. So at the moment I do not think it is likely. If they were to do it in the future, it would have to be a sustained period of investment for them to do it and I do not foresee that at the moment, particularly when BBC local radio in the UK is at the moment discussing regionalising rather than giving more local programmes. So I do not think the budget is there anyway.

1725 **Mr Smith:** I think the one thing the BBC have got is tremendous brand power. If the BBC expand their services here, everybody will know about it. Let's look at this as the real big picture: if there is an opportunity to improve news provision and dissemination, both on the Isle of Man and off the Isle of Man, about the Isle of Man – and let's talk about Isle of Man PLC here – then any expansion of news coverage on the Isle of Man by *any* service provider has got to be a good thing for all of us in the long term. We each carve out our niches within that and we each exist commercially in some cases and not in others. We would welcome an expansion of BBC services on the Isle of Man. We would not see it as a commercial threat.

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The Chairman: Are there any final comments you would like to make, or statements?

Thank you very much for your attendance today. This now ends the public sitting of this Select Committee. I would like to thank you all for your attendance. Thank you very much.

The Committee adjourned at 12.14 p.m.