



MEDIA

ALL THE HOT GOSSIP ABOUT MEDIA POLICY AND IMPORTANT PERSPECTIVES.

GOVERNMENT PUBLISHES BBC MID-TERM REVIEW

OVER £1 BILLION AWARDED TO ROLL OUT FAST BROADBAND IN HARD TO REACH AREAS

OUR CHAIR ANDY CARTER RAISES CONCERNS ABOUT THE BBC'S PLANS FOR NEW RADIO STATIONS

CHANNEL 4 LAUNCHES "DIGITAL-FIRST" STRATEGY

GOVERNMENT PUBLISHES RESPONSE TO AI REGULATION WHITE PAPER

PACT RESPONDS TO OFCOM CONSULTATION ON CHANNEL 4 LICENCE RENEWAL

I would like to welcome you all to the first All-Party Parliamentary Media Group newsletter of 2024.

2023 was marked by a series of crucial developments for the sector, with the Royal Assent of the long-awaited Online Safety Act, which officially came into law on 26th October. The significant amendments to this piece of legislation will help to achieve a safer online environment, a collective goal shared by the

entire media industry. The group also welcomed the inclusion of the Media Bill in the King's Speech, and I am pleased to see that the Government is supporting British broadcasters to compete with international firms and big tech competitors! I look forward to continuing to engage with the Bill as it completes its final states in Parliament.

Looking to the year ahead, we can expect another busy year as media legislation

continues to to keep up to date with the sector's ever-changing nature! We can expect to see further rollout of 5G networks, a renewed focus on investing in skills for the sector across the UK, and regulation of emerging technologies such as generative AI. As ever, the Group will continue to keep on top of developments and seek to provide an open forum for discussion within Parliament.

Andy Carter MP
Chair of the Media APPG

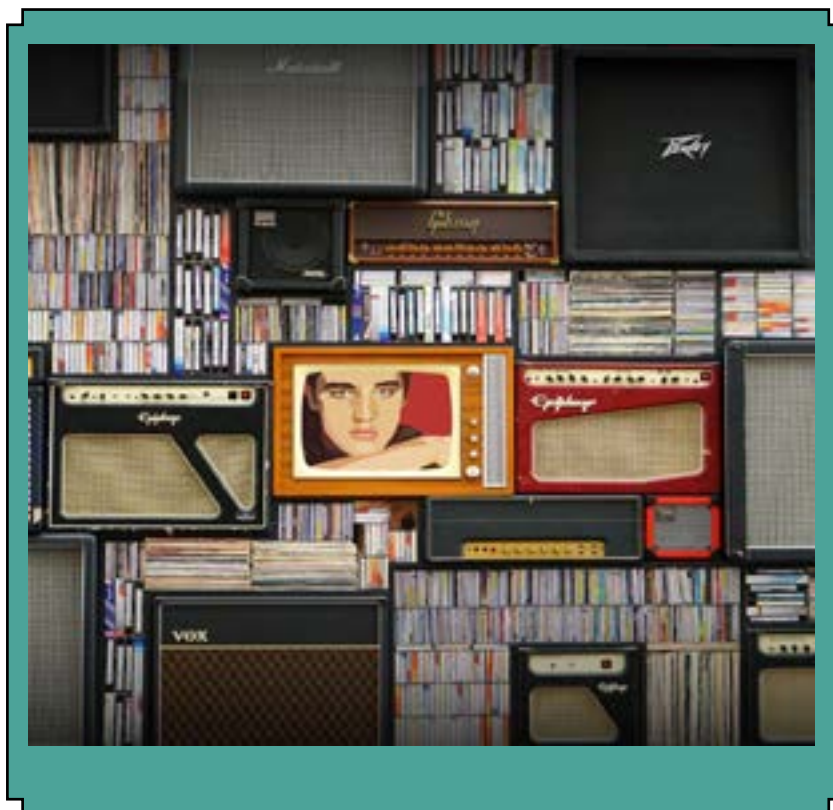
NEWS AND VIEWS

GOVERNMENT PUBLISHES BBC MID-TERM REVIEW

The Government has published its [mid-term review of the BBC Charter](#), a process designed to assess the effectiveness of its governance and regulatory framework in ensuring the best outcome for audiences, while limiting market impact competitors such as commercial radio.

Much of the focus of the review has been on impartiality and improving the complaints process for BBC audiences. However, it also emphasises the need to keep the impact of the BBC on competitors under review. As a result, Ofcom will be asked to report on the position of the BBC in certain markets, including radio and local news.

In addition, the BBC will need to be more transparent when developing new services and will be held to a higher standard of openness and engagement with competitors in future. The current BBC Charter runs until 2027 and will be reviewed in more detail ahead of that time.



OUR CHAIR ANDY CARTER RAISES CONCERNS OVER THE BBC'S PLANS FOR NEW RADIO STATIONS

the BBC is preparing to launch some new national radio spin-off stations that they would like to broadcast in DAB+ on their national DAB Digital Radio multiplex.

The stations planned include an enhanced version of Radio 1 Dance and a souped-up version of BBC Five Live Sports Extra using some of the BBC's sports podcasts. The new stations are un-named at the moment, but will include:

- Another Radio 1 spin-off station focused on new talent, and playing classic tracks from the past 20 years from artists Radio 1 has championed. Anthems-ish?
- A Radio 2 spin-off for the over 50s with UK music from the 50s to 70s. Radio 2 Boom it seems.
- A Radio 3 spin-off playing calmer classics and choral works. Radio 3 Smooth?

During DCMS oral questions on 22nd February, our Chair Andy Carter raised concerns about these new stations, stating they are a direct imitation of commercial broadcasters' innovation. He argued that the time and resource the BBC are investing could be better spent in reversing the cuts to BBC local radio.

GOVERNMENT PUBLISHES RESPONSE TO AI REGULATION WHITE PAPER

On 6 February 2024, the Government [published its response](#) to the March 2023 consultation on a pro-innovation approach to Artificial Intelligence (AI) regulation. The consultation response sets out a summary of the evidence the Government received along with its formal response and next steps for the AI regulation framework.

The Government explains that its proposed regulatory framework builds on the existing strengths of the UK's AI industry and expert regulatory ecosystem, focusing on ensuring that regulators are prepared to face the new challenges and opportunities that AI can bring to their domains. It is announcing several new initiatives aimed at making the UK an even better place to build and use AI, including the allocation of £10 million to jumpstart regulators' AI capabilities, a commitment by UK Research and Innovation that future investments in AI will be leveraged to support regulator skills and expertise, and a £9 million partnership with the US on responsible AI as part of the International Science Partnerships Fund.

NEWS AND VIEWS

PACT RESPONDS TO OFCOM CONSULTATION ON CHANNEL 4 LICENCE RENEWAL

Pact, an organisation representing production companies, has [responded to Ofcom's consultation](#) on Channel 4's license renewal, advocating for mandatory quotas to ensure that 50% of the commissioning budget is spent outside of London. They also propose separate quotas for the Nations, similar to the BBC's model.

These suggestions aim to address concerns about Channel 4's potential shift towards in-house production and its impact on the wider production sector, particularly in regions outside of London. Pact CEO John McVay emphasises the importance of supporting independent production companies across the UK and urges Ofcom to consider strengthening Channel 4's commitment to this goal. These proposals seek to provide certainty to the industry amidst ongoing challenges identified in Ofcom's consultation.



CHANNEL 4 LAUNCHES "FAST-FORWARD" STRATEGY

Major changes are coming to Channel 4, as they are set to close some of their linear channels – in favour of moving to a streaming-based future. This transition announced by the channel is a response to evolving viewer habits and the rising dominance of digital media.

Channel 4's new ['Fast Forward' plan](#) involves commissioning TV shows that are more suitable for the streaming audience, along with improvements to the Channel 4 app. Furthermore, the channel plans to launch additional free, ad-supported streaming-only channels, and try to tempt more people into signing up for Channel4+, its ad-free service (see more details below).

However, adding to the notable changes under Channel 4's plan is the challenging decision to reduce the workforce, with significant job cuts being a part of this strategic transformation. Whilst Channel 4 have stated this move is essential to streamline its operations and invest more efficiently in digital priorities, it has received significant backlash across industry.

GOVERNMENT AWARDS OVER £1 BILLION TO ROLL OUT FAST BROADBAND IN HARD TO REACH AREAS

The UK government is making [significant progress](#) in its rollout of next-generation broadband, with £1.1 billion in contracts signed to connect 677,000 rural homes and businesses across England. The Project Gigabit initiative aims to provide faster and more reliable 'gigabit-capable' broadband to areas that would otherwise miss out. Six new contracts, totaling over £450 million, have been announced, allowing immediate surveying work to connect around 236,000 premises, with the first connections expected in early 2025. CityFibre will deliver five of these contracts, serving various rural communities, while Connexin will upgrade premises in Nottinghamshire and West Lincolnshire. Full fibre broadband can deliver speeds up to 1,000 megabits per second, significantly faster than traditional connections, offering economic growth, job creation, and improved access to online services for rural areas.

EVENTS



PAST EVENTS

MEDIA APPG ANNUAL RECEPTION

On Wednesday 7th February, the Media Group hosted its Annual Reception.

We had a fantastic line-up of speakers including Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Lucy Frazer, Ofcom Chief executive Dame Melanie Dawes, Competition and Markets Authority Chief Executive Sarah Cardell, Creative Industries Council co-chair Peter Bazalgette, and our Chair Andy Carter MP.

They spoke with an audience of some of the industry's most prolific movers and shakers, giving invaluable insight into what lies ahead in media policy and regulation.

UPCOMING EVENTS



EVENT ON DEVELOPING SKILLS AND GROWING TALENT IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The Media APPG will be hosting a roundtable event discussing skills within the creative industries, how these can be developed and potential reforms to the apprenticeship levy.

MEDIA GROUP'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Media APPG will be hosting its annual general meeting on Tuesday 19th March, where the officers and members will be formally elected. If you are interested in attending the AGM, or becoming a Member of the APPG, please contact hello@appgmedia.com.

Get in on the action: Support our APPG

Get yourself a seat at the table and a platform for your views - become a sponsor of the Media APPG.



Benefits of sponsorship include:

- ◆ Access and influence media policy with parliamentarians & policymakers
- ◆ Organise events in parliament with the Group
- ◆ Attendance and visibility at all Group events
- ◆ Six invites to the industry event of the year: the Group's annual reception
- ◆ Acknowledgement on all Group digital and print materials
- ◆ Opportunities to contribute to our blog and feature on this newsletter
- ◆ Parliamentary engagement supported by the Group's Secretariat
- ◆ A listing in the Parliamentary Register of APPG

The All-Party Parliamentary Media Group: enriching and informing debate and policy.

To find out more information or to support our group, email hello@appgmedia.org and follow us on Twitter @APPGMedia

Feel free to forward this on to anyone you think would be interested. We welcome guest blogs and enquires about upcoming events.



This is not an official newsletter of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. It has not been approved by either House or its committees. All-Party Parliamentary Groups are informal groups of Members of both Houses with a common interest in particular issues. The views expressed on this site are those of the group's secretariat and the authors of the individual articles.

The Secretariat for the APPMG is run by [Whitehouse Communications](https://www.whitehousecommunications.co.uk/). To unsubscribe from this newsletter, please email STOP to hello@appgmedia.org.