

Comms Review Series: Scotland Seeks Power in Broadcasting & Broadband



Philip Schlesinger, Professor in Cultural Policy at the [University of Glasgow](#) and Visiting Professor in Media and Communication at the LSE, assesses proposals to the Communications Review consultation by Scottish interests.

Responses from Scotland to the Communications Review [Consultation](#) offer a good indication of how debate is likely to be shaped north of the border once the Green Paper has been published.

So far as broadcasting is concerned, the [Scottish Government's](#) position emphasises the 'strong desire for content relevant to Scotland' to be produced in Scotland and the need for 'true plurality'. In its view, this entails more provision of Scottish content beyond that produced by BBC Scotland and STV. The Scottish Government – like [STV](#) in its submission – supports the creation of an all-Scotland licence for Channel 3, removing the present arrangement whereby ITV controls the Border TV licence. The Scottish Government also wishes to have greater powers to control broadcasting in Scotland.

As the main commercial TV incumbent in Scotland, STV has reaffirmed the importance of delivering PSB content, especially through a range of diverse platforms. It takes the view that the shift from analogue to digital has now largely met current demand for television services, not least given the continuing strong showing of PSB players. Not surprisingly too, it is a strong supporter of regulation that continues to ensure that TV production is distributed around the UK and also supports the idea of investment in UK content as a characteristic feature of PSB.

[Tern TV](#), a leading Scottish indie, also strongly supports regulation for independent production quotas as essential to continued activity. It notes the impact of falling revenues from broadcasters on the exploitation of its programme IP over the past five years.

Submissions by the [South of Scotland Alliance](#) and the [Scottish Local Television Federation](#) read as though crafted by the same hand and have an identical leitmotiv running through them. Both are critical of a centralized approach to communications in the UK and both advocate more devolved regulation for the 'region/nation' and the locality. Devolved regulation of spectrum for local use is particularly underscored as is a bottom-up approach to production for PSB purposes.

On the theme of spectrum, the Scottish Government advocates a competitive telecommunications market to encourage broadband take-up, noting the present lack of competition outside the main population centres in Scotland. The Scottish Government is especially keen to underline the limitations of market-led investment in such areas and the need for regulation to ensure a USO in next-generation broadband.

