



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE BBC AND THE NORTH EAST SCREEN INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP

CONTEXT

The BBC is the UK's primary public service broadcaster. Paid for largely by the public through a Licence Fee, it is universally available to viewers right across the UK, providing them with free access to content that informs, educates, and entertains. It is vital that the BBC reflects the lived experience of viewers from all four nations of the UK.

There has also been a growing recognition of the importance of the Licence Fee as a key investor in the creative economies of the UK's Nations and Regions, and that local voices, stories and portrayal can benefit from vibrant local production & talent ecologies.

On 18 March 2021, the BBC announced its Across the UK plan, a strategy which will shift the creative and journalistic centre of the BBC away from London and move not just people, but power and decision-making, to the UK's Nations and Regions. It will bring the BBC much closer to the communities it serves and represent them better. It will see the BBC spending at least an extra £700m outside London by 2027/28 across TV, Radio, News, Digital and Support Functions.

The North East of England has a long history of investing in the cultural and creative industries and in recent years, this commitment has been further extended through particular focus on the contribution of the creative industries – and its strategic development – to local economic regeneration plans.

The North East Screen Industries Partnership (NESIP) is a new vehicle, established to facilitate the strategic development of the TV & screen industry in the region, including screen industries and FE / HE organisations building creative talent in the region.

NESIP represents all North East Local Authorities working in partnership. It includes Tees Valley Combined Authority, (representing the five authorities of Hartlepool Borough Council, Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council, Darlington Borough Council and Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council), the North of Tyne Combined Authority (representing its three partner authorities Northumberland County Council, North Tyneside Council and Newcastle City Council) and the North East Combined Authority authorities of Durham County Council, Gateshead Council, Sunderland City Council and South Tyneside Council.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formally signifies the beginning of a long-term partnership and the signatories commit to working together in the coming years to ensure that the delivery of the specific components contained within this agreement provide the foundations for sustainable growth and catalyse a broader renaissance of the North East's creative and screen economy.

THE AGREEMENT - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

This MOU between the BBC and NESIP sets out our shared ambitions for audiences and creators and the wider screen industries in the North East. It has been informed by the BBC's need to serve its audiences by reflecting, representing and serving the diverse communities of the UK's nations and regions, the requirements of the North East's ambitious local creative content sector, and the region's particular characteristics.

The BBC will work with NESIP and local partners in the North East to support sustainable growth in the regional production economy and to highlight the BBC's cultural and economic contribution to the region.

This agreement will significantly enhance the BBC's presence and investment across the whole of the North East with a range of complementary activity working together as a single ecology, playing to sub-regional strengths and drawing on the rich and diverse characteristics of its unique geography.

It will give our local sector access to senior BBC talent and expertise to support their development and the BBC's presence will bring with it further partners to the region. As part of its work, the BBC's ambition is to encourage other existing sector partners to support its focus on the region. A multi-partner approach will expand the benefits across the region, accelerate activity and impacts, ensure the development of a strong and complex ecosystem and provide further opportunities for collaboration.

The NESIP commits to investing in talent, business and infrastructure to support the development of BBC productions and vibrant NE production ecology aligned with the BBC's creative ambitions.

The BBC specifically undertakes the following:

- Seek to target a minimum of £25m of Network TV commissioning spend to the North East over the next 5 years – in line with local investment in talent, business and infrastructure.
- The focus will be on strengthening unscripted production activity and skills in the short term – with the ambition of broadening the range of genres produced from the region in the longer term.
- It will do this by:
 - Basing a new daytime factual commission in the region, providing returning volume to underpin unscripted skills development.
 - Expanding BBC Three activity in the region, by launching a new creative commissioning opportunity in partnership with Northern Film + Media, to discover new factual talent, voices and ideas from the region.
 - Investing in longer-term talent development.
 - The BBC Writers Room will continue to nurture the new writing talent identified through its NE Voices and Northern Voices programmes, as well as running a shadow writing scheme in the region for CBBC's The Dumping Ground.
 - To kick-start the discovery of Comedy talent and ideas in the region by holding a series of masterclasses and events across the region as part of a significant BBC Comedy announcement.
 - Supporting talent and skills development working with the Northern Film + Media (the regional screen agency), and their relationship with HE and FE organisations in the region.
- The BBC has asked NESIP to match its investment to spark the sustainable growth of production in the region. It reserves its right to review the levels of its investment in future years if this is not possible and a sustainable infrastructure is not established to support organic development and growth.

NESIP specifically undertakes the following:

- NESIP will seek to commit a minimum of £11m funding over the next 5 years for Northern Film + Media to promote the region, attracting production businesses, as well as investing in professional talent, skills, creative business and infrastructure development.
- NESIP will create a North East wide Screen Production Fund, and will align its priorities, activities and investments to support the BBC's MOU commitments and wider ambitions in the region.
- NESIP will invest in a talent and skills pipeline with a region-wide strategy and programme of activity that links the Northern Film + Media with HE and FE and other partners with production locating in the region.
- It will, at a minimum seek to match-fund BBC investment in talent and skills development in the region associated with BBC productions or training initiatives.
- NESIP and individual Local Authorities will invest strategically in co-ordinated infrastructure support to maximise production spend in region – consulting with the BBC, and aligning delivery across the North East as a whole.
- NESIP will add to its initial agreed budget by applying for further financial support from government, industry and creative funds, and review their investment as part of future budget processes for the region.
- NESIP will provide a clear mandate, governance and budget to Northern Film + Media to deliver the region's ambitions on production and skills growth. Northern Film + Media will be the main interface between the region, the BBC and other partners.

Both parties agree to work together with other like-minded Broadcast, training and sector partners to further strengthen sustainable production activity, skills and talent in the region.

NEXT STEPS

NESIP will clarify its mandate for Northern Film + Media, including how quickly budget will be made available, and all governance and approvals required for its operation.

In addition, a regional North East Screen Industry Partnership Board will be established, consisting of appropriate representatives from senior leadership from the BBC and NESIP. It will set a roadmap of delivery over the timeframe of this agreement. It will also meet periodically to monitor the delivery of commitments within this MOU as well as how collectively all parties support the wider ambitions to grow its creative community. In the first year, the Partnership Board will meet every two months to build momentum around delivery. Thereafter, it will meet quarterly.

22 September 2021

Signatories

Tim Davie, Director General of the BBC

Ben Houchen, Mayor, Tees Valley Combined Authority

Cllr Shane Moore, Portfolio Holder for Culture,
Tees Valley Combined Authority

Jamie Driscoll, Mayor, North of Tyne Combined Authority

Norma Redfearn, Mayor, North Tyneside

Cllr Nick Forbes, Leader, Newcastle City Council

Cllr Glenn Sanderson, Leader, Northumberland Council

Cllr Graeme Miller – Chair, North East Combined Authority

Cllr Amanda Hopgood – Leader, Durham County Council

Cllr Martin Gannon – Leader, Gateshead Council

Cllr Tracey Dixon – Leader, South Tyneside Council

Cllr Graeme Miller – Leader, Sunderland City Council