



BBC and Northern Ireland Screen

Third Partnership Agreement

June 2021

BBC AND NORTHERN IRELAND SCREEN

THIRD PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

FOREWORD

The BBC and Northern Ireland Screen have again agreed to commit to a partnership focused on sustaining and growing the screen industry in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland's screen industry has moved on apace since the signing of the first Partnership Agreement in 2014 and Northern Ireland now has a strong reputation for the delivery of Television Drama, Children's Drama and Animation, Documentary, Factual & Entertainment and Studio Films

While earlier agreements focused on ensuring that the BBC's production quota for Northern Ireland was met, this agreement assumes that level of production as a baseline.

The agreement commits the parties to the continuation of an interest in sustaining a mixed portfolio of content produced in Northern Ireland to include significant volumes of TV Drama, Children's drama & animation, Factual & Entertainment content as well documentaries.

The partnership focuses on 4 areas critical to the sustainability and future growth of the sector: Infrastructure, Development, Skills & Partnership, as well as a continued commitment to invest in production.



Tim Davie
BBC Director-General



Dame Rotha Johnston
Chair, Northern Ireland Screen

June 2021

1. Infrastructure

Screen production infrastructure has expanded greatly in Northern Ireland over the past 10 years with the development of Titanic Studios and Belfast Harbour Studios.

Belfast Harbour has plans to develop Belfast Harbour Studios further with a doubling of the stage capacity and associated support facilities. Alongside this expansion, Belfast Harbour intends to build a cutting edge virtual production facility promoted by Ulster University as part of proposed City Deal investment in Belfast. The facility, to be called the Screen Media Innovation Lab (SMIL) and designed to integrate production, innovation and research activity, will incorporate a range of resources including a large Volumetric Stage, a SMART stage and a motion capture facility. There is also a plan for a further phase of development to create a state-of-the-art television studio to provide for recent growth in this area and future opportunities.

Northern Ireland Screen assists and partners both Ulster University and Belfast Harbour in relation to the development and expansion of SMIL and Belfast Harbour Studios respectively.

The BBC plans to contribute to this creative sector infrastructure by:

- Replacing its OB Truck as soon as possible. This OB Truck will sustain the Daytime and Entertainment Quiz productions such as Mastermind that are housed within Blackstaff Studio. In the longer run, this OB truck can also interface with the proposed television studio at Belfast Harbour Studios/SMIL.
- Facilitating innovation and making best use of BBC facilities and expertise in advance of the availability of SMIL.
- Collaborating with SMIL and Ulster University in their aim of making SMIL the Centre of Excellence for Virtual Production in the UK and align BBC R&D and innovation in virtual production with SMIL.
- Making best use of the new facilities, and in particular working together to develop television studio provision, as an addition to the SMIL initiative.

2. Development

The BBC and Northern Ireland Screen commit to working in partnership to strengthen the creative sustainability of the sector in the following ways:

BBC Three

The BBC Three scheme, which offers a guarantee of a network series commission, has significantly over-delivered on minimum expectations and will yield 3 x BBC Three series from its first year of operation.

Our aim now is:

- To partner on at least one more round of the BBC Three Youth Content development scheme during the MOU period – with match-funded investment across development and production and a guarantee of further commissions. Northern Ireland Screen and BBC Three will also explore other opportunities to build a more sustainable pipeline from NI.

BBC Two

BBC Two and BBC Nations launched a new co-commissioning opportunity for suppliers based outside of London. The initiative offers guaranteed commissions for each Nation that will increase representation on the channel from across the UK and also develop a sustainable, scalable pipeline for the future. BBC NI is co-funding an 8-10 part observational documentary series, with BBC Two and NI Screen. This is another significant Network-facing initiative, which builds on the model of the BBC Three scheme.

Our aim now is:

- To identify and co-invest in opportunities to develop network series of scale and ambition from Northern Ireland.

Comedy Development Partnership

- To co-invest in 2 year development deals with 4 Comedy producers to build a regular pipeline of Comedy from Northern Ireland. Any pilots or programmes resulting from this development to be co-funded.

Children's Development Partnership

- To partner with BBC Children's to stimulate animation opportunities produced from Northern Ireland.

TV Drama Development Partnership

- The BBC and NIS will agree co-development deals for 4 Northern Ireland based Drama companies to further strengthen the Drama pipeline. The

focus will be on ambitious and/or authored titles which appeal to audiences across the UK, but are rooted in Northern Ireland, and complement existing commissions.

3. Production

NI Screen continues to commit to enable high end production in Northern Ireland and will invest in key BBC commissioned productions where they meet their investment criteria – especially in Scripted and high-end Factual/Entertainment. This applies equally across independent productions and BBC Studios.

The BBC continues to commit to invest a minimum of 3% of its commissioning spend in Northern Ireland but commits to seeking to exceed that baseline during the period of this MOU.

4. Skills

The last two partnership agreements have included investment in skills development and creating job opportunities, most notably the Aim High trainee scheme which has introduced new talent across the screen industry. This partnership will refresh and extend this commitment to talent and skills development in Northern Ireland – reflecting a new focus on diversity, and the strengthening of senior editorial roles in the sector. Specifically:

- Recommission of Aim High but with a focus on diversity.
- The BBC to work in partnership with NI Screen and others to provide apprenticeship opportunities for a wide range of younger entrants to the industry in NI.
- Targeted support for skills development of senior roles on BBC Drama & Comedy series – with clear progression plans.
- The extension of Factual Fast Track into Northern Ireland to strengthen the next generation of factual creative leaders through a partnership with the BBC, C4, NI Screen and TRC.

5. Partnership

- The BBC and Northern Ireland Screen will move to a new framework for their co-commissioning and co-financing of Irish Language and Ulster-Scots content.

- Nations to Network – we will treat ILBF/USBF commissions on the same footing as standard BBC NI commissions where the BBC is a majority funder. We will calculate the network uplift from the combined value of the BBC Licence Fee and the NI Screen Funding (and apply the standard rate of 10% and cap of £10,000).
- Seeking out other opportunities to showcase the work of new talent from NI including a commitment to broadcasting shorts from new talent on BBC NI/iPlayer

6. Sustainability

We will adopt Albert certification in all eligible TV Projects with producers being encouraged to create and deliver their content in the most carbon effective way. Producers should, where possible, source the greenest products and services possible in all aspects of the production life-span.