



Future of BBC News Channel

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BBC management is considering the future of the BBC News Channel as part of a cost-cutting exercise. Several plans are being examined:

- Close the BBC News Channel and broadcast the BBC World News TV in the UK instead.
- Close both channels and create a new one which would air in Britain and globally. It would have a foreign news emphasis, with coverage of UK stories significantly reduced, so as to appeal to an international audience.

The NUJ believes both play an important and different role and therefore must be retained. The union argues that efficiency savings can be made elsewhere.

The BBC News Channel has a weekly audience of 8 to 10 million, reaching more than a third of all households. TV remains by far the UK's main source of news, despite the march of online and mobile content.

The BBC News Channel interviews hundreds of MPs, peers and campaigners from across the political spectrum each year. It provides a vital platform for political debate, scrutiny of public and private institutions and provides policy analysis.

It covers politics across the UK's nations and regions, bringing local issues to a wider audience. BBC News Channel's output is continuous so it has more time to examine issues and seek a wider range of opinion than other news programmes on TV and radio.

UK licence fee payers rightly expect to have their own distinctive domestic channel, while continuing to fund foreign TV news channels in Arabic and Persian, plus 12 TV bulletin services in languages such as Swahili, Pashto, Hausa, Kyrgyz and Urdu.

Joint output would be tricky because of competing domestic and international agendas. How could a merged channel justify rolling coverage of, say, the 2015 Cumbrian floods when, at the same time, more than 500 people were killed and nearly two million people displaced by flooding in southern India?

For its part, BBC World News is a commercial entity. It is funded through advertising and a merger would blur the lines between licence fee and profit.

BBC World News cannot afford to compromise its distinctive international content because of British editorial priorities. It provides, along with the World Service, a vital outlet for impartial

news abroad and promotes the UK's democratic and cultural values. Meanwhile BBC News aired in the UK must be above accusations that it is funded commercially.

If the BBC News Channel were to disappear, it would leave Sky with a domestic monopoly in continuous UK television news.

John Whittingdale, the Culture Secretary, has warned the corporation not to cut news budgets or close a channel. The Government's White Paper called instead for the BBC to save money by becoming a more "efficient, lean organization".

In February, the Best Report from the Lords Communications Committee recommended "the continuation of a dedicated UK news channel".

The NUJ urges the BBC to cut 1,000 management posts as promised and to stop signing off expensive redundancies only to later reopen the same staff jobs. NUJ members have put forward dozens of ideas that would, if implemented, save millions of pounds across BBC News by reducing waste and avoiding duplication without losing services or jobs.

The proposal goes before the BBC News executive board in July.

We hope that parliamentarians will help persuade the BBC to retain two separate TV news channels offering distinctive output, relevant to their particular audiences.