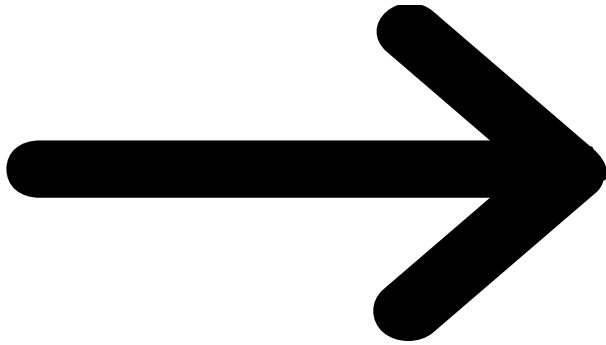


BBC announces major investment in Scotland

22 Feb 2017



Significant investment in news and programming in Scotland by the BBC has been welcomed by the Scottish Conservatives.

Shadow culture secretary Jackson Carlaw said the additional £20 million injection would provide viewers north of the border with exactly what they wanted, while not jeopardising access to UK-wide programming.

The corporation's director general, Tony Hall, announced today there would be a new BBC channel for Scotland.

Broadcast every evening, it will have an initial budget of £30 million and carry news and entertainment programmes.

It will also provide the opportunity for journalists and programme-makers in Glasgow to work on wider BBC projects, creating 80 new jobs.

Despite the benefits set out today, SNP MP John Nicolson still found fault with the news, saying the Beeb had "missed an opportunity to deliver for the people of Scotland".

Scottish Conservative shadow culture secretary Jackson Carlaw said:

"This is an extremely welcome announcement.

"It's good for jobs, journalism, scrutiny and programming.

"It also ensures those who still prefer the UK-wide BBC news at 6pm, and other programming on BBC1, get to keep that too.

"It's no surprise, despite this fantastic investment, to see SNP MPs complain about it.

"Only they, with their inherent and serial grievance agenda, could find fault with this.

"The fact Scottish-based journalists will now have a chance to showcase their

work elsewhere across the network is also a development which should be applauded.”

Press release: Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan visits Montenegro and Macedonia

From:

First published:

22 February 2017

Part of:

His visit underlines the UK’s commitment to playing an active and supportive role in the Western Balkans.

During his visit to the Montenegrin capital Podgorica, the Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan, will reaffirm the UK’s commitment to the region and Montenegro during his meetings with the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and Minister for European Affairs. He will spend time with key civil society organisations from Montenegro, and discuss important reforms on corruption, the rule of law and media.

In Macedonia, Sir Alan will meet President Ivanov and the leaders of all political parties represented in the Macedonian Assembly. They will discuss the current political situation, the need for important reforms to enable progress on NATO and EU accession and their plans to build a prosperous and inclusive country. He will also meet members of Macedonia’s civil society, and rule of law institutions focused on the future of Macedonia.

Ahead of the visit, Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan said:

The Western Balkans is a key region for the UK. We are committed to playing an active and supportive role. I’m delighted that my visit will build on this by developing opportunities for future cooperation on security, prosperity and reform.

We have long supported both Macedonia and Montenegro on their paths towards EU accession and NATO membership, which will require vital progress on reforms within both countries.

Of course, challenges remain. I am eager to hear from politicians

and civil society so we can better understand how the UK can support both countries to be stable, secure and prosperous.

Further information

[News story: Marine Management Organisation \(MMO\) issue authorisations to catch bass](#)

From:

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From 22 February 2017 the MMO will be issuing letters to fishermen.

In order to protect bass stocks and the sustainability of the wider marine environment from 22 February 2017 the MMO will be issuing letters to fishermen who, based on their track records, have authorisation to catch bass. The MMO will also send letters to those who do not have such authorisation.

The letters include details of a representation process through which fishermen can, on limited grounds, provide evidence to the MMO should they wish to challenge the authorisation decisions which have been made. The deadline for such representations is 14 March 2017.

The MMO action is a response to Article 9(2) of Council Regulation (EU) 2017/127 which fixed the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters in 2017.

Phil Haslam (MMO Director of Operations) said:

“The bass authorisations help implement EC measures designed to manage effort in order to help protect and improve Bass stocks.

I would urge fishermen to read the letters they receive and familiarise themselves with the bass regulations and the representation process. Those that feel they meet the representation criteria and can provide the relevant evidence should do so at the earliest opportunity and certainly before the 14 March 2017 deadline”.

Full details of the [bass regulations and the representation process](#) have been published on the [MMO website](#).

Assistance is also available via [MMO coastal offices](#).

[More GP surgeries in Wales are open for longer](#)

New figures show that more GP practices in Wales are open between 8.00am and 6.30pm in the week and more appointments are being made available to patients early in the morning and later in the day.

Wednesday 22 February 2017

In 2016:

- 85% of GP practices were open for daily core hours or within an hour of them, an increase from 60% in 2011
- Only 3% of GP practices were closed for half a day on one or more week days, a decrease compared to 4% in 2015
- 84% of practices offered appointments at any time between 17:00 and 18:30 every week day, compared to 79% in 2015
- The percentage of practices offering appointments before 8:30 on at least two weekdays increased from 16% in 2015 to 19% in 2016.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“We know that access to primary care services is extremely important to people. In Taking Wales Forward, our programme for government, we committed to continuing to improve access to GP surgeries, and these figures demonstrate we are delivering this. These figures also show that more appointments are available for people at more convenient times. I am pleased to see that the trend of improvement has been continued for 2016.

“I want to say thank you to our GPs and their teams who are working hard to extend their opening hours in Wales. They are also working with other health professionals to ensure that people receive their care from the right person. This might mean seeing a pharmacist, physiotherapist or a nurse. This will allow GPs to focus their time and expertise on people with complex care needs. We will continue to work collaboratively with GPs and other professions to improve access and patient experience.”

Right to Buy suspended in Flintshire

The move comes ahead of the Welsh Government introducing legislation to abolish the Right to Buy across the whole of Wales.

The Right to Buy allows eligible social housing tenants across the UK to buy their council or housing association property at a discount. The proposed legislation will end these rights, protecting social housing stock from further reduction.

Over the past 30 years, the Right to Buy has resulted in a significant reduction in social housing stock. Between 1981 and 2014, 138,709 council homes were sold – this is a 45% reduction in the social housing available since the policy was first introduced.

Research also indicates that many of these homes end up in the private rented sector and, as a result, cost local people more to rent and, in some cases, the public purse more in housing benefit.

The First Minister said:

“I have agreed to Flintshire council’s application to suspend the Right to Buy to help them deal with the pressure their social housing is facing and to ensure that homes are available to those who need them.

“While this will help one area for a short period of time, we also need to address this issue for the long term. This is why we will be introducing legislation to abolish the Right to Buy in Wales.

“The Right to Buy is depleting our social housing stock. This damaging policy is further increasing the pressure on our social housing supply and is forcing many vulnerable people to wait longer for a home.

“Legislating to end the Right to Buy is the only sure way to prevent this and give social landlords the confidence to invest in building more of the affordable homes Wales needs.”