

Scottish Digital Network to be debated

Steps to realise the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's vision for a Scottish Digital Network (SDN) have been set out by the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs.

During a debate at the Scottish Parliament, Fiona Hyslop suggested three areas where Holyrood should have more input into power and influence over broadcasting to help deliver quality public service content for the whole of Scotland. Ms Hyslop has proposed that the Scottish Parliament:

Needs to be able to ensure the establishment of the Scottish Digital Network as a public service broadcaster with a remit within Scotland and with guaranteed spectrum which can make it available to everyone in Scotland

Needs to be consulted on subsequent television licence fee settlements and the use of that revenue if it has knock-on impacts for Scotland

Could have a responsibility for, or at least an involvement in, decisions made by the UK Government about local television stations which will broadcast within Scotland.

Any such stations could have an impact on the viability of Scottish media companies, for example if they competed for a limited advertising market. The Culture Secretary also highlighted the possibility that Holyrood could be able to determine which sporting events should be placed on the 'crown jewels' list of sporting events which must be shown live on free-to-air television – which could include the Scottish men's football qualifiers for the World Cup and European Championship.

Ms Hyslop said: "This is a crucial time for broadcasting in

Scotland. BBC ALBA is now available on Freeview and Digital Switchover will be completed next week. We have made real progress over the past four years and the Scottish Parliament has played a big part by using its influence to change broadcasting in Scotland for the better."Broadcasting is vital to our nation's sense of identity. It makes a valuable contribution to our economy, enriches our culture and strengthens our democracy.

Broadcasting's cultural importance is a key reason why so many of the proponents of devolution during the 1990s – from all parties – believed that broadcasting should be a devolved issue. However, it remains reserved to the UK Government.

Now is the right time to renew the dialogue on whether Scotland should have more responsibilities for broadcasting which would allow us to address matters, such as the Scottish Digital Network, which are a priority at Holyrood but which may not be a focus at Westminster.

The Scotland Bill contains a welcome provision on the BBC Trust and I am pleased that the UK Government has now announced its intention to include another provision for MG Alba."However, Scotland needs a stronger voice on broadcasting. I have proposed three sensible and proportionate measures which would do much to improve the current accountability framework for broadcasting in Scotland.

We will shortly publish a paper setting out those proposals in more detail, and highlighting other areas where a consensus might be achievable."