



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

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NORMAN A MACDONALD

CONVENER

19 January 2017

Lord Hall of Birkenhead
Director-General, BBC
Broadcasting House
Portland Place
LONDON
W1A 1AA

Dear Lord Hall,

BBC ALBA: GÀIDHLIG PROGRAMMING

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, the local authority for the Outer Hebrides of Scotland, and the country's most Gàidhlig/Gaelic speaking area, would like to indicate its strong support for increased investment in BBC ALBA.

The relatively minor changes being advocated would reap significant benefits, not only for Gàidhlig broadcasting, but for the status of Gàidhlig within Scotland and in the UK.

The changes being sought are these: a clear BBC policy for Gaelic broadcasting, delivered with a central allocation of adequate BBC funding; an increase in BBC expenditure on BBC ALBA from less than 0.25% to a still very modest 0.5% of the service budget; an increase in BBC programme contributions to BBC ALBA from less than 5 hours to 10 hours per week, in line with the BBC contribution to S4C; and an increase in new or original daily output on BBC ALBA so as to reduce reliance on repeats (from less than 2 hours per day of new programmes to 3 hours per day).

The advantages to implementing these changes would be to increase the provision of services to learners, children and young people, who are seen as being at the very heart of the future of the Gaelic language. It would also reach out to the elderly who can be particularly isolated in rural communities, allowing them to experience a sense of participation within the community.

An extended news coverage to the weekends and enhancing current affairs would provide the whole of the audience and our society better, with sports, music, arts, and stories from all our communities and from abroad, much of which is not provided by any other broadcaster in the UK.

BBC ALBA's success has surpassed what many had anticipated; attracting worldwide audiences and its delivery has certainly enhanced the BBC's reputation for excellent programmes.

Sorry I missed you when you visited Stornoway last summer, but hope that you have happy memories of your visit.

Leis a h-uile deagh dhùrachd,

Norman A. MacDonald.

Norman A MacDonald
Convener
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar