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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Lord Hall of Birkenhead
Director-General of the BBC
Director General's Office
W1 NBH 04 A
Broadcasting House
Portland Place
London, W1A 1 AA

15th December 2016

Dear Lord Hall,

I write to you once more regarding BBC ALBA, a channel of which you and MG ALBA should be proud.

BBC ALBA's success is however at risk of being undermined because current BBC investment is not sufficient to build on the success of the channel. I am a strong supporter of Gaelic, including Gaelic broadcasting, because I see the direct and indirect benefits that accrue to Scotland, and to the UK. Gaelic is a hugely important part of the UK's cultural mosaic, BBC ALBA is a door to that, and the BBC has a particular role in ensuring it is nurtured. It would be hugely disappointing to me and others if BBC ALBA and with it Gaelic, was undermined because of a lack of investment by the BBC.

The channel is not currently adequately resourced. It has a repeat rate of 74%. There are gaps in the areas central to the survival of the language, including children's programming and learning.

It is my view that the BBC has a particular role to play to ensure its indigenous minority language services are properly resourced and funded on a consistent, principled basis. The funding of Gaelic broadcasting should be principles based: the BBC should have a clear, consistent supportive policy on the UK's indigenous minority languages, and that should be articulated and championed by you and your colleagues. The question of the channel's funding should not be devolved to the BBC in Scotland. Gaelic is a special case that has required a specific intervention: it undermines that intervention not to fund it properly, and further, to make Gaelic language programming compete for limited resources within Scotland.

BBC ALBA has achieved an enormous amount in a short time. It has not only demonstrated the feasibility of a Gaelic language channel, it has made it a huge success.

IAN MURRAY MP
Labour Member of Parliament for Edinburgh South

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The BBC has had a hugely significant role in making that possible. It would be a missed opportunity if this success story was to be undermined by a lack of investment.

I ask you therefore to articulate a consistent policy, to ensure that funding of BBC ALBA is driven by that central policy and not devolved to Scotland, and to increase the BBC funding of the channel to match that of the in-house contribution by the BBC to S4C.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Murray".

Ian Murray MP
Member of Parliament for Edinburgh South

Cc

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