

soundwaves

UK Audio Production Industry News – Podcasting, Audiobooks, Radio
Autumn 2022



Commercialising BBC Radio production should be balanced by 100% competition for independent producers to make BBC programmes

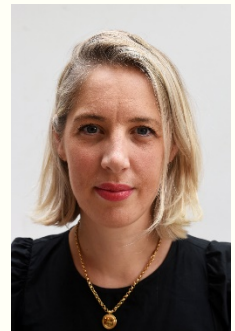
The BBC is reviewing whether to place its speech radio production into its commercial arm, BBC Studios. BBC TV production is already almost entirely within BBC Studios, meaning it competes against independent production companies to make programmes for other broadcasters.

In radio the BBC is required to ensure that just 60% of its non-news network commissioning is open to competition. The lower level is due to its having an in-house radio/audio department.

However if the BBC's speech radio production moves to BBC Studios, allowing it to compete for commissions from other audio platforms, the level of competition to make BBC speech audio content would correspondingly need to be at 100%. You can read [more about this issue here](#).

AudioUK MD Chloe Straw said:

“AudioUK’s position is that if the BBC similarly moves its radio and audio production to BBC Studios, then the quid pro quo must be that the BBC opens up all their non-news content to competition from independent production companies, to bring the best ideas for high quality programmes to every part of the BBC’s portfolio.”



Evaluation under way for Audio Content Fund

The Government is formally evaluating the [Audio Content Fund](#) (ACF), following the conclusion of its three-year pilot phase.

The contestable fund [commissioned](#) 165 projects from 91 different suppliers, broadcast on 350 commercial and community stations that reach 40m. This amounts to 732 hours of unique programming that is traditionally more difficult to support on a commercial basis.

An ACF survey indicated that the funding supported 6,000 freelancer days, and 240 jobs.

Earlier this year over 300 audio producers, radio executives, educators and supporters of public service media signed an [Open Letter](#) calling for a continuation of the ACF.

Tim Wilson, AudioUK's Director of the ACF, said: *“The Audio Content Fund is a very efficient way of bringing PSB to audience on their stations of choice, while simultaneously boosting growth through creating new business partnerships and creating additional employment. We do hope the Government will continue to support it post-evaluation.”*

Further Audio Content Fund Facts

- The Fund has created an enhanced share of voice from people across the UK and supported the Levelling Up agenda. 70% of the projects were produced outside of London.
- The ACF financed the first children's radio soap opera; a tour of Manchester's musical heritage; the first drama on Jazz FM; unique content in Welsh, Gaelic, Irish and Ulster Scots; and introduced a range of diverse presenter talent onto a major national network.



Audio Production Tax Relief to be highlighted at Westminster Forum

Following on from AudioUK's [report last year](#), the Government/Industry Digital Radio and Audio Review recommended that "The government to consider the case for tax relief for investment in higher-end produced audio" content."

The tax relief would attract more of the growing international investment in digital audio formats such as podcasting and audiobooks. AudioUK is continuing to discuss the scheme with officials and Managing Director Chloe Straw will be setting out the case at the [Westminster Forum on radio and audio policy](#) on 16 November.



Lords Committee response spells out policies needed for audio growth

[AudioUK's paper](#) to the **House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee** inquiry into the Creative Industries has stressed the need for measures to be put in place to allow the UK audio production sector to take its place among the UK's other media content production industries in terms of being a full part of the policymaking infrastructure and implementing some key policies. AudioUK's proposals include:

- A place on the Government/Industry Creative Industries Council
- Recognition in DCMS statistics of audio production as a distinct sector
- Financial support for skills production in the audio sector, as is already given to screen based content industries
- An Audio Production Tax Relief to secure international investment into UK audio production
- Continued Government support for the Audio Content Fund

AudioUK has also been making these points to DCMS and the Creative Industries Council in the context of the current development of a Sector Vision for the Creative Industries.



Other news in brief...

- **UK Advertising expenditure on podcasts increased** by a reported 61% to reach £54m, as [reported by Ofcom](#) in August.
- **Podcasts are increasingly popular** because of: its suitability to a mobile lifestyle; convenience of listening; the low barrier to entry to produce; and its ability to cover niche topics. This and many other findings were in the worldwide '[State of Podcasting](#)' report published in October.
- **Nominations for the Audio Production Awards were announced on 31 October**, with the highest ever recorded number of entries. The 'APAs' recognise excellence and diverse new talent, both in front and behind the microphone in the fields of podcasting, radio and audiobooks.

Soundwaves is produced by AudioUK, the trade body for the independent audio production sector. The sector has 200+ SMEs based around the UK producing high-quality podcasts, radio programmes audiobooks and other audio-led content. For more information on us or this newsletter, or to meet with us, please contact Tim Wilson, AudioUK Lead on Policy and Regulation: tim.wilson@audiouk.org.uk

audiouk
the audio producers association

www.audiouk.org.uk
[@weareaudiouk](https://twitter.com/weareaudiouk)