

South West Birmingham Local Party

Conference confirms:

- the Liberal Democrats' commitment to the principle of public service broadcasting and the future of the BBC.
- That the BBC is a valuable institution that helps to maintain quality across all types of broadcasting, contributes to the wealth of the nation economically, educationally and culturally, and provides representation to communities and subject areas that might otherwise be neglected in the commercial arena.

Conference notes:

- In January 2013 the BBC published 'The Economic Value of the BBC', which calculates the Gross Value Added (GVA) of total BBC operating expenditure. It states that for every £1 of the licence fee, £2 is generated in the wider economy.
- In the same report the BBC asserts that it has an important role in rebalancing the economy.
- The BBC's report also highlighted the economic impact of increasing expenditure in the nations and regions. Where this has occurred a corresponding rise in GVA has been observed.
- Current expenditure across the nations and regions is highly inequitable. Calculations based upon the BBC's 2014 Annual Report reveal that spending per licence-fee payer in London was approximately £757, Wales £122, Northern Ireland £103, Scotland £89, the North £80, the South £66, and the Midlands £12.
- The BBC is committed to a strategy of moving production away from London and creating centres of excellence. This has the aim of moving 50% of TV production out of London by 2016.

Conference also notes with concern:

- In some instances the BBC has failed to match up to its stated aim to redistribute production around the UK.
- Although expenditure has risen in some of the nations and regions since 2012, it has actually fallen in others, most especially the Midlands.
- The rises in expenditure in some of the Nations and regions has been at the expense of other areas, in particular the Midlands, not just London.
- Although expenditure in London has fallen some production has been moved into London from other regions, including the Midlands.
- A consequence of the bulk of expenditure being in London means that public money is transferred out of the nations and regions into London. The amount that is transferred varies enormously across the country.
- Approximately 16% of the licence fee that is raised in Wales is transferred into London. In Northern Ireland this figure is 29%, Scotland 39%, the North 45%, the South 55%, and in the Midlands it's 92%. The result of this is that £862 million is transferred from the Midlands into London every year.
- Despite recent changes, most notably the opening of Media City in Salford, expenditure across the UK remains highly inequitable.

Conference finally notes:

- If half the money raising by the licence fee in the Midlands was spent in the Midlands this would inject an extra £393 million per annum into the regional economy.
- According to the BBC's own GVA calculations the retention of 50% of the licence fee in the Midlands would generate an overall total £946 million per annum for the regional economy.

Conference believes:

- As a publically funded organisation, the BBC is right to assert that it has an important role to play in rebalancing the UK economy. The aspiration of moving production and expenditure away from London is correct.
- At a time when other forms of public subsidy are being cut the BBC's support for the cultural and creative economy across the UK is even more vital.
- By providing jobs in the media industry the BBC creates the conditions for commercial producers and freelancers to prosper. Where the BBC has little presence there tends to be an equivalent paucity in the private sector and a diminishment of skills.
- By investing in the nations and regions the BBC can stimulate growth in the wider economy, not just in the media sector.

- The BBC has a duty to provide opportunities for both jobs and training in all areas of the country. An active and visible BBC can raise the aspirations of those young people who may not have even considered a career in the media industry.
- As the BBC raises its budget from the general public in all areas of the country, it must consider the economic impact of its spending in all areas of the country. London and the nations have particular requirements but the distribution of expenditure across the UK must be fair and have some correlation with where the licence fee is raised.
- For the BBC to represent all communities and retain the support of those communities it must be active within those communities.

Conference calls for:

- The fair distribution of expenditure and production across the nations and regions to be a key part of the BBC's Charter renewal negotiations.
- The renewed BBC Charter to legislate that at least 50% of the licence fee should be retained within the nation or region in which it is raised, these being Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Midlands, the North, the South and London.
- The BBC to produce as part of the Charter negotiations a clear timetable of how and when this 50% minimum target will be met.
- The Charter to specify the role of the BBC Trust (or alternative body) in overseeing the fair distribution of expenditure, production and job provision across the UK. This should include an annual report on progress towards the 50% target.