

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: University of Stirling</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: D36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies</p>
<p>Title of case study: Understanding the media needs of Scottish civil society</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Blain has significantly contributed over the assessment period to the policy formation process, and public awareness, around the growing challenge posed by the media needs of Scottish civil society. This has occurred at a time of paradox in which Scotland's growing articulation of separate identity has been undermined by diminishing media platforms. Blain's academic research has been paralleled by wide and sustained involvement in consultation and debate about press and broadcasting policy in the context of parliamentary, media industry and media consumer initiatives and events.</p> <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Though Blain's history of research into the Scottish media, including extensive research consultancy for BBC Scotland and the former Broadcasting Council for Scotland, long predates his arrival at Stirling in 2007, he has continued to publish on Scottish media themes since then, co-editing <i>The Media in Scotland</i> (with David Hutchison, 2008) for Edinburgh University Press, for which he and his co-editor assembled the largest collection of essays on Scottish media themes so far published, on topics ranging from communications policy and language themes to TV comedy and sport. Blain was also invited to write the history of Scottish film and television (2009) for a volume of the major ethnological compilation on Scottish life, <i>A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology</i>. This research has focused variously on the history of Scottish media and on recent developments and debates linking the media needs of Scottish civil society with increasing political autonomy.</p> <p>Blain has also served as speaker/panellist in a series of high profile events on the Scottish media and also in commissions and inquiries, in several cases producing evidence subsequently available on government websites. These engagements have involved an additional and distinct body of related research, evidenced through the reporting of Blain's participation as witness to press inquiries in Westminster (March 2009) and Holyrood (January 2010), in the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's evidence sessions (April 2008) and in the report of the Scottish Digital Network Panel (2011).</p> <p>This has consisted of detailed desk and interview research into a range of matters including historical patterns of press circulation in local and regional contexts, internet business models for the press, also questions of broadcasting finance and control in Scotland, commissioning patterns, the shape of the independent sector in Scotland, the cross-border functioning of the BBC, and the state of commercial radio.</p> <p>Blain's contribution to public media events has also been based on similar, mainly desk research, generally into broadcasting industry finance and control patterns affecting regional broadcasting, but often into cultural and democratic aspects of media provision. Between 2008 and 2011 Blain was involved as a speaker/panellist in a score of public meetings or public lectures on Scottish media themes, with events ranging from the Edinburgh Book Festival (2008) and the Edinburgh Festival of Politics (2011) to media consumer/media industry events eg organized by the Voice of the Listener and Viewer (VLV, 2008) and the European Alliance of Listeners' and Viewers' (EURALVA, 2011). Events also included major broadcasting symposia/summits eg an advisory session with industry representatives and politicians anticipating the work of the Broadcasting Commission (Glasgow City Chambers, 2007, speaker/panellist), and the Scottish Government's follow-up event, <i>Where Now for Scottish Broadcasting?</i> (Royal Glasgow Concert Hall, February 2010) with the Minister for Culture, where Blain gave the formal reply to the address by the SBC chair.</p>

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Typically the participants/audiences for these events have been non-academic, consisting of media executives, NGO and civic society representatives, politicians (members of the Scottish and Westminster parliaments, local council representatives), trades unionists, and members of the public, with perhaps a few academic specialists.

The research for the work of the five-person Scottish Digital Network Panel (2010-2011), on which Blain was the sole academic member, was underpinned by a series of extensive Panel deliberations from October 2010 until February 2011, interspersed with evidence-taking sessions with a large number of media industry participants, and also very extensive desk research into the history and present state of Scottish broadcasting provision. As well as the pre-report research, Blain took substantial responsibilities in the report's second and final draft. He was also involved in private (individual) consultation with civil servants from the Scottish Government's Culture Division, on broadcasting matters (May 2009).

3. References to the research

- Scottish Digital Network Panel: *Final Report* (2011), Scottish Government, ISSN 978 0 7559 9946 0, 36pp..
- Blain, N. (2009) The visibility of small countries: the Scottish dimension in film and television, in Veitch, K. (ed.) *Scottish Life and Society: Transport, Communications and the Media. A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology, vol. 8*, Edinburgh: John Donald in association with the European Ethnological Research Centre, ISBN: 978 1 904607 88 5, pp. 768-792.
- Blain, N. and Hutchison, D. (2008) *The Media in Scotland*, Edinburgh University Press.
- Blain, N. and Burnett, K. (2008), A cause still unwon: the struggle to represent Scotland, in Blain, N. and Hutchison, D. (eds.) *The Media in Scotland*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 3-19.

4. Details of the impact

Blain was asked to give evidence as a witness or was otherwise involved in the process of all four major Westminster and Holyrood parliamentary initiatives on Scottish media matters in the period 2008-2011, having given evidence to the Scottish Broadcasting Commission (2008), the Westminster 'Crisis in the Scottish press industry' inquiry (2009), the Holyrood consideration of the local/weekly press industry (2010), and having been a member of the Scottish Digital Network Panel (SDNP, 2010-2011), these engagements in addition to speaker and panellist roles in related public events including those organized by the Scottish Government.

Corroborating sources below detail the main areas of impact, which are (a) government responses to evidence given at the two press inquiries and to the SDNP report and (b) the public response to the SDNP report. A number of conclusions impacting on future policy arose from both press inquiries, and indicative corroboration material is offered below of the Westminster follow-up to the Scottish Affairs Committee inquiry.

The Scottish Digital Network Panel report elicited both a supportive response from Fiona Hyslop, the government minister who commissioned it, and in subsequent debate at the Scottish Parliament (online link given below). The report's main recommendations were adopted by the Scottish Government and widely supported in the Scottish Parliament. Because of the imminence of the Scottish independence referendum, the next phase of Scottish Government action on the Scottish broadcasting landscape is for the time being in abeyance, though the SDNP report's recommendations to move forward with the establishment of a digital network remain government policy.

The corroborating sources below are a very few examples of many which evidence both strong media interest and public responses eg on comment threads online, in coverage of the SDNP's activities and report. This was on a substantial scale, not just by the BBC and STV, but by a number of newspapers and specialist publications and websites. One of the sources below also

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refers to a major industry/political sector event in November 2010 at which among others former BBC Director General Greg Dyke gave his response to the ongoing work of the Panel, with a large invited audience including MSPs, senior broadcast and press executives and representatives of Ofcom and various NGOs. Blain was also involved in subsequent discussions about the Panel's work, for example at an RSA Fellow's debate on the report (Anderson Strathern LLP, Edinburgh, 10 February 2011) and in the media, for example discussing the report on BBC Radio Scotland.

Examples of public platforms (Blain, as speaker and panellist):

- Platform speaker/panellist (with chair of Scottish Broadcasting Commission), *Broadcasting, Scotland and the Future* event (Voice of the Listener and Viewer/Scottish Youth Parliament/Scottish Broadcasting Commission), Scottish Storytelling Centre, Edinburgh, 1 May, 2008.
- Speaker/panellist (with chair of Scottish Broadcasting Commission), SBC event, *The Scottish Broadcasting Commission: What it Said and What Happens Next*, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1 October, 2008.
- Speaker/panellist (with Minister for Parliamentary Business; CEOs/chairs of Scottish Broadcasting Commission; Ofcom Scotland; Nations and Regions C4; Scottish Screen; Public Policy and Corporate Affairs BBC Scotland), *The Future of Scottish Broadcasting* conference, Hilton Grosvenor hotel, Edinburgh, 11 February, 2009.
- Speaker/panellist (with Minister for Culture, and former chair of Scottish Broadcasting Commission), Scottish Government/Saltire Society broadcasting summit, *Where Now for Scottish Broadcasting?* (extract from address/Formal Reply reproduced on Scottish Government broadcasting website), Exhibition Hall, Royal Glasgow Concert Hall, 8 February, 2010.
- Opening speaker/panellist, *Serving the Citizen: Broadcasting Accountability in an Online Europe* conference, European Alliance of Listeners' and Viewers' Associations (EURALVA), Scottish Storytelling Centre, Edinburgh, 7 October, 2011.

Inquiries/commissions:

- Oral evidence (transcript subsequently on SBC website; with D Hutchison, Glasgow Caledonian University, and R Beveridge, Edinburgh Napier University) to Scottish Broadcasting Commission (session on democracy and broadcasting), Scottish Enterprise, Glasgow, 17 April, 2008.
- Oral evidence to Scottish Affairs Committee, House of Commons, as witness (with two trades union representatives and a former journalist) in its 'Crisis in the Scottish press industry' inquiry (broadcast live on Internet and recorded for television, transcript on House of Commons website/published), Westminster, 31 March, 2009.
- Private consultation meeting with Deputy Director of Culture, Scottish Government, and broadcasting policy lead, Culture Division (as part of National Conversation), on implications for broadcasting sector of any major constitutional change in UK; Culture, External Affairs and Tourism Directorate, Scottish Government, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, 29 May, 2009.
- Oral evidence to Scottish Parliament's Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee, as witness (with academic colleague from GCU and two representatives of Ofcom; broadcast/recorded/transcribed) in its consideration of the Scottish local/weekly newspaper industry, Holyrood, 20 January, 2010.
- Member, Scottish Digital Network Panel (Scottish Government-appointed five-member group advising Minister of Culture and External Affairs on digital network funding), September 2010-March 2011.

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5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Session of Scottish Affairs Committee, 'Crisis in the Scottish press industry' inquiry House of Commons, Westminster, 31 March, 2009

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmsscota/401/40109.htm>

Report: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmsscota/981/981.pdf>

Government response:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmsscota/981/98102.htm>

Session of Scottish Parliament's Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee, in its consideration of the Scottish local/weekly newspaper industry, Holyrood, 20 January, <http://archive.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/ellc/or-10/ed10-0202.htm>

Scottish Digital Network Panel Final Report and contextual information,

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/ArtsCultureSport/arts/Archive/Broadcasting/sdnpanel>

Scottish Parliament's discussion of Scottish Digital Network Panel Report, 16 June, session 4,

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/29971.aspx>

Public discussion of Scottish Digital Network Panel, and SDNP report:

Scottish Government Review to Consider New BBC Rival, BBC News, 13 September 2010,

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-11281924>

Exploring the Future of a New Scottish TV Network, BBC News, 16 November 2010,

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-11760330>

Report Urges Licence Fee Cash for Scottish TV Network, BBC News, 24 January 2011,

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-12258541>

Scottish Government backs publicly funded Digital Network, Press Gazette, 9 March 2011,

<http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/wire/7595>