

Freagraí Samplacha ar
Chomhairliúchán an BBC



I mí Eanáir 2016, rinne an BBC athbhreithniú ar na seirbhísí atá ar fáil sna réigiúnacha éagsúla. Seo thíos na freagraí a mhol Conradh na Gaeilge:

Q5. In a paragraph, please provide a summary of what you think about BBC radio and news programming for Northern Ireland.

You may wish to think about what you like about these services across radio, TV and online. The different topics of programmes, the variety of programmes, how programmes are presented, the tone and style, or if you think there is anything that makes it stand out from other radio stations and providers of news for Northern Ireland.

At present, BBC radio and news programming doesn't meet the requirements of a significant portion of the population. In 2015, Conradh na Gaeilge published 'Céard é an Scéal? Public Views on the Irish Language.' This research showed that 54% of respondents in a survey conducted by Millward Brown agreed that services should be available through Irish for those who wish to use them, with only 26% of those involved disagreeing with this. This shows that the BBC ought to be providing adequate services for its Irish language audience as this reflects the will of the public here.

The Irish language content which is currently produced by the BBC is of a high standard and well received by audiences, but more investment is needed to ensure that the small amount of content which is currently produced can be increased and expanded to cover a wider range of topics and to properly meet the needs of the Irish language community here.

Q6. BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle's remit is to:

- **provide accurate, impartial and independent news**
- **report and scrutinise political and social issues in Northern Ireland**
- **carry extensive sports coverage**
- **support music and arts in Northern Ireland**
- **provide programming in the Irish and Ulster Scots languages, reflecting the needs and interests of these communities**
- **fully reflect the diverse faiths, cultures and communities of Northern Ireland**
- **provide programming specifically for audiences in the North West on Radio Foyle**
- **provide opportunities for informal learning across a wide range of subjects**
- **encourage participation from the audience**

How well do you think BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle does this?

The programmes which are available through the BBC in Irish are very well received, and the Ofcom communications market report disclosed that, during 2013-14, programming supported by the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund and broadcast by the BBC reached an audience of 660,000.¹ The high standard of programming which comes from the BBC Gaeilge unit is a testament to the skills of those working in that department, and shows the great potential which exists within the BBC to develop and expand this work in order to meet the needs of the Irish language community in a much more comprehensive manner.

The Irish Language Department of Radio Ulster provides high quality, interesting and informative radio content which is well received by the Irish language community. However, content which the unit provides varies greatly to the output provided in the other regions. The BBC provides dedicated, indigenous Celtic language stations in Wales and Scotland. For Welsh there is BBC Radio Cymru which broadcasts for up to 19 hours a day and has an annual budget of £12.8m. For Scottish Gaelic there is BBC Radio nan Gàidheal which broadcasts for at least 90 hours a week and has an annual budget of £3.7m. Wales and Scotland also have full-time English language services in the form of BBC Radio Wales and BBC Radio Scotland. BBC NI, on the other hand, has no dedicated Irish language service. Radio content in Irish (5-7 hours a week) is scheduled on the same BBC service (Radio Ulster) that provides English language radio programming. The funding for Irish language programming on BBC Radio Ulster is difficult to identify accurately as it is rolled into the overall cost of that station.

Q8. What do you think about BBC news and current affairs on television in Northern Ireland?

You may wish to think about:

- **Whether it covers a wide range of topics and subject matter and how relevant it feels to Northern Ireland**
- **Whether you think the programmes are high-quality, and whether it offers something different to other channels and providers**
- **How well the programmes put issues into context, explain complex issues, investigate and scrutinise issues and institutions as they impact on Northern Ireland**

The current news and current affairs output of the BBC rarely covers stories which are relevant to the Irish language community. Too often, stories which relate to the Irish language in any way are broadcast as a result of negative statements which are, more often than not, made by politicians. This fails to reflect reality, which is that there is a strong, vibrant and growing Irish language community here. This community undertakes a significant amount of community work which benefits the lives of those involved in it, but this is rarely or never seen in the coverage that the BBC provides. Issues relating to the Irish language are often over-simplified and generalised, giving inaccurate perceptions of the Irish language and of the Irish language community. Whenever news stories relating to the Irish language or the Irish language community are covered, this is nearly always done in the context of a party political disagreement. The BBC often achieves 'balance' in its stories relating to the Irish language by seeking the views of two opposing political parties, usually

¹ NI Assembly Question, AQW 41532/11-15, January 2015

the DUP and Sinn Féin, instead of seeking the views of those in the public who area affected by the issues involved.

In April 2014, the Irish language community organised a march in order to protest against the implementation of Irish language rights here. This was a community organised protest in which political parties had no role, although several parties attended. The BBC coverage stated that 3,000 people were in attendance (when in fact 10,000 people took part in the march) and used as its cover a picture of Sinn Féin taking part in the protest, once again giving the impression that issues relating to the Irish language are invariably linked with political parties. Sinn Féin leader, Gerry Adams, was also interviewed while taking part in the march and this was broadcast on the news, though no interviews were conducted with those who had organised it. (See: Belfast protest over Irish language rights - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-26997500>)

This contrasts greatly to the approach which the BBC takes in relation to other rights issues. For instance, the coverage of the Pride parades each year, or in relation to other stories affecting the LGBT community. (See: Belfast Pride: Thousands attend 25th annual parade in city - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-33747622>)

When these stories are covered, the opinions of those in the community are sought from representative organisations such as the Rainbow Project, and there isn't a focus on the views of political parties. This is also the approach when issues relating to this issues are being debated on BBC radio or television programmes. A similar approach should be taken in relation to Irish language news stories. The continuous and unfair portrayal of Irish language issues as being a 'green and orange' debate adversely affects our communities ability to promote language rights as an open, inclusive, progressive campaign which will benefit everyone in society and that is to be feared by no one.

Q9. What do you think about the BBC's online site for Northern Ireland or the news for Northern Ireland that you can choose to get through the BBC's News app?

The information available on the website should be available in Irish, as is done with Welsh. Not only is there very little coverage of stories relating to the Irish language community, but there is no information available on news, weather, travel and some local interests, such as sport, heritage and events in Irish. The BBC Gaeilge site provides useful information on the BBC programmes which are currently available, but coverage of other topics is notably absent. This means that only a very small percentage of the website output provides content for Irish language speakers.

Q10. What do you think about the news and information available from BBC Northern Ireland through social media sites, such as Twitter or Facebook?

No content is available through Irish on any of the social media sites, apart from the BBC Gaeilge service. This service, while valuable, doesn't provide any information on news, recent events, the weather or traffic reports as the other local BBC social media outlets do. This means that only a very small percentage of the social media output provides content for Irish language speakers.