

BBC English Regions
Management Review
2013/14



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Front cover

As part of BBC Radio Cumbria's 40th anniversary, the radio station linked up with the BBC Philharmonic, BBC Outreach and the Cumbria Music Service to create a Cumbria Community Orchestra and Chorus

Controller's introduction

“We want to do all we can to play our part in helping all forms of local journalism to flourish not only inside the BBC, but outside it too.”



Throughout the mayhem of the winter rain, the storms and the flood surges audiences depended on our teams for news and crucial information. It was a strong example of the special responsibility we have in keeping communities in touch, but it was also another demonstration of the unique, and highly prized emotional bond we have with our audiences. Remarkably, even in the face of huge adversity, people came to us to share moving accounts of how they and their families had been so badly affected.

Our mission was also to ensure that those in positions of responsibility were asked the questions that count. As suggestions grew that more could have been done to help those caught up in the flooding, the Prime Minister, senior cabinet ministers and local politicians were among those quizzed both by our teams and directly by the audience. Our resolve to promote and facilitate local accountability based journalism and robust local debate continues to be one of our key priorities for the year ahead.

I am particularly proud of The World War One at Home project which is one of the biggest editorial undertakings ever by BBC English Regions and has already produced a wealth of captivating stories which chronicle how the conflict affected communities across the country. All of them will be published online and will remain available indefinitely, providing an extraordinary digital archive as part of the BBC's wider venture to mark the centenary of the Great War.

In the year ahead, our specialist network of political journalists will report on, aim to make sense of, and seek to engage people in the stories which matter to local communities ahead of next year's General Election. We will reflect the excitement of the Commonwealth Games and other major sports events. And we will prioritise strengthening our social media and online presence, including the BBC Local Live modules, which provide frequently updated news, sport, travel and weather information in one place.

We want to do all we can to play our part in helping all forms of local journalism to flourish not only inside the BBC, but outside it too. To this end, we will build on a host of really exciting partnerships we have started to develop with a wide range of other news organisations in different parts of England – from local newspapers and fledgling television stations to highly industrious citizen journalists.

Regardless of how people consume our programmes, content and services, our determination to be the most trusted source of high quality local news and information, blended with lively debate and discussion which truly reflects as many different communities as possible, will remain at the heart of our commitment to audiences now and in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Holdsworth". The signature is stylized and includes a long, sweeping flourish at the end.

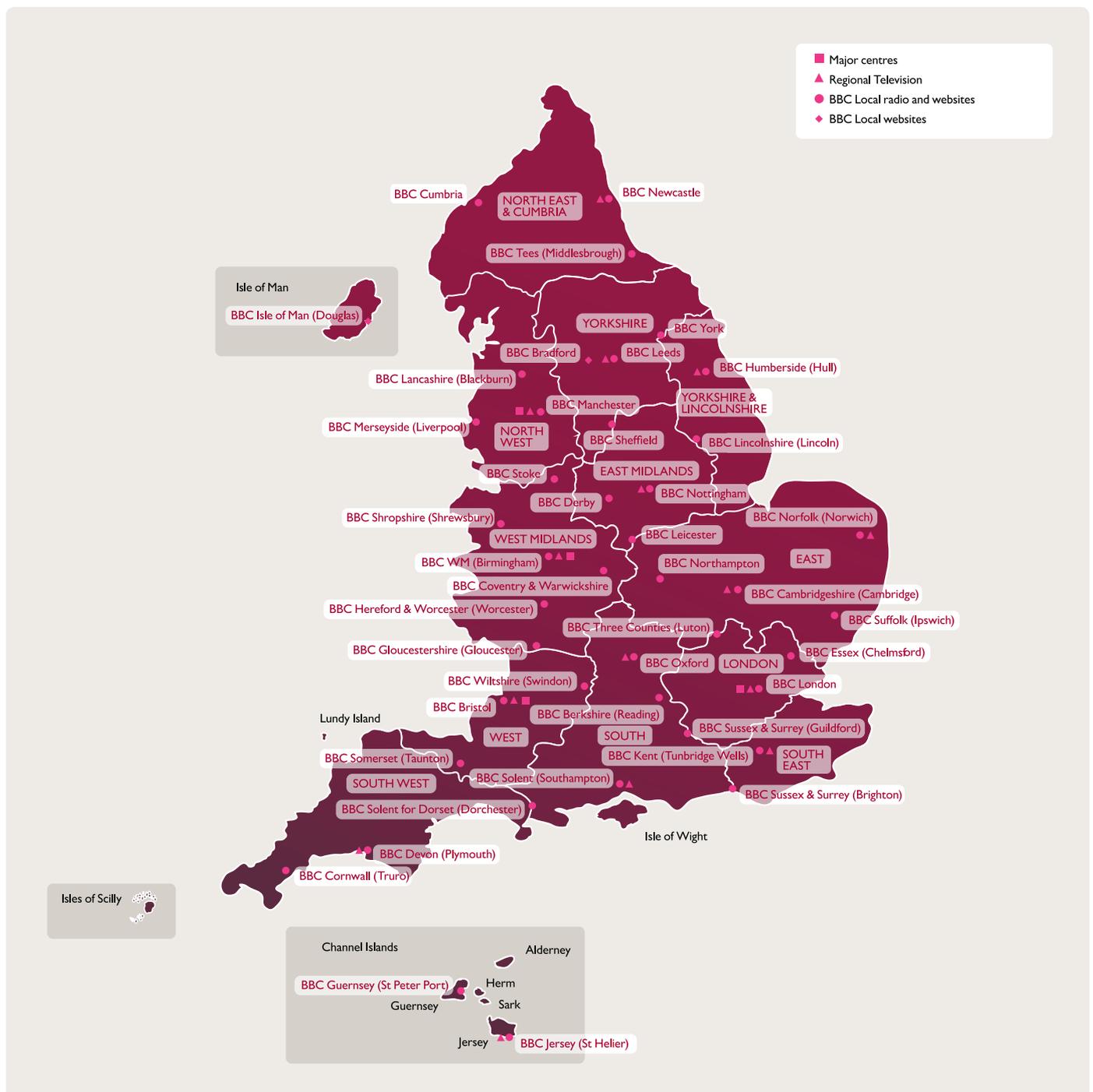
David Holdsworth
Controller, English Regions

Two minute summary

Our primary aim is to deliver a distinctive, high quality service of local and regional news and information for communities across the country. There has been an increasing emphasis on providing the audience with a platform to hold people in positions of responsibility and power to account.

On television, we produce daily news output for twelve English regions, along with weekly current affairs, politics and sports programmes. There are 39 local radio stations and forty two

local websites. Alongside our established output, we are successfully developing fresh ways of forming a relationship with existing and new audiences through social media channels.



Two minute summary

Television

49.8% of the adult population watch BBC regional news in England during an average week



Source: BARB/TRP, BBC England SD, adults

Television

Our 6.30pm programmes are the most watched news programmes in the UK



Source: BARB/TRP, BBC England SD, adults

Television

Inside Out has an average audience of 3.3 million



Source: BARB/TRP, BBC England SD, adults

Television and Radio

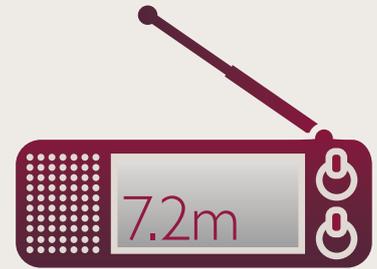
Our biggest audience of the year was during the height of the severe winter weather in February



Source: BARB/TRP, BBC England SD, adults

Radio

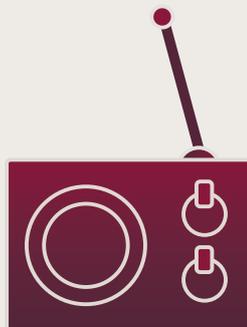
BBC local radio is listened to by 7.2 million people



Source: RAJAR/TRP, BBC LR in England TSA, 12 month weight, Q4 2013

Radio

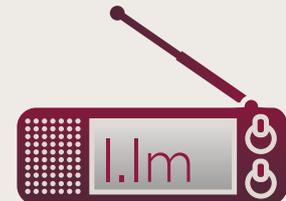
2.4 million BBC local radio listeners listen to no other BBC radio station



Source: RAJAR/TRP, BBC LR in England TSA, 12 month weight, Q4 2013

Radio

1.1 million BBC local radio listeners hear no other radio output at all



Source: RAJAR/TRP, BBC LR in England TSA, 12 month weight, Q4 2013

Online

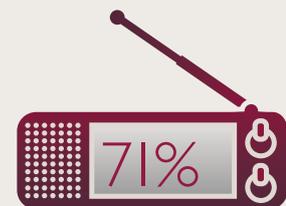
There were 11.4 million average weekly unique browsers to English Regions online content



Source: istats

Radio

Between 6am and 7pm 71% of all BBC local radio output is speech



Source: BBC English Regions

Service performance

As many areas of the country struggled to cope with the worst winter weather for a long time, BBC English Regions teams went into overdrive to provide communities with an unrivalled service of news updates, critical information and a place where people could share their thoughts and comments while also having the chance to question those in positions of responsibility.

Some BBC local radio stations moved into rolling news format and broadcast around the clock. Live despatches from reporters on the scene and emotional personal accounts from listeners were shared with BBC online, social media and network outlets. David Cameron and other senior politicians, together with the heads of local authorities and other agencies facing claims that not enough was being done to protect people, were questioned live on-air. The coverage of this fast moving story received plaudits from audiences, emergency services and key decision makers alike.

Regional television

During the storms the audience for our early evening programmes peaked at 7.3 million people in February. *Midlands Today* was among the regions which regularly presented live editions from flooded communities, while BBC London reporters brought viewers dramatic pictures as they followed rescues along the Thames. *BBC Points West*'s Somerset correspondent, Clinton Rogers, showed the devastating emotional impact of the unfolding events on people living in rural parts of the county, some of which had become inland islands, and frequently had to travel by boat to reach those at the heart of the story. His graphic reports featured prominently too on the BBC News Channel and national BBC One bulletins.

A significant increase in collaboration between BBC regional and network news teams has led not only to more sharing of stories and a more efficient use of staff and technical resources, but also a wider exposure for some strong examples of original journalism generated by teams around the country. For example, the Prime Minister described immigration as "a major concern" after seeing pictures – filmed by *South East Today* – showing men climbing onto the axles of trucks at Calais in an attempt to reach and enter Dover. And *Look East* carried out an investigation into the plight of eastern European migrants in the Fens and the unscrupulous gang masters who take their wages and force them to live in terrible conditions. Both stories had prominent coverage on all the BBC's main local, regional and national news outlets.

A pooling of minds and journalistic effort provided regional television and local radio with a comprehensive insight into the growing relationship between local communities across England and the Far East during the BBC's China Week. The expertise of our business correspondents helped to drive the project, with an impressive range of regional material also appearing on the News Channel and the 10 o'clock news.

BBC Somerset's presenters and reporters broadcast live from the worst affected areas throughout the winter floods



BBC Look East presenter Stewart White preparing to broadcast live from Shanghai



North West Tonight explored one of the most controversial and divisive energy issues since nuclear power with a week-long series on fracking which set out to raise awareness of the issue, examine the potential impact on the region and question those at the centre of arguments surrounding the story. As a result of a tip off to a member of staff, *Look North* in Hull was able to ensure the BBC led the field on the story of a plane passenger who was talked through making an emergency landing in the dark after the pilot collapsed. *South Today* was presented live from Portsmouth to mark the Government's decision to end naval shipbuilding in the city after more than 500 years. And an interview on *Spotlight* in Plymouth, which revealed how the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall was spending more on support staff than the authority he was elected to replace, prompted much comment from viewers.

East Midlands Today achieved success in the national Royal Television Awards taking the title of Nations and Regions news programme of the year, largely in recognition of the way in which it has dealt with a series of big stories. At the same event, *Look East's* Stewart White was voted regional presenter of the year for the second time in a row with the judges describing him as being in a class of his own.

Look North (Leeds) presenters Harry Gration and Amy Garcia cycled all two hundred and fifty miles of the two Yorkshire stages of this year's Tour de France on a tandem to raise money for Sport Relief. And the *North West Tonight* team spent a day using social media to take viewers behind the scenes, with pictures and updates, a live feed of the production gallery as the evening output was broadcast and a question and answer session with the programme's editor.

Look North presenters Harry Gration and Amy Garcia raised money for Sport Relief by completing a 241 mile tandem ride of the Tour de France stages through Yorkshire



During a series of special reports *BBC North West Tonight* explored the issues surrounding the controversial process of extracting gas known as Fracking



Local radio

There has been an emphasis on further developing the role local radio stations have in delivering original journalism and providing the audience with a platform to hold people in positions of power and responsibility to account. Our “hot seat” sequences, which involve leading figures being questioned directly by the audience, have continued to be popular and have made some strong output. *BBC Radio Lancashire*, working with regional television colleagues, built a week of output around unlimited access to the county’s largest hospital, the Royal Preston. Reporters brought a great deal of insight into the intense pressure faced by the teams at the hospital and the coverage included a special “hot seat” with the local NHS chief executive.

Our network of specialist political reporters have originated many strong stories which have also featured prominently on other BBC outlets. The revelation that a college in Luton was claiming nearly a million pounds for students it did not have a record of teaching came from a leaked report to *BBC Three Counties*. It followed months of investigative work and the building of contacts for information. The tenth anniversary of the Morecombe Bay tragedy led to some powerful output on all the BBC’s outlets in the North West, with *BBC Radio Lancashire* running a series of outside broadcasts, reports and features. The lifeboat crews who went out on the night were among those who shared their thoughts and extremely painful memories. *BBC Essex* and *Look East* told the stories behind the alleged cancer cover-up at Colchester hospital, providing interviews for many other outlets across the BBC.



On the second anniversary of the murder of Daniel Pelka, *BBC Coventry and Warwickshire* was allowed to embed a reporter with social services to report on how things have changed since the tragic death of the 4 year old. *BBC Radio Derby* found itself at the forefront of reporting two particularly significant national stories. As Mick and Mairead Philpott and their friend Paul Moseley were found guilty of the manslaughter of six children in a house fire, the station secured the first live interview with Mrs Philpott’s father. And a few months later, *BBC Radio Derby* journalists broadcast an exclusive live interview with the Al-Madinah School governors in which they revealed that they were going to change their rule on making female staff wear a Hijab, regardless of religion. The recording was also broadcast on Radio 4’s *Today* programme and on *Breakfast* on Five Live, and quotes from it were used by competitors and newspapers.

Recipients of the BBC Radio York Flood Hero awards



Laura Rawlings presents the Afternoon Show on BBC Radio Bristol and BBC Somerset



A special report by *BBC Radio Stoke* into the sex trade in North Staffordshire uncovered evidence of prostitutes working to pay university fees. The local Police and Crime Commissioner described the investigation as a “real public service” which brought the issue back onto the priority list. *BBC Radio Lincolnshire* went to the Romanian city of Cluj to investigate the likely outcome of the dropping of work restrictions on people from there being allowed to come to Britain. And an exclusive report by *BBC London 94.9* discovered that almost four thousand women and girls have been treated for female genital mutilation in the capital’s hospitals. The story, which ran across radio, TV and online as well as *BBC Arabic*, heard powerful and moving testimonies from women who have been involved.

BBC Radio Manchester took some of its main programmes on the road for eight weeks for an ambitious outreach campaign, while *BBC WM’s* summer tour, “Loving Where You Live”, involved taking the station out for a month of outside broadcasts in June. To celebrate the 30th anniversary of Torvill and Dean winning gold with *Bolero*, *BBC Radio Nottingham* went back to Sarajevo with them. The station organised a reunion, which reduced Chris and Jane to tears, with a girl who collected flowers from the rink in their Olympic performance in 1984.

There has been a drive to increase the diversity of the teams who produce and deliver BBC local radio programmes and content, with the aim of developing broadcasters and production staff who better reflect the wide range of people and communities we serve. A series of coaching and development workshops were run jointly by BBC English Regions and the BBC Academy for up-and-coming female presenters from both within and outside the BBC who would like to advance their on-air skills. We have made great strides forward towards achieving our goal to increase significantly the number of female presenters who host our most high profile output, particularly our Breakfast programmes. And an apprenticeship scheme is being run to attract new members of the workforce from a wider range of backgrounds. All these initiatives are being directly supported by the BBC’s Director-General, Tony Hall.

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of Torvill and Dean winning Gold with the *Bolero*, *BBC Radio Nottingham* went back to Sarajevo with them



A programme recorded at BBC Birmingham – “The Asian Silence? Rape, honour, violence: Are crimes against women the last taboo?” marked the first anniversary of the Delhi rape case. The debate brought key thinkers and activists together with ordinary women – young and old – and was used across Asian programmes on local radio stations as well as on the BBC Asian Network.

BBC Radio Manchester’s first annual charity appeal raised more than £770,000 for the Christie Cancer hospital which needed a mobile chemotherapy unit. *BBC Radio Devon*, *BBC Radio York* and *BBC Radio Suffolk* also ran fundraising partnerships with local charities in 2013, with two further stations starting them in 2014. *BBC Hereford and Worcester* listeners and staff achieved a world record for putting together the longest unbroken line of bunting for Children in Need. They managed six miles.

BBC Radio Humberside did the double by taking the Station of the Year title at both the UK Radio Academy and Frank Gillard awards. The station has been running an outreach project linked to the bombing of Hull by Zeppelins in 1915 which has involved working with a local playwright with the aim of engaging people in normally hard to reach areas by involving them in a unique community drama based on the story of the German raids. To mark *BBC Radio Cumbria’s* 40th birthday the station worked in partnership with the BBC Philharmonic to create a community orchestra and chorus.

Following a long campaign by listeners asking for a bespoke service for Dorset, a new weekday breakfast programme was launched for people living in the county.

BBC Radio Manchester’s Sam Walker and Bill Rice abseiling down Old Trafford for the station’s Christie charity appeal



Online and social media

The key issue for online this year has been refocusing our offering in response to audience feedback. The demand has been for a more agile model of delivery that sees better use made of multimedia content and more frequent updates. Six indexes have been turned to this new format, with others to follow. Audience response has been positive and the establishment of new ways of working in our newsrooms has improved communications between journalists working on different media. Next steps will be to add better video and audio functionality.

A significant piece of work has been done with a group of local press titles to explore better ways of working together, surfacing the most valuable content from outside the BBC on our websites and beyond. We will build on this and develop our relationship with local press and other media providers such as the new Local TV operators during 2014.

Editorially, we have focused on delivering distinctive added value and original journalism with our work on the Hillsborough inquests, several key trials such as that of Daniel Pelka's parents, the devastating flooding at the start of the year and World War One commemorations receiving particular plaudits. We have also improved our use of infographics and longer form journalism with work on a Hillsborough 'wall' of the victims' faces, significant work on fracking, the anniversary of the Kegworth air disaster and our work on the Mary Rose.

Original journalism highlights included work which employed the Freedom of Information act to expose errors at Kettering hospital and revealed that structural issues at Bath Abbey were caused by buried bodies.

Our sports teams, fully restructured in the last two years, generated some excellent journalism following the Portsmouth football club takeover by fans' group the Pompey Supporters' Trust and an exclusive on Gareth Hock saying he was "unfairly treated" after being kicked out of England's Rugby League World Cup squad. Strong local relationships have delivered dividends on stories such as the Leeds United takeover saga and sport has also created more opportunities for covering events like the Aviva using live text.

In social media we have rationalised our presence on key third party sites, seeking to build on best practice in our own teams and in the wider BBC, to remove underperforming sites and to ensure that we make the best of new developments. Engagement with our third party pages, especially over events such as this year's widespread flooding, has been significant and we continue to use social media as a way to drive reach and engagement with our services.

Weekly and special output

The BBC launched its coverage to mark the centenary of World War One with the BBC Nations and Regions-led *World War One at Home* project at the heart of the plans. More than a thousand stories linked to places around the UK are being created in an ambitious partnership involving the Imperial War Museum and academics from across the country. As well as featuring across BBC Local Radio, regional news and local online services, the stories have appeared on network programmes including *The One Show*, *Five Live breakfast* and *Breakfast* on BBC One. More stories will be told throughout 2014 and a website featuring the collection of a hundred stories per region is now growing, full of stories of how the conflict rippled down every street.

BBC Hereford and Worcester listeners designed a flag for Worcestershire which now flies all over the county



BBC Radio York presenter Jonathan Cowap broadcasting live from the Great Yorkshire Show



Inside Out continued to deliver moments of original journalism, in spite of BBC financial cutbacks coming into force. As well as regions continuing to focus on challenging local journalism, we continued to find success, in audience terms, when we joined up to highlight a particular topic, such as energy theft, food safety or immigration issues. The *Inside Out* run finished strongly, although concerns around the pressures on our teams, and the amount of investigative journalism they can deliver, is something we continue to monitor.

It has also been the first year of a fruitful collaboration between *Inside Out* and *The One Show*, with local journalists regularly contributing ideas and items to the *One Show* when *Inside Out* is off air, or when a current affairs story develops in a particular region or patch. Examples have included the coastal erosion story from BBC East and the Dawlish railway crisis from BBC South West.

Meanwhile, the same teams were also very active in delivering one-off specials for television, funded through the 'Impact Fund' we hold in reserve in order to invest in journalism outside the *Inside Out* run, or mark particular events in the life of a region. Two strong examples were a very moving investigation into the Birmingham Pub Bombings, called *Who Murdered Maxine?* by the West Midlands team, and a half-hour programme to mark an amazing archaeological discovery on Dartmoor. *Mystery of the Moor* almost doubled the audience normally watching BBC One at that time in the South West.

We enjoyed continued success in getting local programmes shown on the network – thus extending both the reach and the enjoyment for the audience. A three-part, fly-on-the-wall documentary following life at York Minster over the course of the year, for instance, has been transmitting in Yorkshire and the North East, and is now going on to be repeated on BBC Two. Our aim is to continue this trend and try to do more with networks – from BBC Four, to BBC Two, to the News Channel.

We have looked for opportunities to provide a broader range of stories reflecting the life of the region for TV viewers across England. In the autumn we looked at the issue of threatened buildings, pegged loosely to the tenth anniversary of the BBC *Restoration* series; and we revealed the rich abundance of wildlife as part of BBC Learning's *Urban Wildlife* season (which went on to be repeated as a network series on BBC Two).

Despite being ostensibly a regional broadcast, we continue to enjoy the occasional network-only commission. *Children's Emergency Rescue*, an off-shoot from the successful *Helicopter Heroes* series made in Yorkshire, was a three-part hit for BBC Two, while *Helicopter Heroes Down Under* has been re-commissioned and is already in production for 2015.

Sport

English Regions sport continues to follow, reflect and celebrate its teams and stars, whether large or small.

The BBC West Midlands edition of *Late Kick Off*, our late Monday night TV football programme, won a prestigious Prix Circom award for best regional sports output. The strand, now into its fifth series, continues to reflect the ups and down of local teams with strong sports journalism. The version for London and the South East regions spotlighted the change of ownership at Charlton and had the first interview with manager Chris Powell after his sacking.

Meanwhile our weekly rugby league programme *The Super League Show* produced more programmes than ever, featuring, for the first time on TV, highlights from all sixteen ties in the Challenge Cup fourth round in one edition. The programme has a national repeat, while its presenter, Look North's Tanya Arnold, has also become a key member of the BBC's network rugby league coverage team, presenting World Cup highlights shows in the autumn.

BBC Radio Jersey's Sports Editor Tim Pryor at the 2013 Island Games in Bermuda



The teams run out for BBC Radio Derby's Legends football match which raised money for Sport Relief



BBC Local Radio stations have a special place for sports fans, following their local sides through thick and thin. While most stations have commentated on their sports teams at home and abroad for years, BBC Radio Guernsey began to do commentary for the first time on all Guernsey FC's games this season, reflecting their rise up the Isthmian Leagues. Their away matches are all on the UK mainland at tiny grounds, so it has been challenge to get the outside broadcast on air.

In unique partnerships with BBC Sport and the ECB, a major innovation in the summer was our enhanced county cricket service, with ball-by-ball commentary on every match the 18 counties play. This drew warm compliments from cricket fans, more than 700,000 page impressions and listeners from all over the world. Many games were also re-broadcast on *Radio 5 Live Sports Extra*.

Live boxing is not a regular part of BBC Local Radio schedules, but *BBC Tees* covered local boxer Stuart Hall's World Bantamweight title fight at the Newcastle Arena. It was a bold and ambitious piece of broadcasting, with unprecedented access to both fighters in the build-up.

Our online sports service, with a Birmingham hub and regional journalists around England, ensures that local stories are written up for www.bbc.co.uk/sport, with many becoming lead stories.

Technology

English Regions' presence on digital platforms has seen some welcome improvements, with regional news available earlier in the evening and 'listen again' facilities for Local Radio now on the BBC News app.

The multi-million pound refurbishment of the BBC South West headquarters in Plymouth got underway, and ambitious work to transform and modernise the technology at local radio sites across the country has made great strides. Much of the equipment is centralised, while studio production and editorial teams remain local. The first station, BBC Radio Northampton, is expected to go live with the new kit in the summer of 2014.

BBC Radio Northamptonshire commentator Chris Egerton and BBC Radio Kent's Peter Guise enjoying refreshments at Canterbury



Three hundred replacement small video cameras have been introduced for journalists to film their own material. Meanwhile, the use of mobile phone technology and tablets has continued to transform newsgathering and live broadcasting capability across English Regions.

A major project to refresh and increase the size of the fleet of live broadcast vehicles used across the BBC's News Group has so far resulted in the introduction of twenty nine new vehicles aimed specifically at local radio, regional television and network news. This will improve the capability of the overall news division to respond to breaking stories.

Local TV

BBC English Regions has a key role in the launch phase of the UK's emerging local television industry. On behalf of the wider BBC, we are leading on a plan agreed between the government and the BBC Trust which encourages the new independent stations to develop strong news operations. A fund, worth up to £15m over three years, allows us to buy news footage created by the stations. The revenue they earn will help them in their crucial early years.

The first station, Estuary TV, went on air from Grimsby in November 2013. On their launch day, *Look North* aired their footage of Spanish nurses arriving to solve a staff shortage in Lincolnshire. Mustard TV in Norwich launched in March 2014. An original story emerging from the newsroom they share with the Eastern Daily Press was used by BBC East on TV, on radio, and online.

We offer training to the new stations and provide the technical facilities for the video transfers. More stations will launch in the coming year and most are keen to enter the partnership deal with the BBC.

BBC Radio Derby's Sally Pepper learning to Morris Dance



Future strategy

One of our chief priorities will be to do more to ensure our output, and our teams who are responsible for it, more closely reflect the tremendous range of communities we serve. With this in mind, we are delighted to be at the centre of the BBC's biggest ever apprenticeship scheme which is offering 45 places across English Regions – at all our local radio stations and some of our regional bases. The 15 month scheme, which was announced by the Director-General, is aimed at non-graduates and will be run by the BBC Academy in partnership with the City of Wolverhampton College. It will sit alongside another of our key initiatives to increase the number of female presenters hosting mainstream output on local radio.

Building on the success of BBC North, the corporation has launched Project England. This new initiative will work across England from our bases in Salford, Birmingham and Bristol to increase the connection with audiences out of London. The revitalisation of BBC Birmingham has already begun with £23.5 million going into the city in the next two years and 200 jobs moving to the centre.

Our aim over the coming year will be to increase the range, ambition and quality of our original journalism even further across television, radio and online – with a clear emphasis on locally rooted, accountability based editorial content and debate. We will seek to expand our reputation for providing audiences with a direct route to question and challenge those in positions of responsibility. This will be particularly evident as our dedicated network of political reporters and correspondents report the twists and turns which will inevitably surface in the run-up to next year's general election.

We will continue to take a lead with high profile BBC-wide editorial projects – including the current season of output to commemorate the centenary of World War One.

Our teams are involved in the BBC's drive to increase and enhance coverage of the arts, including plans to work with the RSC on a Shakespeare 2016 season. *BBC Radio Bristol* has been piloting a format similar to *BBC Introducing* to give a voice to local comedians, poets and storytellers.

Additionally, our focus will be on improving our interaction with the audience through social media platforms, our Local Live online updates and other digital opportunities. This will not only enable us to form a deeper relationship with members of our existing audience, but will also help us to connect with new groups of people who may not use our more traditional services.

Underpinning all these developments will be our determination to nurture and grow even stronger the special relationship our teams are able to achieve with their audiences by reflecting real life at a local level in communities across the country.

Contacts

If you wish to find out more about the BBC's year – including full financial statements and performance against other public commitment – then please visit www.bbc.co.uk/annualreport

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**BBC English Regions Annual Review 2013/2014 compiled
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