

UTV PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF 2019

PROGRAMME REVIEW

Content - News and Current Affairs

UTV's portfolio of local programmes offers a diverse range of news, current affairs and other shows including lifestyle and entertainment. In an intensely competitive market, UTV is committed to maintaining the highest quality content with a focus on the needs and preferences of the Northern Ireland audience. News and current affairs are at the heart of UTV output. UTV Live continues to be the news brand trusted for accuracy and authority, balance and impartiality, and that is reflected in the continuing rise of its viewing figures.

MAJOR NEWS EVENTS IN 2019

Brexit dominated UTV's news coverage in 2019. - The year opened with disagreement over the Irish backstop and the extension to the deadline for a deal, and ended with a new prime minister in Downing Street negotiating a new deal to replace the backstop. Throughout the crisis, UTV reported from Brussels, London, Dublin, Stormont and the borderlands, at times on an almost nightly basis.

2019 was also the **year of elections** and we carried extensive extra live debate and results programming for three elections - local government and European elections in May, and a surprise Parliamentary election in December.

The other big stories of the year included the murder of the journalist Lyra McKee by dissident republicans; the decision to bring one prosecution over the Bloody Sunday killings; and in the world of business, Belfast shipyard Harland & Wolff and Wrightbus of Ballymena both going into administration within weeks of each other.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Up Close - a hard-hitting current affairs series, continued and looked in depth at several local issues and news stories affecting Northern Ireland, including poverty in Northern Ireland and reflective programme to mark the 25th anniversary of the IRA and loyalist ceasefires.

View from Stormont our weekly one-hour programme, continued throughout 2019, looking at the issues affecting the people of Northern Ireland. It played an important role in providing viewers with in-depth political analysis and comment from the key political players, often responding to key news events of that day, as well as broadening its remit to cover key groups and sectors affected by the suspension of government.

OTHER PROGRAMMES

UTV's non-news programme offering continued to be very popular with viewers. UTV supports and works closely with the independent sector in Northern Ireland and, consequently, our programme offering was a mix of in-house and independent production.

Rare Breed returned to UTV with a new series of 12 programmes in January 2019 produced by Crawford McCann. The series charts the agricultural year through the lives of farmers working in a variety of enterprises, with each episode capturing the highs and lows of each month.

Eamonn Mallie Face to Face with ... Award-winning journalist Eamonn Mallie returned for a second series, talking one-to-one with some of the biggest names in the world of sport, acting and public life in Northern Ireland. In this eight-part series, produced by Mallie Productions, Eamonn interviewed, among others, Eileen Paisley (widow of Ian Paisley) and snow Patrol frontman Gary Lightbody,

Westway Film Productions produced two series for UTV in 2019.

Ulster Giants returned for a second series with presenter Joe Mahon exploring giants of civil engineering in Northern Ireland in an eight part series. He along with various experts visited bridges, tunnels, canals, viaducts, harbours, windmills, railways, roadways, lakes and peatlands – to hear fascinating stories of how our “Ulster Giants” were built.

Lough Erne, an eight-part series, saw Joe Mahon taking to the Fermanagh Lakes, travelling around this area of outstanding natural beauty.

UTV Life - In 2019 UTV Life continued in its peak-time slot at 8pm on Friday evening bringing viewers a relaxed and conversational line-up to kick off their weekend. The studio-based series reflects life and topical events across Northern Ireland. Special programmes included a day at Royal Portrush Golf Club to mark The Open; a Game of Thrones special from Carrickfergus Castle; and a Christmas special from Glenarm Castle.

With this Ring - This was a new six- part series which aired in mid-October about the trials and tribulations of married life in Northern Ireland. Ten different couples talked on their sofas to the cameras. It was produced by local independent production company Triplevision.

Rewind with Julian was a four-part series in which Northern Ireland celebrities reminisced about what life was like growing up in Northern Ireland. Produced in-house by UTV, and fronted by UTV's Julian Simmons, well-known faces shared their light-hearted memories of a variety of topics, including family life, school, holidays and romance. Each programme was interspersed with footage from UTV's rich archive dating back to the early 1960s, some of which was not seen since originally transmitted.

Frontline - 2019 was the 50th anniversary of the start of The Troubles, and UTV marked this major historic milestone with a 6-part series. Produced in-house by UTV, and using footage

from UTV's rich archive, the series looked back at the Troubles and the vital services on the frontline which helped to keep Northern Ireland functioning during that turbulent period. Interviewees gave first-hand accounts of their jobs and how they dedicated their lives to their various professions to keep life moving despite the conflict that was going on.

UTV in Japan - This was a series of four special programmes covering the events of the Rugby World Cup in Japan. UTV sports correspondent Ruth Gorman brought reports and interviews with the biggest names in the game.

Other programming - UTV also broadcasted a number of one-off specials on significant events in Northern Ireland in 2019 including: a special on the **St Patrick's Day** parades in March; a special on **The Balmoral Show** which showcases the strong agri-food sector in Northern Ireland; a special in July on **The Twelfth** parades and celebrations around Northern Ireland; **The Spirit of NI Awards** in June showcasing inspirational local people rewarded for their achievements and endeavours.

CULTURAL AND OTHER DIVERSITY

UTV is committed to providing equality of opportunity, dignity and respect both on and off screen. In 2019, UTV continued its support for a number of major community events and organisations, including the Sunday Life Spirit of NI Awards, Belfast Mela, Cinemagic, and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). News covered much of the activities of these cultural activities. Staff also took part in Belfast Pride as part of ITV's Pride network. We hosted a Meet the Media event for the Chartered Institute of Public Relations and a media awareness event entitled Women into News, to demystify the news process for potential female interviewees from key sectors.

PUBLIC INPUT

UTV is very proud of the diversity of our programming and the interactivity we enjoy with our audiences across all platforms. Facebook and Twitter activity continues to grow with the increased use of Facebook to communicate shortened key news stories of the day. Twitter was increasingly used to provide updates to stories in between televised news, and individual reporters as well as the official UTV news sites increased their followers.

PROMOTION OF MEDIA LITERACY

As well as giving tours of our studios, we've also actively engaged with groups and individuals to promote media literacy. We've welcomed broadcast media students from Belfast and Dublin and Donegal. News Anchor Paul Clark gave a talk to 50+ media students as part of Cinemagic's Film Festival. UTV worked with the Media Trust on its Breaking into News campaign in 2019, which saw a local media studies student being mentored by a UTV journalist. The report they worked on was broadcast on UTV Live News.

UTV also welcomed a group of young people to UTV in summer 2019 as part of the Social Mobility Business Partnership (SMBP) which aims to break down barriers and help young people from low income backgrounds in their pursuit of a career.

UTV appointed a News Trainee in October 2019. This is in line with other ITV nations and regions. The successful candidate got a nine month contract to learn all the skills necessary to work in our multi-media newsroom.

UTV STATEMENT FOR 2020

At the outset of 2020 we were looking forward to providing our audience with the same high standards of news, current affairs and high quality local programming.

The outbreak of COVID-19 and resultant government restrictions had a massive impact on those plans. The focus for UTV from March was to remain on air providing up-to-date, accurate and relevant news to the UTV audience.

INNOVATION, EXPERIMENT AND CREATIVITY

Delivering our programmes and online news service is crucial at a time when trusted and impartial news has been more important than ever before, to support and inform people through this crisis.

From the outset of the pandemic, UTV has stepped up in very challenging circumstances, with the talented people who work in all our news operations perfecting new ways of working to ensure our viewers continue to get a first class service. Our top priority has been to ensure the safety, health and well-being of our employees, and we adapted quickly in several ways, getting information out to the public quickly and accurately.

Daily Stormont briefings - The daily Northern Ireland Executive briefings are shown on social media. Along with our in depth expert analysis on the 6pm news, viewers get a comprehensive picture of the daily decisions.

PROGRAMME OFFER

Our weekly political programme, **View from Stormont**, has continued throughout the pandemic. The programme's focus has shifted from the day to day workings of Stormont to the political response to, and policy decisions arising from, the pandemic.

To ensure the safety of all our colleagues we suspended production of all non-news programmes. Filming of some independent commissions continued under strict safety measures. Despite restrictions and challenges, UTV has been able to air several local non news programmes. Below is a summary:-

Farming programme, **Rare Breed** which was filmed in 2019 returned for a 12 week run in January.

Eamonn Mallie Face to Face with..... aired in January, filmed in 2019, had interviews among others, with rugby legend Stephen Ferris, Fr. Brian D'Arcy, and Derry Girls creator Lisa Magee.

Taste of Success – aired February 2020. Bushmills-born world-renowned chef Clare Smyth was the focus of a half-hour programme charting her career. She trained with Gordon Ramsay and cooked for Harry and Meghan's wedding, and now runs her own award-winning restaurant in Kensington London.

Ulster Giants returned for a third series in July with five episodes completed pre-Covid. The remaining three episodes were filmed during Covid and will air at the end of 2020.

Lough Foyle is a new ten-part travelogue series which will air from October.

We also produced one current affairs **Up Close** programme pre-Covid; a special programme on the Renewable Heat Incentive inquiry; a special hour-long tribute to John Hume on his passing in August; and most recently a special half-hour programme immediately after the prime minister's 8pm address on 22nd September.

Changes to schedule

We maintained the normal schedule of news through the day and throughout the week, with adjustments to the duration of some of the shorter bulletins. We returned to all normal news and weather durations from mid September. To reduce operational complexity, UTV continuity announcements between programmes were suspended, and UTV viewers have been seeing ITV branding on screen between programmes.

Reporting

The latest technology allows editors and reporters to film, edit and deliver news packages remotely for transmission. Morning editorial meetings are conducted via Google Hangout.

Editorially, UTV has worked hard to provide a balance between providing the latest accurate information, alongside the human stories, and where appropriate, also showing the lighter side of life.

We had a huge response to our 'Rainbows' segment at the close of the evening news, which ran for the duration of the Clap for Carers campaign. We received hundreds of drawings from viewers' children in support of key workers every day.

For the foreseeable future, social distancing will continue to be a part of how society and business is expected to work and we'll continue to follow the relevant guidelines. For the weeks and months ahead that's likely to mean a continuation of how we've been working and bringing the news to the public. Any changes we make will happen gradually in a measured way, in line with government guidance.