



UTV PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF 2023 and Statement of Programme Policy 2024

PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF 2023

Content - News, current affairs and general programming

UTV's portfolio of local programmes offers a diverse range of top quality news, current affairs and other content including factual entertainment. UTV operates in an intensely competitive market, and is committed to maintaining the highest standards of output 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 is the number one source of news in Northern Ireland above all other outlets, with the share of the available audience at 6pm rising last year from an already very high base.

Tier 2 Arrangements:

We broadcast 208 hours of news programmes a year for UTV audiences in Northern Ireland in line with our licence commitments. These include our flagship UTV Live at 6pm on weekdays and a range of bulletins for audiences during the early morning, lunchtime, the late evening and weekends. We also deliver 104 hours of current affairs and factual programmes each year. Outside of our licence we offer a full 'on demand' service including web content and streaming.

Significant change:

There was no significant change to the licence.

Innovation, Experiment and Creativity

Delivering accurate and impartial news remains central to the UTV offer, and innovations in technology have allowed the news team to work more flexibly and more efficiently.

In 2023 a new production system was introduced. All news staff are now trained on Avid Media Central. This is a leading industry package for ingesting, storing, accessing, editing and publishing news content. The system serves the entire ITV News operation across all locations including UTV. All newsrooms can access each other's media across the estate - a

key objective of the 30 million pounds investment decision, which represents a major strategic commitment for ITV News.

2023 saw the introduction of regional content on streaming service ITVX. This is already making an impact, allowing viewers to watch live and catch up, as well as watch bite size chunks of the programmes and bespoke material, with specially gathered longer reports exclusively for ITVX.

ITV has also invested in mobile journalism with dozens of kits being sent out across the UK, including to UTV. This followed testing by the ITV News Innovation Lab. UTV now has 13 kits on site aiding daily newsgathering.

UTV's digital footprint grew in 2023, completing 12 months in a row of two million page views or more per month. UTV also reached a milestone of one million downloads on podcasts.

UTV relocated its North west bureau to Ebrington Square with a high standard office close to an excellent location to 'go live' when required.

Reporting

Major stories in 2023 which UTV covered extensively:

1. 23 Feb 2023 - Murder attempt on PSNI detective John Caldwell at Omagh (full news OB special)
2. 27 Feb 2023 - The 'Windsor Framework' deal reached
3. 12 April 2023 - Visit by President Biden to Ulster University in Belfast
4. 9 August 2023 - Fallout from PSNI data leak

Also of note was the marking of the 25th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. We began with a one-hour Up Close special the previous night, followed by a news special that evening.

We also did a programme dedicated to the pressures on the health service, as bodies which represent thousands of doctors and nurses said the system was on the brink of collapse. In another news special we examined the trend in patients going abroad for surgery, some of whom suffered extremely serious consequences.

PROGRAMME OFFER

UTV PRODUCTIONS

UTV's weekly political programme, **View from Stormont**, aired regularly on Monday nights with the focus on the turbulent political scene here.

UTV Life (weekly magazine programme) presented by Pamela Ballantine aired throughout the year, continuing mostly in its Friday 7pm slot. Famous Irish and UK actors, singers and performers came into the studio, with a special programme from the BAFTAs following the success of locally made short film - 'The Irish Goodbye', which went on to win an Oscar.

Up Close (hard-hitting current affairs programme) with four hour-long programmes produced throughout the year. Topics covered included Dissident Republicans, double agent spies, and the pollution in Lough Neagh.

Hidden NI - the return of a six part series which uncovered some of the less well-known spots in Northern Ireland. UTV's Sara O'Kane presented the series and travelled across Northern Ireland (and sometimes a little further) to explore hidden gems, and find out about places few knew existed or got to see.

Homemade Heroes - this four part series charted the lives and careers of four of Northern Ireland's sporting legends. These local stars talked about the highs and lows of their careers in sport, their motivations, and who supported and inspired them along the way. They also shared amazing stories about their times in the spotlight, with insights to their current lives.

Living Off Grid - a two-part special UTV production which featured people from Northern Ireland embracing a different way of living. Reporter Emma Patterson met those who've turned their backs on convention, discovering how and why people choose to live this way; what prompted the move; how they overcome daily challenges; and what motivates them. The programmes were filmed solely using mobile journalism.

Other programmes commissioned from local independent production companies.

Rare Breed – A Farming Year returned to UTV with a new series of 12 programmes produced by Strident Media. The series charts the agricultural year through the lives of farmers, with each episode capturing the highs and lows of a particular month.

Eamonn Mallie Face to Face with... produced by Mallie Productions, entered a sixth series on UTV. Each programme is a long form interview by the award-winning journalist Eamonn Mallie who talks one-to-one with some of the biggest names in the world of sport, drama and public life in Northern Ireland. The seven-part series saw Eamonn interview firstly Tony Blair followed by, among others, Martin O'Neill, Mary Black and Patrick Kielty.

Keepers of the Lough - following its successful launch in 2021, this series made a welcome return with six new episodes in 2023. Set on and around Strangford Lough, the series takes the viewer on a beautiful voyage of discovery at this enchanting part of the Northern Irish countryside, learning about its people and its habitat. It is produced by Green Inc and narrated by Patrick Kielty.

Westway Film Productions delivered twelve episodes of **Mahon's Way** in 2023. Veteran presenter Joe Mahon travelled the highways and byways of Northern Ireland, visiting interesting places, providing fresh insights across a wide range of subject matter, from flora and fauna to historic buildings, areas of natural beauty and history. It was presented with all the usual enthusiasm and genuine enjoyment Joe brings.

Secrets of the Comedy Circuit enjoyed a second series in 2023. This series showcased the vibrant Northern Ireland comedy scene. The original four part commission was extended to eight episodes. The series was filmed in front of a live audience in the Belfast Empire Music Hall during the 'Empire Laughs Back Comedy Club' nights, a mainstay of the comedy

scene for more than 30 years. The series highlighted local talent, featuring both well-known and emerging voices as well as acts from across the UK. This was picked up by the UK pages of our streaming service ITVX and so reflected Northern Ireland to a wider audience across the nations and regions.

Other programming

Election 2023 - UTV provided extensive coverage of the local council elections with four dedicated slots.

UTV in France - was a UTV production kicking off the Rugby World Cup and following the Ireland team during their highs and lows of the tournament. There was a special hour-long preview programme, with reports from France, which complemented ITV's exclusive coverage of the tournament.

Being James Martin - following the success of locally-made Oscar winning short film, 'The Irish Goodbye', UTV produced a special programme about its star, James Martin - who has Down's Syndrome - which examined his early life and the inspiration he has become.

There were also programmes to mark The Twelfth parades and celebrations, as well as a St Patrick's Day programme. **UTV at the Show** brought highlights of the Balmoral Show, showcasing the best of NI's agri-food industry.

Cultural and Other Diversity

UTV is committed to providing equality of opportunity, dignity and respect both on and off screen. The company continued its support for a number of major community events and organisations. Belfast Mela, NI's largest multi-cultural event held a series of outdoor events, with UTV reporter Paul Reilly hosting the kick-off carnival in Belfast city centre and the finale concert at Botanic Gardens.

A wealth of on air content was included in our news and non-news programmes representing our audiences in the content we make.

We supported Business in the Community in their endeavours to help 'hard to reach' children from low income households.

UTV supported the SistersIN project, a gender diversity scheme, which aims to inspire young female students to become strong leaders through a year-long 1-2-1 mentoring programme. A number of senior female figures at UTV were involved in the pilot scheme and hope to support the scheme next year.

On-screen reporter Sarah McKinley was a key speaker at an International Women's Day event at Belfast Harbour Commissioners. She also gave the keynote speech at the RTS student awards.

ITV Able events - following the success of the 2022 ITV-wide initiative to encourage disabled staff members across the business to consider employment in news and programmes, the scheme was repeated for 2023. Eight disabled staff members have signed up to take part in newsroom visits in early 2024. It is hoped they will become more engaged and increase their knowledge of potential careers in ITV News and Programmes.

The UTV Diversity & Inclusion Panel continued to meet in 2023. Four meetings were held hosted by Vidar Hjordeng. Panellists got to see content and hear about company initiatives. The forum is excellent at giving valuable feedback on UTV's activities and output.

UTV formalised diversity activity in 2023, with the formation of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion group, comprising staff from different disciplines who are all involved in DE&I initiatives UTV carries out.

Public Input

UTV is very proud of its range of programming and the interactivity enjoyed with audiences across all platforms via our social media accounts where audiences engage with our content daily.

Our social media presence increasingly allowed us to identify stories and contributions from our online audiences.

Promotion of Media Literacy

UTV appointed a News Trainee in October 2023. This was 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.

2023 saw UTV staff members both on and off screen visit local schools under the **ITV News Schools Outreach Programme** to encourage children from diverse backgrounds to think about careers in news. This was met very positively by schools, pupils and teachers.

UTV hosted University of Ulster Coleraine MA Journalism students for a newsroom and studio visit.

UTV was involved in the launch of the BFI Replay project - a joint venture with the BFI and NI Screen, making archive footage accessible to library users all over NI. 98% of the content available comes from the UTV archive.

UTV STATEMENT FOR 2024

We look forward to providing our audience with the same high standards of news, current affairs and top quality local programming which reflects the people and issues of Northern Ireland in 2024.

News and current affairs remain at the heart of our output this year and we will continue to deliver a full service. Other programming will return with new series of familiar favourites and some brand new content is also planned.

Innovation, Experiment and Creativity

The newsroom will continue to operate a hybrid working model to support staff, with more of an emphasis on colleagues being in the office, so they develop and share ideas, maintaining their wellbeing by collaborating in person, as well as enjoying greater flexibility.

Innovation - in addition to embedding the major investment in the new production system, we will be expanding our use of mobile journalism kits. 2024 will continue to see this technology used in programme making, as well as news.

PROGRAMME OFFER

News

UTV Live will continue to deliver a market leading news service and will respond quickly to breaking lines following developments and will include exclusive reports and informed analysis.

We will also provide relevant coverage of the most topical and popular events in Northern Ireland.

View from Stormont will continue to analyse the political scene, providing viewers with an in-depth look at developments, including commentary from key players and voices in Northern Ireland.

Current Affairs

Up Close - the hard-hitting monthly current affairs programme is set to run in 2024, with the first programme examining the issues and controversy around the XL Bully Dog breed and owners.

Other programmes

Weekly magazine show **UTV Life** returns in 2024 bringing viewers a relaxed and conversational line-up. The studio-based series airing on regular Friday 7pm slot will continue to cover a diverse range of subjects centred on Northern Ireland's cultural life. It is presented by Pamela Ballantine with reporter Rita Fitzgerald bringing filmed items from all over NI.

UTV will also produce a third series of **Hidden NI**, where a team of three reporters will take the viewer to hidden gems in Northern Ireland to which members of the public wouldn't normally have access.

Eamonn Mallie Face to Face with... Award-winning journalist Eamonn Mallie returns for a seventh series, talking one-to-one to some of the biggest names in Northern Ireland. The series kicks off with Linda Ervine, who is a language rights activist from East Belfast. Poet Michael Longley and artist / illustrator Oliver Jeffers feature in future episodes. This series is produced by independent production company Mallie Productions

Keepers of the Lough will return for a third series. First aired in 2021 and set in Strangford Lough, the episodes take the viewer on a beautiful voyage of discovery around this enchanting part of Northern Ireland, learning about its people and the habitat. The series is once again narrated by Patrick Kielty and produced by independent production company Green Inc.

Westway Film Productions will produce eight programmes to be aired later in the year.

Mahon's Way presenter Joe Mahon will take to the highways and byways of Northern Ireland again, with a promise of returning with another entertaining mix of people, places and fascinating stories.

The Kelly Years - this will be a UTV produced four-part archive series, charting highlights of 'The Kelly Show'. The Friday night chat show which aired on UTV for more than 16 years from 1989 to 2005. Viewers will see clips of interviews with Garth Brooks, Jamie Dornan, several soap stars and other sporting and acting legends.

Dogs with Jobs - this will be a UTV-produced six-part series, looking at those special canines who do great things, from therapy to search and rescue, and everything in between.

Putting on the Glitz - this UTV-produced four-part observational documentary will follow a Belfast party planner and her team as they transform local venues for parties, weddings and Christmas.

Winging it - a UTV produced three part series will look into the Northern Ireland Pigeon racing scene.

In addition, we have a new UTV-produced six-part series still in development for transmission later in 2024, but which will have a local history and heritage theme, looking at some dying trades, and what local people are doing to keep them alive.

Special programmes will include UTV at the Show, the Twelfth parades, St Patrick's Day celebrations and the expected General Election.

ENDS
