
Titles and Descriptions

It's not just the programmes that need to have a sense of excitement and the ability to create curiosity in our audience and potential audience. Whatever we publish - titles, billings, online descriptions etc (known as 'metadata') - have an effect on how your programme performs on the web.

Programme titles and descriptions should always be written in a way that encourages the most people to listen to it, makes the programme topic clear, and ensures visibility and findability across the web - in podcast provider spaces (such as Apple Podcasts, Spotify etc.), search engine results (such as Google) and other tech, such as voice-activated systems (such as Alexa).

We need to have titles and programme descriptions five weeks before the transmission date. This ensures that both Press and Publicity have time to adequately promote the programme, and that these descriptions are ready in time for our automated systems. It can be difficult to update programme descriptions at some of their publication sites if the information arrives too close to transmission.

Titles

Indicate immediately what the programme or podcast is about.

- Use clear simple language – no puns. Show the value of your content
- Be succinct - take out any unnecessary words (use 50 characters max)
- Put the words that convey most about the story at the front (apps may cut off the end of the title)
- Use search terms so people can discover your content

Examples of Good Titles

- The Death Row book club
- ADHD and me
- Finding the viruses that destroy superbugs
- How Christo wrapped the Reichstag

Programme Descriptions

We need you to provide two descriptions for each programme you deliver. Make this clear, informative and valuable. If you are making a series of programmes, each programme will need its own title and descriptions.

Short description - 89 characters (approx. 12 words)

Medium description – 179 characters (approx. 30 words)

Long description - 1800 characters (about 250 words)

- Writing for publication (Online or Press) is not the same as writing a radio script. Don't copy and paste the top of your script or the original proposal summary, to 'make do' for your online text. It doesn't work for the reasons outlined below...
- The first 8 - 10 words are the most important. Do not waste valuable character count with phrases such as "In this week's programme" as many digital devices will cut off after the first few words. Instead, encapsulate the subject matter efficiently and get to the point straightaway. Make these useful, relevant and interesting. Think about where the programme descriptions will appear (mobile phones, on digital listings, in social media posts and other electronic programme guides, etc. See below...).
- Decide on one tense and stick to it. Present tense is often best. Explain acronyms and abbreviations. Include keywords your audience would use to find your programme in Google or Apple Podcasts, Spotify. 80% of us find online content this way.
- Use strong words and short sentences. Tease and intrigue to illustrate the story: 'Darren weighs 57 stone - and he's only 13-years-old. He hasn't left his bed for over three years. Meet him at his home in Philadelphia.'
NOT: 'A quirky documentary delineating the everyday life of the world's most obese teenager.'
- Provide context to make the subject matter more intriguing: 'The diabetes treatment insulin has been with us for 90 years, but in countries like Mali, insulin costs are as high as 40% of annual income. Why does the treatment cost so much and how can children in countries like Mali get access to it?'
- **Your writing should be true, accurate and unambiguous.**
- **Check that everything's 100% legally and editorially correct.**

Avoid

- Using today, this week, this month; a list of questions; lots of clauses and commas
- The name of your presenter or guests in first paragraph unless they're an A-lister – but include later in the paragraph
- Radio speak - 'We discuss / find out more / take a sideways look at / send our roving reporter out to...'

An Example of a Title and Descriptions

TITLE

Can 5G make you ill?

SHORT

There are scientists who claim they can prove it.

MEDIUM

Can 5G make you ill? There are scientists who claim they can prove it. Since the outbreak of the coronavirus, attacks on telephone masts and workers are being reported around the world.

LONG

Can 5G make you ill? There are scientists who claim they can prove it. Since the outbreak of the coronavirus, attacks on telephone masts and workers are being reported around the world. That's because some people think that 5G can make you sick – from coronavirus to cancer. And they claim a whole host of other symptoms. But at a time when many businesses are struggling, could this apparent threat be helping to fuel a whole industry of strange and expensive products? And worse, could stoking these fears actually be damaging people's health? Assignment investigates how bad science could be making you sick.

Hosted by Tom Wright.

Digital Assets

Press and Publicity Information

Business Development publishes a monthly guide to the programmes on World Service and the long descriptions are essential for this. This guide goes to many of our most important partners and is well used, particularly in the US and Australasia. In addition the BBC Press Office will use the long descriptions as the basis for press releases which can generate interest from reviewers both in the UK press and online, and internationally.

Your Programmes on BBC Sounds and BBC.com

BBC Sounds is how audiences listen live, catch up and discover radio programmes in the UK. Every programme can be accessed globally via BBC.com which is available around the world online and in most of the world via the BBC World Service App.

BBC World Service on Sounds can be found here – note how the images are cropped to the middle https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/live:bbc_world_service

And the schedule is here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/schedules/p00fzl9p#on-now>

BBC.com cannot be view in the UK.

Digital assets: Images



Your images should tell the story of your programme or podcast. Titles and images work together, and are vital in encouraging your audience to listen.

Take images of the locations and contributors and anything that tell the story of your programme visually. You can take these with your phone, but make sure the images are in focus, high resolution and carefully composed. **Don't use images of presenters** or the programme team, unless we've specifically asked you to do so.

Think early about digital. Great images will improve the visibility of your programme, extending its shelf life, and help reach a new, digital audience. It's much easier to source these at the time you make your programme, so plan ahead.

This permission should be for all rights, all media worldwide in perpetuity in connection with promotion of the programme/podcast. If you are taking pictures of your contributors, please check they are happy with their picture appearing on other platforms to promote the programme (including BBC websites, partners' platforms and social media accounts).

Images should work in a landscape format, but also be 'square safe' as many devices, including the new BBC Sounds app (more on that below), will crop to the central area of the image.

These should be delivered with the programme information described above, and you should ensure these are rights-cleared before offering them. This usually means that either you have taken them yourself, or you have the written permission of the person who took them.

If there are complexities with rights, especially around third party publication of the photographs, please consult wsncamultimedia@bbc.co.uk

You may also get a commission for a text feature piece from the BBC News site off the back of your programme – several of our spin-off articles have had over 2m+ page impressions.

Where do these descriptions/pictures appear?

Your programme images, titles and descriptions will appear on

- The World Service programmes website
- The Sounds app and Sounds website – the BBC audio service
- Promotion across the World Service homepage, the BBC homepage and the BBC News website In social media posts – these are posted on the World Service YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and X accounts with a combined follower/subscriber base of 11million people. In podcast platforms such Apple Podcasts and Spotify
- All search platforms - so including terms that the audience may be searching for is important
- Streams and feeds of our programmes in listings and promotion platforms

Digital Assets - Video

Video and visualized audio are an important way of reaching new audiences, amplifying the impact of your programmes. through our social platforms.

We selectively commission video content for which additional budget may be available. In your Proteus submission, you should include:

- Up to three examples (with links) of social video content that your team has previously produced. Ideally, these will have amplified your audio storytelling.
- Information about the social presence of any presenters/contributors you intend to work with (e.g. their accounts and follower numbers).
- Details of any visual assets you intend to have access to as part of the programme (e.g. family photographs/videos; relevant archive photography/video; self-shot video; custom graphics).

For referencing our latest visual styles, please review our [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#) feeds.

BBC SOUNDS

BBC Sounds was launched in October 2018, replacing iPlayerRadio as the way for audiences to listen live, catch up and discover radio programmes.

You can find Sounds via the [BBC radio homepage](#) – and is also available as an app via any App Store – search for BBC Sounds.

Programmes and podcasts can all be accessed via BBC Sounds. You can see how important a square safe, clear image and a strong title is important.

The screenshot displays the BBC Sounds website interface. At the top, the BBC logo is on the left, and navigation links for News, Sport, Weather, iPlayer, Sounds, and More are in the center. A search bar is on the right. Below the navigation bar, the 'SOUNDS' logo is on the left, and 'Listen' and 'My Sounds' links are on the right. The main content area features a large player for the 'Heart and Soul' podcast, titled 'A female rabbi in training'. The player includes a thumbnail image of a woman, a progress bar showing 00:08 / 26:29, and playback controls. Below the player, a text snippet reads: 'Miriam Camerini is training to be one of the world's first female Orthodox Jewish rabbis'. To the right of this text is a 'Subscribe' button. Below the main player, the 'Coming Up Next' section is displayed, featuring a carousel of upcoming content. The first item is 'Heart and Soul' with the title 'A female rabbi in training' and a duration of 26 mins. Other items include 'The wind phone' (26 mins), 'Football and belief for Egypt's Copts' (26 mins), 'Thought for the Day' by Francis Campbell (3 mins), 'Prayer for the Day' (02/07/2019, 2 mins), and 'All Things C' (investiture@5i, 28 mins). An 'Autoplay' toggle is visible in the top right corner of the 'Coming Up Next' section.

BBC KatherineC News Sport Weather iPlayer Sounds More Search

SOUNDS Listen My Sounds

Heart and Soul
A female rabbi in training
WORLD SERVICE

00:08 26:29

Miriam Camerini is training to be one of the world's first female Orthodox Jewish rabbis
Read more ▾
Programme Website

Subscribe

Coming Up Next Autoplay

NOW PLAYING
Heart and Soul
A female rabbi in training
26 mins

Heart and Soul
The wind phone
26 mins

Heart and Soul
Football and belief for Egypt's Copts
26 mins

Thought for the Day
Francis Campbell
3 mins

Prayer for the Day
02/07/2019
2 mins

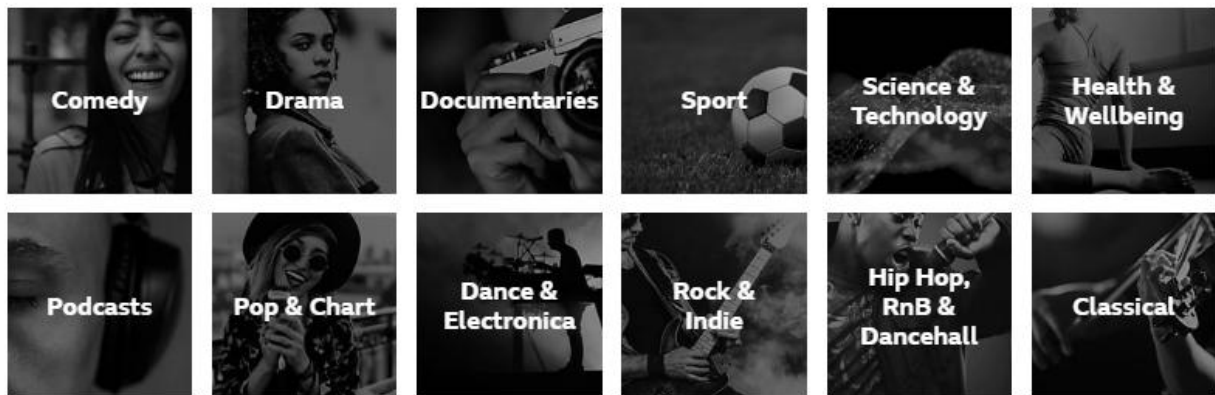
All Things C
investiture@5i
28 mins

Sounds also collates programmes from across the radio networks –

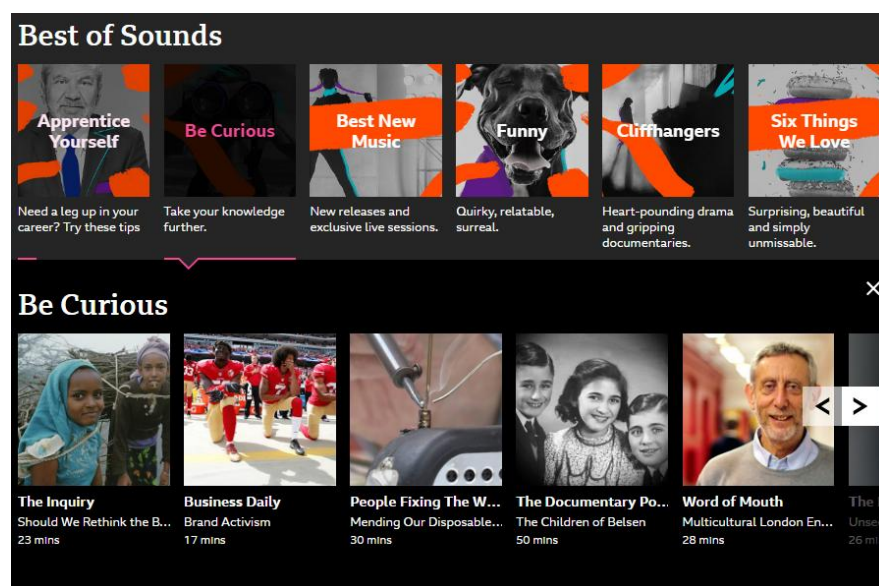
By category – e.g. Documentaries, Food & Drink and Science & Technology

Categories

[View all Categories >](#)



2. And by curated collections – Be Curious, Cliffhangers ...



... So there are even more ways that your programmes can be found – and as these grabs show, images and descriptions are even more important.

How do I deliver the Programme Information?

For internal BBC production suppliers – up to eight weeks before TX, suppliers will be asked to submit programme information onto SharePoint:

<https://onebbc.sharepoint.com/sites/WorldServiceEnglishWSGNews/Lists/World%20Service%20English%20Programmes/newform.aspx> (you may be asked to use BBC Login)

World Service English Programmes - New Item

<https://onebbc.sharepoint.com/sites/WorldServiceEnglishWSGNews/Lists/World%20Service%20English%20Programmes/newform.aspx>

EDIT

Save Cancel Paste Cut Copy Attach File ABC Spelling

Commit Clipboard Actions Spelling

Items on this list require content approval. Your submission will not appear in public views until approved by someone with proper rights. [More information on content approval.](#)

TX Date (first placing)

TX Week No *

Slot/Strand *

Episode Title *
(If no specific title, use programme strand name selected above)

Number of episodes

Production ☐ BBC Production ☐ Independent Production

Is it a co-production? If so, between who?

Presenter

Producer

Editor

Contact * Enter a name or email address...

Reversion/Repeat

Short Description
(max 90 characters including spaces - Required)

Medium Description
(max 180 characters)

Long Description
(max 1800 characters / 250 words - Required)

Press Office Description

Notes

Attachment details

Please attach photographs by clicking 'Attach File' in the 'Edit' tab at the top of this window.

Add filename, description, copyright details and additional credits required to the box above.

Click **Save** to submit the billing;
Click **Cancel** to discard

Save Cancel

TX Date/Week is whenever the first placing on World Service English Radio is – irrespective of whether it's on TV, Sounds, podcast etc on another date

Number of episodes: if the episode is part of a series, enter the total number of episodes in the series. If stand-alone, enter 1

Contacts: please endeavour to provide Producer/Editor names.
At least one contact name must be given

Reversion/Repeat: has the programme previously been broadcast by WSE or re-versioned from another outlet?

IMPORTANT: If the programme has previously been broadcast on World Service English Radio, please email wsenglishchannelmanagementteam@bbc.co.uk with repeat info, original TX date etc so a repeat can be scheduled

Descriptions: Programme descriptions of various character lengths. *Please ensure the 'Long Description' box is always filled, even if it's only a short length.*

Press Office Description: Only fill this box if there is a specific, differing billing for press/publicity

Attachment details: Images can be attached to the form with the 'Attach File' button in the top ribbon

BROWSE EDIT

Save Cancel Paste Cut Copy Attach File ABC Spelling

Commit Clipboard Actions Spelling

Please use the 'Attachment details' box for filenames, descriptions, credits etc of any attached images

For Independent productions – Again, up to eight weeks before TX you will be asked to submit programme information through this form:

<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=M3FYDo5W1kSAHSJmvFLlz1FU0ytwEcIDvVjOWWaJEtlUMjNUVE5JTlpGSU8wQTNLWThKWjVGNFNHTSQIQCN0PWcu>

The image shows a screenshot of a Microsoft Forms page titled 'Independent Production: Programme Information' under the BBC News World Service banner. The form has a red header with the BBC logo and the text 'NEWS | WORLD SERVICE'. Below the title, there is a link for image uploads: 'For image uploads, please go here: [World Service English - Digital Image Assets Upload - Fill in form](#)'. At the bottom of the form, a disclaimer states: 'When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.' and a legend indicates '* Required'.

Use the link provided to upload photographs and other assets.

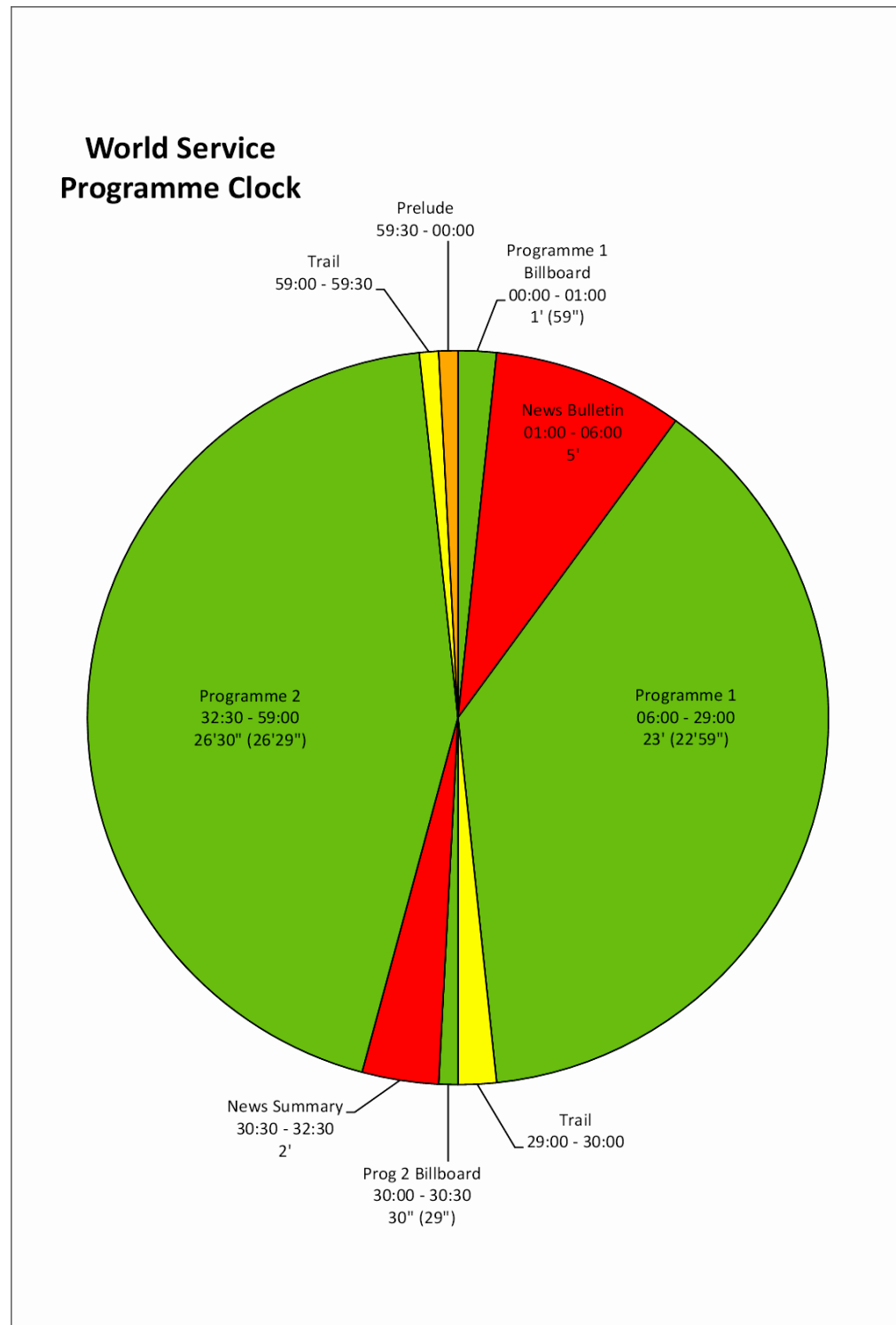
Your PI will then be approved.

Please contact vanessamorris&karenhowe@bbc.co.uk for further information

The Programme

The World Service English schedule runs to a fixed time clock. This means that all programme slots at the same point in any hour have the same duration, although there can be some variation in this at the weekend and for special commissions.

The World Service Clock



This is the standard World Service clock (illustrated above), which outlines fixed times within each hour for programme starts and ends, as well as designated slots for trails and billboards.

The standard hour begins with a one-minute billboard, promoting what will follow on the network in five minutes' time — after the news. The news bulletin starts at one minute past the hour and runs until six minutes past. However, a “post” is inserted at four minutes past, allowing partner stations to exit the bulletin if they only wish to carry the first three minutes. A post is a brief (one-second) pause that enables a natural-sounding departure, often preceded by a station ident – ‘world news, from the BBC’.

The post at six minutes past marks the end of the news and the beginning of the next programme, which runs until 29 minutes past the hour. At this point, another post is inserted, followed by a one-minute trail. This ends with another post at exactly 30 minutes past the hour.

At 30 minutes past, a 30-second billboard follows, promoting content in the second half of the hour. This concludes with a post at 30 minutes and 30 seconds past the hour.

A two-minute news summary then airs, ending with a post at 32 minutes and 30 seconds. The remainder of the hour is filled with programme content until 59 minutes past, when another post is inserted. The final minute of the hour is used for trails and a prelude or station ident.

This is the basic clock structure. Some - rare instances - programmes omit the posts at the bottom of the hour. In such cases, the trail slot, billboard, and news summary are not broadcast, allowing a single programme segment to run uninterrupted from six minutes past the hour until either 50 or 59 minutes past. This is often referred to as an “un-clocked hour” or “un-clocked 50 minutes”.

The term “un-clocked” refers specifically to the absence of posts at the bottom of the hour. Posts at the top of the hour are almost always retained.

To accommodate the variety of programme lengths and the presence or absence of bottom-of-the-hour posts, we use the following programme slot descriptions:

59 minutes clocked

This comprises:

- 1 minute billboard at the top of the hour.
- 23 minute first part of the programme.
- 30 second billboard for the second part of the programme.
- 26 minute and 30 second, second part of the programme.

Please see the clock diagram in the appendix.

The exact audio durations for the slots outlined above are 1 second shorter than the length of the available slot. So, the audio durations are:

Top Billboard	59"
Programme Part 1	22'59"
Billboard	29"
Programme Part 2	26'29"

59 minute un-clocked

- 1 minute billboard at the top of the hour.
- 53 minute main programme.

Please see clock diagram in the appendix.

The exact audio durations for the slots outlined above are 1 second shorter than the length of the available slot. So the audio durations are:

Top Billboard	59"
Programme	52'59"

50 minutes clocked

This comprises:

- 1 minute billboard at the top of the hour.
- 23 minute first part of the programme.
- 30 second billboard for the second part of the programme.
- 17 minute and 30 second, second part of the programme.

Please see clock diagram in the appendix.

The exact audio durations for the slots outlined above are 1 second shorter than the length of the available slot. So the audio durations are:

Top Billboard	59"
Programme Part 1	22'59"
Bottom Billboard	29"
Programme Part 2	17'29"

50 minute un-clocked

- 1 minute billboard at the top of the hour.
- 44 minute main programme.

Please see clock diagram in the appendix.

The exact audio durations for the slots outlined above are 1 second shorter than the length of the available slot. So the audio durations are:

Top Billboard	59"
Programme	43'59"

Programmes of less than 30 minutes duration

These programmes can have similar overall durations (if the billboard is included in the duration) so they are differentiated by the duration of the main body of the programme. They appear in either the front half or the back half of the hour.

23 minute (front half)

- 1 minute billboard at the top of the hour.
- 23 minute main programme.

Please see clock diagram in the appendix.

The exact audio durations for the slots outlined above are 1 second shorter than the length of the available slot. So the audio durations are:

Top Billboard	59"
Programme	22'59"

26 '30" (back half)

- 30 second billboard at 30 minutes the hour.
- 26 minute and 30 second main programme.

Please see clock diagram in the appendix.

The exact audio durations for the slots outlined above are 1 second shorter than the length of the available slot. So the audio durations are:

Top Billboard	29"
Programme	26'29"

17 '30" (back half)

- 30 second billboard at 30 minutes the hour.
- 17 minute and 30 second main programme.

Please see clock diagram in the appendix.

The exact audio durations for the slots outlined above are 1 second shorter than the length of the available slot. So the audio durations are:

Top Billboard	29"
Programme	17'29"

9' 00" Programmes

These programmes only appear in the back half between 50 minute post and the 59 minute post. They do not normally require a billboard.

Again the exact audio duration is 1 second shorter than the length of the available slot. So the audio duration is:

Programme	8'59"
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Managing the Clock

Self-Contained Programmes

World Service programmes should always be self-contained; we were ahead of the curve for podcasts. This means the presenter introduces and closes the programme themselves — there is no continuity announcer, as is common on other networks. This approach ensures that all World Service programmes feel lively and fresh, fostering an immediate and direct connection between the presenter and the audience. The presenter is not a guest in someone else's space—they are the host, speaking directly to listeners.

For those accustomed to having a continuity announcer set up their programme, this can initially seem daunting. However, it can also be liberating. As both producer and presenter, you have greater freedom to establish the tone, pace, and style of your programme right from the outset. It encourages you to picture the audience clearly and speak to them directly from the very beginning.

There are no strict rules on how this should be done, but there are some helpful guidelines for structuring programme billboards, as well as the opening and closing of programmes and their segments.

The first billboard...

This is the billboard that introduces the programme. For front-of-half programmes and those longer than half an hour, the billboard appears at the top of the hour and lasts one minute. For back-half-hour programmes, it is 30 seconds long. These are among the most valuable slots on the network, and the presenter should use them to clearly tell the audience who they are, what station they're listening to, and why they should stay tuned after the news.

The billboard should be lively and conversational in tone, but not rushed — avoid trying to cram in too much. Keeping the audience engaged through a five-minute news bulletin can feel challenging, but you have a full minute to hook them. Use that time to share your enthusiasm and connect with listeners by offering something intriguing, joyful, puzzling, or emotionally engaging from the programme — something that makes them eager to hear more.

In addition to stating who you are and what station you're on, the billboard should ideally include at least one clip from the programme — preferably the most compelling excerpt — to spark curiosity and give a clear sense of what's to come. You can end the minute by reiterating your name and letting the audience know you'll be back in five minutes, after the news.

The same principles apply to the shorter, bottom-of-the-hour billboard. You still need to introduce yourself, name the station, and explain what the upcoming programme is about, while engaging the audience's curiosity or emotions. Although it's more difficult to include a clip in such a short slot, if you have a brief "money shot" that requires little setup, use it. A presenter-only billboard can also be highly effective."

The Programme Opening

You cannot assume the listener has heard the billboard — so the programme must begin as if the listener has just tuned in or only caught the news. Like the billboard, the opening of the programme should be engaging, conversational, and relaxed.

There's no requirement to start with a formal introduction such as, "Hello, I'm Jean Presenter and you're listening to the BBC World Service...". Why not begin with something more intriguing and immediate, like: "Is the world round? I'm Jean Presenter, and for the BBC World Service, I'll be investigating..."

At the start, you should clearly explain what the programme is about, why it matters, and how you're going to demonstrate its relevance. In other words, it's perfectly appropriate to talk about the programme itself — its purpose, structure, and stories — while also telling those stories in an engaging way.

Programmes on the World Service are required to include a midpoint ident. This is essential for maximising attribution and recognition on partner stations — over half of the BBC World Service English audience listens this way. As our content is podcast, we ask that you include a short pause after the midpoint ident. This allows our commercial partners to dynamically insert revenue-generating advertising outside the UK.

The End of the Programme

At the end of programme the presenter will close the programme. If it is a requirement to credit the producer and, in the case of an independent production, the production company as well – this should be done in an informal and conversational manner in keeping with the style of the programme. It is not World Service style to credit in-house producers and editors. If it's a series, trail ahead to the next part. Do this in a way that fits into the flow of the preceding programme.

Navigating the “bottom of the hour”...

For programmes longer than half an hour that follow the clock, it's important to handle the trail slot and news summary at the bottom of the hour smoothly, and to ensure the short midway billboard fits naturally into the flow of the programme. This can seem a little daunting at first, but it's helpful to approach this sequence as an integral part of your programme.

The end of the first part of the programme...

As you near the end of the first part, remind the audience who you are and what the programme is about. It's important to make it clear that the programme isn't ending. This can be as simple as saying, “...and we'll be continuing the story of xxxx in a moment,” or you might choose to trail something coming up in the second half.

Keep your tone steady—or even rising, especially if ending on a question—to avoid giving the impression that the programme is concluding.

There's no need to label the segments as “part one” and “part two” (e.g. “In part two of the programme you'll hear...”), as this can interrupt the narrative flow and create an artificial divide, which may cause the audience to disengage.

The “bottom” billboard...

After the first part ends, there's a one-minute trail followed by a 30-second billboard introducing the remainder of the programme. The same guidance applies here as with any billboard: don't hesitate to repeat what you've just trailed, but add more detail or include a short clip to build interest.

Be sure to remind the audience who you are, that they're listening to the BBC, and what the programme is about. End with a clear point forward, such as “...after the latest news,” or “...that's in two minutes,” or a combination of both.

After the News Summary

Following the two-minute news summary, reintroduce yourself, the station, and the programme. Then continue the story.

Why It Matters

This may feel repetitive, but experience and audience feedback show that you can't remind listeners too often who you are and what they're listening to—both the programme and the station. This signposting should be consistent throughout, ideally at least once in each half of a one-hour programme. It's also effective to pair the ident with a reminder of what's still to come, or a quick recap of what's already been covered.

Requesting Announcer Recordings

In rare circumstances, you may need to request an announcer to record an introduction, a close, or possibly a billboard. This typically applies when your programme is a reversion of a Radio 4 production and the original presenter is no longer available.

In such cases, the main audio durations (outlined above) will need to be adjusted to accommodate these announcements. If this is required, please contact the Channel Management team at least two weeks before the programme's delivery date to notify them and arrange for the recording.

Once the script is ready, send it to the Channel Management team. They will record the audio and return it to you for inclusion in the final programme. You can then deliver your programme and billboards according to the standard durations.

Channel Management can be contacted via:

 wsenglishchannelmanagementteam@bbc.co.uk

Podcasts

No-one else in podcasting has a remit quite like that of the BBC World Service. Our aim is to reach podcast audiences across the globe, including a wide range of markets. Many of our podcasts also support the growth of BBC Sounds here in the UK.

We're proud of our diverse and high-quality podcast slate.

The Global News Podcast is the BBC's biggest podcast, with episodes at least 12 times a week. The Global Story explores one major story each weekday and will return in the autumn. What in the World is the award-winning audio and visual podcast for listeners aged 16 to 24.

We also produce two of the BBC's flagship "umbrella podcasts"

The Documentary is the home of single-episode storytelling. It's a window into our world, investigating, reporting and uncovering true stories from everywhere – award-winning journalism, unheard voices, amazing culture and global issues. We examine the impact of social media, take you inside the minds of the world's most creative individuals, and reflect on personal approaches to spirituality. The Documentary podcast features episodes from *Weekend documentary*, *Business Daily*, *Assignment*, *People Fixing the World*, *Thursday documentary*, *Heart and Soul*, and *BBC Conversations*. As the Weekend documentary is monthly, this leaves three free slots for *The Global Jigsaw*, ad-hocs and feed drops.

World of Secrets is the BBC's global investigations podcast, told over multiple episodes – uncovering stories from around the world and telling them, episode by episode, with gripping storytelling.

World Service English podcasts have won multiple awards, enjoyed critical acclaim, and have been hugely popular, including success in the charts.

As well as those mentioned above, our podcasts include Good Bad Billionaire, The Con (seasons Love, Janessa and Kaitlyn's Baby), 13 Minutes Presents: The Space Shuttle, Dear Daughter, The Bomb, The Six Billion Dollar Gold Scam, Dramas, Amazing Sport Stories and The Lazarus Heist.

It's definitely not always the case but podcasts are often listened to on headphones, so the listening experience is usually more intimate and personal than the sometimes more communal experience of listening via speakers on the radio. We are really keen on building listener communities around our shows.

We could have the best podcast ever made but if nobody knows about it, no one will hear it. Aiding discovery is essential. Episode titles, descriptions, publicity, promotion and marketing are vital. We will often ask for extra audio or presenter links to help trail our podcasts. Getting the episode descriptions and titles right, with key words, is a priority.

Nearly all podcast commissions will also run in the WSE radio schedules, so will require a cutdown radio version.

The majority of our radio programmes are released in podcast feeds. Please see the essential music guidance below

Commercial Music

There are a number of rights restrictions which apply to BBC podcasts, particularly around the use of commercial music. This new guide (below) has been written by the BBC's rights experts and it means, in most cases, BBC podcasts can no longer include commercial music. This either means making your programme without any commercial music or removing it from the podcast version. Please discuss this with your BBC World Service commissioner at the start of your production. In some circumstances, exemptions can be made, which would allow a certain (limited) amount of commercial music to be used – again, please discuss this at an early stage with your commissioner. You may also wish to consider commissioning music specifically for your programme/podcast – this obviously has budget implications and needs to be contracted in the correct way – so please also discuss with your commissioner.

New guide to using music and other extracts in podcasts

- **Commercial Music should not be included in BBC podcasts**
- **This includes “direct to podcast” (podcast only shows) and podcasts that have a linear radio transmission (i.e. the podcast version of any radio programme)**
- **Only use production library music or specially commissioned music**
- **Fair dealing of music must be avoided – please take advice from Music Rights**
- **There are Exempted Series and there is an exemption process for individual episodes of series where use of commercial music is editorially essential (see below in FAQ for details)**

We appreciate this is a change for editorial teams, which have been relying on the previous guidance which allowed the use of 30”/60” of music. However, with the increasing commercialisation and distribution of our content internationally, we are updating our advice to ensure BBC content is available as widely as possible, not subject to take down notices and most importantly to ensure that there are no claims for music copyright infringement.

With this new guidance, we would encourage you to make the most of the extensive production music libraries. These libraries have a wide range of excellent music and are building on their repertoire all the time.

In consultation with the commissioner for your podcast/programme, you may also consider commissioning music. Please familiarise yourself with this guidance and cascade to your teams.

For specific music rights questions, please contact the Music Rights team:
MusicLicensingQueries@bbc.co.uk

For broader questions about the editorial content of your radio programme or podcast, please contact the commissioner for your podcast/programmes:

What is commercial music?

As Commercial Music can no longer be used, here are some examples:

Recordings owned by commercial record labels – e.g. Kylie Minogue or Rolling Stones track or any commercial recordings of classical music or jazz recordings.

BBC recorded performances of commercial artists – e.g. Ladysmith Black Mambazo performing on Focus on Africa.

Performances of copyright songs by artists or musicians on the BBC or any other broadcaster/platform – e.g. a contestant singing on a talent show.

A guest on the radio singing a Lennon/McCartney song or a band recording a live session.

What is production/library music?

The BBC now has a wide range of comprehensive licences with production music libraries all of which grant unrestricted podcast rights. These libraries are extending their repertoire all the time. You can use as much of this music as you want in your podcast with no charge to your budget.

The music library & clearance tool called BBC MusicBox can provide easy access and search on all library music.

Inhouse: <https://staff.bbc.com/gateway/production-toolkit/material/clear-existing-material/production-library-mood-stock-music/>

Indies: Indies can access MusicBox info via the Academy website:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/bbc-musicbox/>

For library music Indies can also use this link: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/delivery/music/>

What is specially commissioned music and what steps are needed to commission this music?

Specially commissioned original music is a great way to add a distinctive edge to the sound of your podcast. This does however require planning and you need to allow time and have budget.

If you are interested in doing this, in the first instance, please contact the commissioner for your podcast/programme.

For inhouse productions please contact the Music Rights team who are experts in this area and can help advise on composers, appropriate rates and will handle the contracts for you. Email MusicLicensingQueries@bbc.co.uk.

If you are an indie, please make sure you agree terms with the composer that covers all the rights you need for the use of the music, the sound recording and any musicians' performances, including commercial rights.

Exemptions: What is the process for a commercial music exemption for broadcast programmes that are also released as a podcast?

We can apply for an Exemption if you are making a broadcast radio programme that is put out as a podcast and your use of commercial music is editorially essential and cannot be avoided. e.g. Music Documentaries for World Service. However, this process can only happen in consultation with the BBC World Service Commissioner for your programme/podcast. The World Service would need to agree to this happening, as it has wider implications beyond your one programme. (Please note that obtaining an exemption will mean that although the podcast can still be part of RSS feeds, it will not be included in any commercial deals): Please note exemptions will be granted on both a title and episode basis and all new/returning titles will need to be granted exemptions. An exemption will mean you can include clips of music limited to a total maximum of 30" pop and 60" classical/jazz per track. You should never use the full track under dialogue, even with an exemption. You must keep durations of commercial music short in podcasts. In some circumstances you will be asked to keep durations to under 0'10". If you wish to request an exemption, please contact RadioExemptions@bbc.co.uk – after the discussions with your BBC World Service commissioner.

What other options are there if I need to use a commercial track?

- (a) **CLEARANCE OF INDIVIDUAL TRACKS** - the Music Rights team can investigate a direct music clearance only in exceptional circumstances where music is editorially essential and where the use of commercial music is limited to one or two tracks.

Please Note: direct clearances tend to be costly (and will need to be met from your budget), and require clearance from rights holders of both the musical works and sound recording i.e. from music publishers and record labels. Licensing music is also a lengthy process (give yourselves *at least* a month – remember one track can sometimes have five or more different music publishers) and permission can be denied by any of the rights holders.

Contact: MusicLicensingQueries@bbc.co.uk

- (b) **RISK BASED APPROACH** - there may also be instances where we might take a view based around risk/ fair dealing use re the use of a very short clip of music. Advice *must* be sought from the Music Rights team. Contact MusicLicensingQueries@bbc.co.uk.

What about Music Reporting?

Music reporting is captured automatically via Soundmouse via Auto-Recognition software. Therefore, no music reporting forms need to be submitted manually. All Indie producers are required to ensure that they (or the Composers that they engage) upload the master recordings and any related metadata for any Specially Composed music to Soundmouse (or to any other database of a company) which provides auto-recognition services to the BBC. Please see guidance here: <https://www.soundmouse.com/bbc/>

Other Rights Restrictions in the content of podcasts (all podcasts)

If you are contracted as an independent producer to produce the podcast, you should follow and comply with the terms of the commissioning contract. This will set out the clearances required.

Please Note: podcasts should NOT include any sports commentary.

Where you license third party material, the license should be broad enough to clear all necessary rights for broadcast and distribution of that material, including download of the podcast without restriction or further payment.

It is your responsibility to ensure that everything is cleared and that permissions cover broadcast and distribution of podcasts including download.

There is no funding available to pay for additional rights so material that is not already cleared may need to be removed.

For BBC Inhouse: if you are fair dealing any material, you need to follow fair dealing guidance on Production Toolkit: <https://staff.bbc.com/gateway/production-toolkit/material/fair-dealing/>

Images promoting the programme/podcast

When seeking permission to use images to promote the programme/podcast: you should obtain permission for all rights, all media worldwide in perpetuity in connection with promotion of the programme/podcast.

If you are taking pictures of your contributors, please check they are happy with their picture appearing on other platforms to promote the programme/podcast (including BBC websites, partners' platforms and social media accounts).

bbcworldservice.com

Programme pages on the website are set up automatically. If you are an in-house producer, you will be able to update your programme pages yourself. If you are an independent producer, the programme information you have sent to us will be used by the World Service online team to make your programme page.

Checklist for makers of episodes for The Documentary Podcast

Opening Sting (to be added by Channel Management before publishing)

All titles will be preceded by a sting so please avoid **starting** your documentary with these words;

“The Documentary. Home of the best documentaries from the BBC World Service.”

Presenter/Strand Introduction language to use within the episode audio.

Assignment: *The stories shaping our world.*

Heart and Soul: *Stories of faith and spirituality*

(OS) Conversations: *Voices from behind the headlines*

Business Daily Doc: *How work and money impacts people*

People Fixing the World: *Finding solutions to our problems*

The Global Jigsaw: *Looking at the world through the lens of its media*

Examples

- Welcome to The Documentary from the BBC World Service. I’m Josephine Casserly and on **Assignment**, where we report on the stories shaping our world, I’m following the Kenyans taking on multinational chemical companies.
- Welcome to The Documentary from the BBC World Service. I’m Silas Gray and in this episode of **Heart and Soul**, where we bring you stories of faith and spirituality, I travel to Ethiopia to trace my father’s Rastafarian roots.
- Welcome to The Documentary from the BBC World Service. This is **OS Conversations**, where we hear voices from behind the headlines. In this episode we speak to people caught up in the wildfires sweeping Europe – from the tourists forced to evacuate to the volunteers helping the displaced.
- Welcome to The Documentary from the BBC World Service. How did one of Europe’s most wanted drug smugglers, Jos Leijdekkers, end up in Sierra Leone while evading justice? I’m Ed Butler and I’ll be investigating in this episode of **Business Daily**, where we examine the impact of work and money.
- Welcome to The Documentary from the BBC World Service. I’m Myra Anubi and this is **People Fixing the World**. Our mission is finding solutions to our problems and in this episode, we are in Argentina looking at how people are looking at new ways to keep old things in use.
- Welcome to The Documentary from the BBC World Service. This is **The Global Jigsaw** from BBC Monitoring where we look at the world through the lens of its media. I’m Krassi Ivanova Twigg. In this episode, we examine how Russia has shifted its vitriol from the US to Britain – the new villain.

Mid-point

- Find a mid-point which is editorially suitable – it doesn't have to be exactly in the middle.
- Say 'This is The Documentary from the BBC World Service'.
- Leave half a second gap and save the time code at the end of the gap. Give the time code to Channel Management when you file. Or, if your team is publishing the episode, you will need to include this exact time marker when you publish in iBroadcast2 (this is how Acast places adverts)
- Pick up with 'I'm XXX and this is (title)' or similar.
- Mid-point/Hour Docs only - For the podcast ep say, 'you are listening to The Documentary from the BBC World Service' and pick up with part 2. NB, in this instance, we DO need a separate radio version throwing to the news.
- Please speak to the schedulers if you need advice on this

End of Episode

- Say 'you've been listening to The Documentary from the BBC World Service'. (This doesn't have to be the very last words, just make sure it is included near the end)

What to avoid in scripting

- Radio references, eg 'you are listening to the BBC World Service', 'you are listening to this on the BBC World Service'.
- Time references like 'this week'. Instead say 'in this episode'.

Descriptions

- Remember that the short, medium and long versions aren't seen at the same time, so you can repeat the first line.
- Make the start strong and direct for SEO and to pull your listeners in.
- As part of the long description, say your strand name e.g. 'This is an episode of Assignment, where we explore the stories shaping our world'

This is guidance, if you need advice, please email Paul Blythe paul.blythe@bbc.co.uk or Anne Dixey anne.dixey@bbc.co.uk

Editorial Guidelines

If you are an independent producer and need to consult the BBC's editorial guidelines they can be found here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/> It is essential that all material contained within a programme adheres to these guidelines and advice should be sought at the earliest stage possible.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

With reference to the use of AI for the commissioning process and programme delivery - the BBC has issued information and Guiding Principles to ensure the responsible use of Gen AI technology in BBC.

Is there (or might there be) any proposed use of Generative AI in the commissioning process, production and delivery of the programme which may give a false and misleading impression to the audience and/or require transparency in order to comply with the BBC's principles and guidance?

Guiding Principles here:

<https://www.bbc.com/mediacentre/articles/2024/update-generative-ai-and-ai-tools-bbc>

The BBC's Editorial Guidance on the use of Artificial Intelligence here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidance/use-of-artificial-intelligence/>

Confirmation of Commission

This will be emailed to you by the Commissioning team when your programme has been commissioned and has been given a preliminary slot in our schedules.

Contains working title, slot, programme duration, proposed TX dates and contact details. These details are subject to change.

TX Confirmation

This will be emailed to you five weeks in advance of TX, when the programme is scheduled. This will confirm transmission placings, programme title, duration, details of opening and closing announcements and whether or not a billboard is required. The email will also come with all necessary documents (e.g. Ofcom Compliance Form, if necessary, Presentation Details) and will include details of how to complete and where to then send the documents.

TX amendment

This will be sent to you if a change has been made to the scheduling, transmission or delivery arrangements for a programme after the TX Confirmation has been sent.

How and where should I deliver my programme?

Programmes should be delivered to the WSE Channel Management team as audio files* via VCS Highlander\VCS Dira Transfers. If you are working outside of the BBC network you can use a BBC provided MediaShuttle account which must be set up in advance. Precise details should be discussed and agreed with Channel Management at least one week before the delivery deadline, which will be given on your TX Confirmation email. You can email wsenglishchannelmanagementteam@bbc.co.uk.

(*Audio files should be either “.wav” or “.flac”, and should be 2-channel stereo, 48kHz, 16bit)

What is the delivery deadline?

Deadlines vary and can be found on your programme's Transmission Confirmation email sent five weeks before transmission. Programmes that are commissioned less than 5 weeks before transmission should agree a delivery date with their commissioner when they are commissioned.

Listening copies should be delivered **2 weeks** before transmission date.

TX versions of documentaries and dramas should be delivered five days before broadcast. Those programmes with content relevant to a specific day should arrive before 12:00 on the day of TX for. For programmes containing material relevant to a specific week the deadline is 16:00 on the day before TX. These may vary for independent productions.

NB: Arrangements for delivering programmes for Witness History and Sporting Witness are different and will be communicated to you from the team in Salford when you agree delivery dates.

Presentation Details

If your programme is self-contained, we do not require presentation details. If it is not self-contained please get in touch with Channel Management WSEnglishchannelmanagementteam@bbc.co.uk.

OfCOM Compliance Form

All recorded programmes must have a compliance form. They cannot be broadcast without one. For internal BBC users, this should be submitted here; https://onebbc.sharepoint.com/sites/WSE_Compliance

If you're an independent production company, the compliance form should be submitted here:

https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=M3FYDo5W1kSAHSJmvFLIz_KKadBP-NNNg44fKGG2-q9UMzZQT09UQIZWMEY0U0JYSTRIRVNTVE80OC4u

If you need any help using this system or are not able to access it, please contact WS English Channel Management Team wsenglishchannelmanagementteam@bbc.co.uk

When and where is the programme going out?

Your programme will be broadcast on various WS channels, often appearing three or four times on each during the course of its run. Details of these exact times and channels are available on request, but we will send you details of the first and last placings on the Tx confirmation.

World Service has international partners throughout the world.

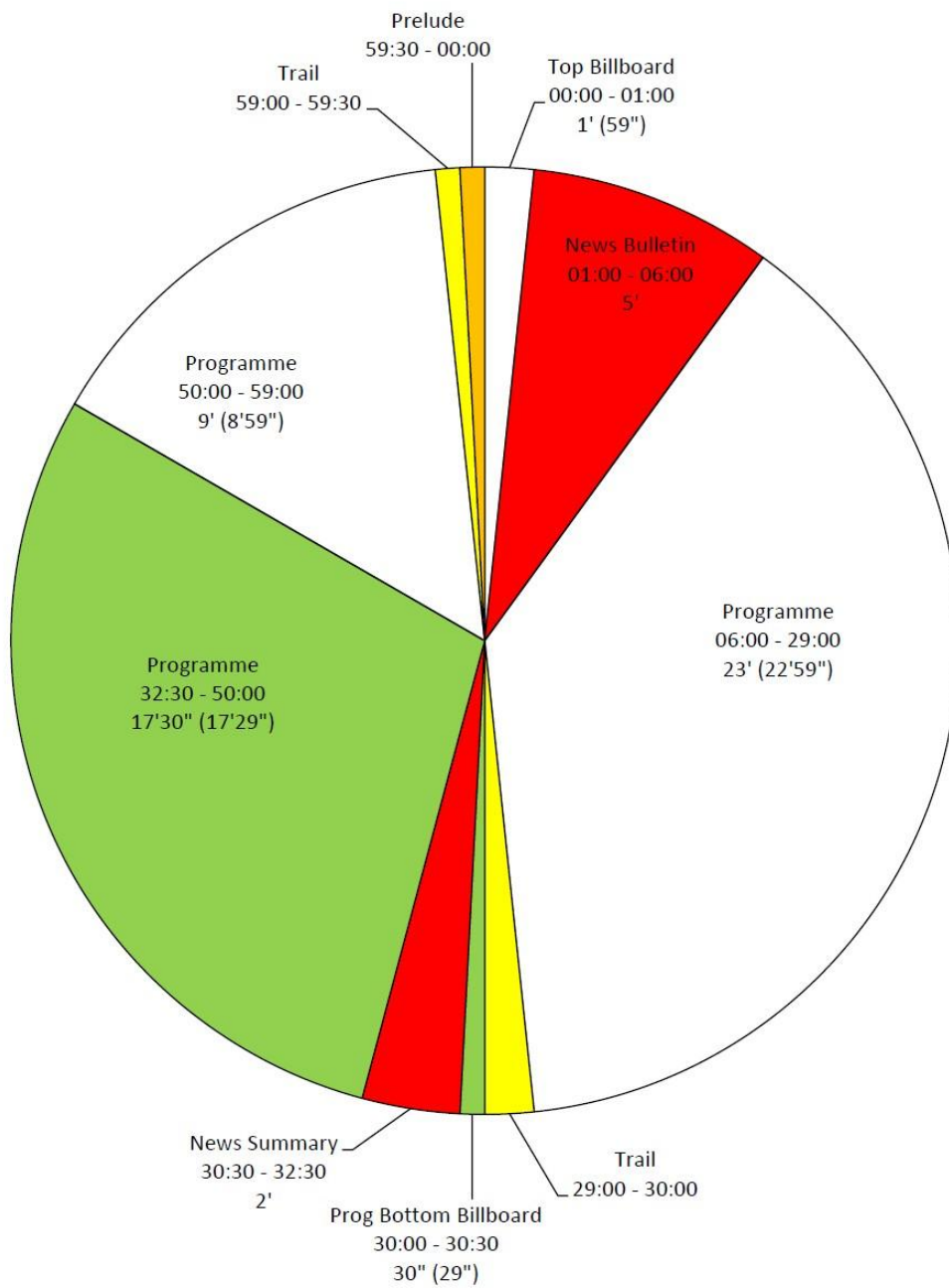
Contact Details

Paul Blythe, Head of Planning & Scheduling
paul.blythe@bbc.co.uk

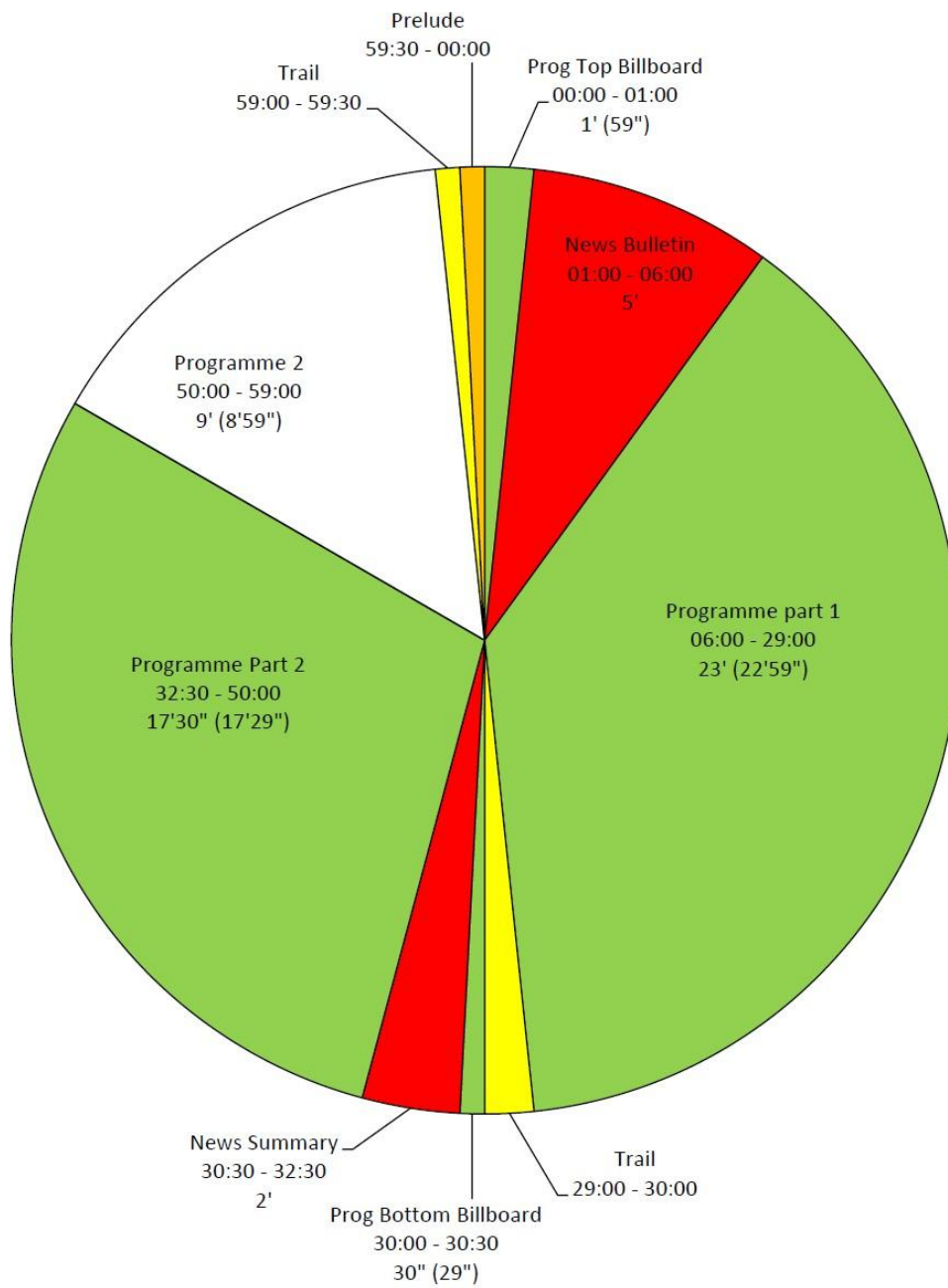
Channel Management Team
wsenglishchannelmanagementteam@bbc.co.uk

Vanessa Morris & Karen Howe, Commissioning Coordinators
vanessamorris&karenhowe@bbc.co.uk

17' 30" Programme Clock



50' Programme Clock



59' 00" Programme Clock

