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How does the Big Screen operate?

Each screen has its own dedicated schedule created, implemented and monitored by a BBC screen manager or producer, located at the nearest BBC centre. The screens team oversees the editorial standards of all content, nurtures key partnerships and consults other stakeholders such as City Councils and LOCOG (the London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games), at regular meetings. The screen and its supporting technology is constructed, installed and maintained by a range of technology providers. Other stakeholders include universities and colleges, community arts and media groups and a range of neighboring organisations who make important contributions to the project.

What do you show?

Whilst local content is a top priority for each screen, the BBC underpins this with a schedule of regularly updated news, weather and sports loops. It would depart from this format to focus on big events, such as a major breaking news story, big sporting events like the Olympics or Wimbledon, or certain flagship programmes like Last Night of the Proms. The video content is accompanied by a high quality audio feed, except overnight when the sound is muted. For much of the time, the screen is split via a number of dynamic templates. Although video runs on most of the screen there is also a text box which supports localised information such as a City Diary and regional travel updates. There's a local weather forecast, a clock/date display and an information "ticker" that runs along the base of the screen with news, sport and information.

Other non-commercial partners provide content for the screens. On the whole we work with short form content of 30 seconds to 7 and a half minutes, though we regularly run longer sequences of local or national non BBC film content. In addition, local events are relayed onto the screens and sometimes integrate with major national and broadcast events such as Wimbledon, The Eurovision Song Contest, Proms in the Park, VE Day, World Cup Football and an annual series of exclusive relays from the Royal Opera House. Many of these events and major broadcasts can attract audiences of up to 8,000 people. The technology also allows interaction between the public and their screen, from simple texting of messages to sophisticated video games between teams in different cities in the UK and abroad. This is an aspect of the screens we are keen to develop further with partners.

There is also a contractual obligation to play in short items from Locog and its sponsors, content which is kept separate from BBC content.

Please note: we do not run charitable campaigns with the exception of BBC Children in Need/Comic or Sports Relief due to requirements of both absolute impartiality and staffing restrictions nor do we run public information campaigns except where local, editorially relevant content can be supplied.

The screens are a showcase and platform for film, video, art, interactivity and above all else, community – they are not there to tell people what they can and cannot do. All content has to be suitable for a family audience

Do you carry sound?

Yes. A computer controlled sound system allows not just automatic volume and quality settings, but also for the sound to be accurately targeted to different parts of the viewing area. When the screen is in “ambient” mode, the sound is set to be fully audible within a predefined area and to minimise any sound spillage outside the zone. The same PA, however, can be automatically re-set to provide a full event sound system for crowds of up to 10,000 people. A number of intermediate settings can take account of different local conditions and requirements. Facilities are also available for a presenter to host events in the square via a cordless microphone link utilising the built-in screen speakers.

Does anyone make any money?

The BBC’s involvement with the Big Screens echoes our wider public service remit and so the network operates on a not-for-profit basis. The BBC provides its content free of charge and augments this with the services of a Screen Manager or Producer. The BBC exercises editorial control of the screen, whose content must meet with its editorial guidelines.

The screen itself is a partnership between city and town/borough councils and the London 2012 Olympics and related sponsors in the build up to the 2012 Olympics.

Public access to view the screen is generally free (with the exception of one or two cities where local agreements override this) and the screens do not run commercial advertisements.

The Screen Manager/Producer must view all external content prior to transmission to ensure it corresponds to BBC guidelines, particularly those affecting issues of impartiality. Genuine sponsor credits are allowable if a video project, community event or live activity of clear public interest is involved, but where extensive association with commercial products and/or services is concerned, the Screen Manager/Producer will be able to investigate further on your behalf.

How do I submit material to the screen?

Please see the documents **Technical Specifications**, **Content Guidelines** and **Contributor Consent**.

If in any doubt, please contact the Screen Manager/Producer directly.

Can you broadcast our live event on the screen?

Recorded events, edited to suit payout in a public space with copyright clearance sought and approved, can be shown once or repeatedly on the Big Screen. These may form part of a showcase, promote an upcoming festival, help reach a wider audience following a performance elsewhere and in doing so offer a unique broadcast space accessed by many thousands each day.

Facilities exist at most screen sites to beam live events taking place at selected key points across the city live to the Big Screen. These are fixed points, at either indoor or outdoor sites. All such inject points use underground cabling to transmit audio/video to the Big Screen. Contact individual site managers for locations.

The live broadcast of events that **do not take place at these fixed sites** is less simple and not usually possible. This is because some form of link - be it cable, microwave or satellite - is required. Microwave link, using wireless technology, is possible only over a short range at considerable cost, with reduced quality and only patchy sound. Satellite link provides astonishing clarity but is prohibitively expensive, suited to big-budget productions only such as our annual transmissions of live performances from the Royal Opera House in London.

Advancements in screen technology hope to allow incorporation of online webcams, both still-capture and streaming, and hosting of webcasts. The latter may yet offer a

low-cost and realisable means of featuring a live camera feed from a site equipped with ISDN/broadband access.

How can I advertise my product/venue/concert/event?

Commercial advertisements are not accepted. Text-only listings for city-wide events and activities of an artistic, entertainment or community nature can be submitted for inclusion in the on-screen city diary.

How many people watch the screen?

Unlike television viewing figures, which are estimated by the British Audience Research Board (BARB: see www.barb.co.uk) on the habits of 5,100 preselected homes installed with an automated monitoring device attached to a phoneline, no such information is available for who should stop to view the screen, how long they stay, or what ethnic/gender/ward breakdown they should fall into. However, many sites have access to figures generated by automated footfall counters in the vicinity that records pedestrian flow. Not everyone stops for a significant amount of time, but many look up, and if they like what they see will pause to observe further. Lunchtimes, early evenings, live events and transmissions of local and national significance attract many more.'

See document entitled **Audience Exposure** for the calculation of an average exposure figure per minute of screen time.

Are there any other BBC operated Big Screens?

Permanent screen sites currently include Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Hull, Bradford, Rotherham, Derby, Swindon, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Bristol, Norwich, Waltham Forest, Middlesbrough, Swansea and Cardiff. A large number of other towns and cities have expressed their interest in the project and it is hoped that the current network of screens will be augmented by others across the UK, including Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Where did it all begin?

The rapid development of giant day-light video technology has spawned a wide variety of screen applications. From sports grounds to entertainment venues, and from shopping centres to motorway service stations, giant video screens have rapidly established themselves as an accompaniment to modern life. Most screens however, rely on advertising and few have been nourished by regular high quality content. The PSB Screen project, however, has different origins.

The BBC was the catalyst, having explored the linkage of major events, multiple audiences and live broadcasts on projects such as Proms in the Park, the 2002 World Cup and at the Manchester Commonwealth Games. For the Queen's Golden Jubilee, the Corporation installed ten temporary screens in major cities around the UK, relaying the Buckingham Palace concerts and ceremonial events, but also working with each city to create local events that integrated with the screen relays. The relationship was often two-way, with cameras at the screen sites to capture the crowd's participation. The screens drew very large crowds and underlined the enduring urge for many of us to gather together in public to share in great moments of sport, music or world events.

The package proved popular, so in partnership with Philips, Manchester City Council and The Triangle Shopping Centre in Exchange Square, the first Public Space Broadcasting Screen was installed in May 2003.

An international conference and public programme of screen based art and technology, 'Urban Screens', launched in Amsterdam 2005, was held in Manchester during October 2007 as a direct result of this groundbreaking legacy. Urban Screens 2008 will be held in Melbourne, and continue to travel the globe as creative content for outdoor media develops further.

How far could the scheme extend?

The response so far suggests that, as the technology continues to mature, the use of PSB: Public Space Broadcasting screens are becoming an increasingly popular civic facility. As the range of public information, events, entertainment and interactive services continue to develop it is possible to envisage a world in which a public space broadcasting screen, operated in the interests of the public, becomes a standard part of the urban infrastructure. It would be a network of screens interacting with each other, sharing content and experiences. Creating a new urban focal point, a new gathering place and a new events arena, it is already increasingly suggested that PSB screens have a key role to play in the regeneration of UK urban life. Although there are larger commercial screen networks that occasionally allow selected spots for artistic material (in Russia, for instance), we have not yet encountered any other network on a similar scale which is entirely free-to-access, community focused, advertising free and champion of creative content – making the PSB project the largest of its kind anywhere in the world.

What kind of sites are appropriate?

The PSB screens will operate to best effect in the heart of UK cities as part of a programme of city centre animation and regeneration. Investment in the screen is maximised by a busy site with strong regular footfall. The location also needs sufficient space for larger numbers to gather for major events and street furniture to encourage casual viewing. Retail and other business districts are usually more appropriate than residential areas. Planning permission and technical infrastructure can also be key

factors in deciding upon screen locations.

Can people interact with the screen?

Yes. Our interactive programme of activities continues to debut pilot activities that allow the public, to directly participate in screen applications. Each site includes a motion-sensitive camera installed on top of the screen that allows us to experiment without the need for hand-held controllers or additional computers in the public space. That said, many of our sites have hosted popular gaming slots utilising domestic console units. Agencies such as ICDC: International Centre for Digital Content have partnered with the screens to create both games and means of intuitive engagement, including voting hot-spots and even a jukebox that allows viewers to select their own content. Participating artists and filmmakers continue to dream of new and ever more imaginative means of involving viewers in our unique network of standalone and/or connected public spaces.

Where can I see pictures of previous events?

Visit www.bbc.co.uk/bigscreens to see a photo book of the entire BBC operated Big Screen family. Each screen site also produces a regular colour newsletter available upon request in digital format.