

Take Part in TV



PROJECT PROSPECTUS =2023=

** Programme delivery, content & governance for the new proposed channel*

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1. INTRODUCTION – WHY WE NEED A NEW CHANNEL FOR THE NORTH-WEST

.-from Vernon Bridgehouse: Take Part in TV

(Just to be clear “Take Part in TV” is the name of the project, not the name of the channel.... The channel name will emerge later.)

PART 1 – BRIEF SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANNEL AND PROSPECTUS

The proposed channel would seek to deliver Web-based television and video content straight to your computer, tablet and mobile phone – rather than through your TV aerial, satellite dish or cable service. And we think we can do this at a fraction of the cost of other broadcasters.

However, we don't plan to compromise on quality in order to achieve this.

Fortunately, there are people out there that care about quality broadcasting. People like you, who've read this far, and who may feel it's worth reading this Prospectus to the very last page.

This Prospectus – which has been laid out as carefully as possible – aims to prove that it really CAN be done.

PART 2 – BROKEN PROMISES

The North-West of England is one of the most dynamic regions of the UK. So why can't it have a channel of its own? (Granada News *doesn't* count!)

British commercial television in the digital age is one of the great squandered opportunities of recent years. Instead of providing a serious rival to the BBC, the new channels have simply filled up their airwaves with cheap, tacky imports and dubious “reality TV” shows. Even worse – **long established channel brands have broken the promises they made** to the regions to provide locally-based content, and broken their promises about variety and quality. *The fact that a few good programmes remain does not make up for what has been lost.*

When ITV began in 1955, it was truly groundbreaking: a peculiar mix of worthy arts content and popular entertainment, which reached its zenith between the late 1960s and early 1990s.

The promise of British commercial TV was that it was free (or almost free), so long as you didn't mind the adverts.

We know that many people already struggle to pay their TV licence. But when you sign up for a digital package with BT, Sky or Virgin, or pay for a streaming service, you're in

effect paying for another “licence” on top of your existing one. So what sort of “freedom” is that?!

If all this seems like an out-of-touch rant from a previous generation, then just look at what has happened to Channel 4. Channel 4 used to have a keen interest in the arts, and when it spoke to young student audience, it did so with a serious attempt to challenge and engage. If we are just talking about younger audiences and music, there are entire music and fashion genres in existence now that Channel 4 just simply won't cover – and yet, it still thinks it's the “cool” channel. Plus, it relies heavily on US imports: a problem common to many UK-based commercial channels.

PART 3 – TAKING THE NEXT LEAP FORWARD

Good programmes don't have to cost millions. These days, good programmes can be made in part using off-the-shelf equipment - camera, tablets, mobile phones and laptops. Some productions can be developed through online collaborations. All this means that production costs can be kept low, even as quality remains high.

The Channel itself will have a very retro, “Back to Basics” feel to it. When I originally envisaged the channel, I was largely aiming at an older audience. However, it seems that some younger viewers have an interest in going back into the archives and learning from the past. When it comes to programme ideas, I've got plenty of new ones, but some of my best ideas come from classic programmes that used to be on TV – because very often, the oldest and simplest ideas are still the best.

A common theme that I hear again and again during my Meet and Greet sessions is that people don't feel listened to. They're worried about the after-effects of Covid, the cost of living, and what their children are watching. They also feel very strongly that even in drama and comedy, they're being fed one-sided propaganda. So who is standing up for the voiceless? If you don't have the right channel to express your frustrations, and just rely on the usual outlets such as Facebook or YouTube, how is that any different from anybody else?!

We owe it to future generations to make the kind of content that that will be fondly remember in years to come. And I believe – truly – that we can.

- VERNON BRIDGEHOUSE, JUNE 2022

2. AIMS OF THE PROPOSED CHANNEL

According to our proposed Constitution, **“The Channel shall not be created with the profit-motive in mind, but for the enjoyment of its members and the general improvement of the wider community.”**

It also states: *“The Channel’s values include a strong commitment to aiding community education, cultural enrichment, enjoyment and wellbeing within the North West of England and beyond - and also the exercise of normal, creative freedoms of expression wherever possible.”*

Some people – it’s true – are happy with TV just the way it is. But think about this.....***ITV, Channel 5, GB News, Sky and many other services are not wholly British-owned, and are often partly US-owned.*** When you look at the mainstream networks’ content, it’s clear that ***their loyalties aren’t to local communities here, or to British content in general,*** but rather – to rootless shareholders and foreign investors.

We want to return to the progressive, regionalised commercial television values of the pre-2000s era or earlier: in particular, of ITV and Channel 4. “Giving the people what they want” can sometimes be interpreted as “pandering to the lowest common denominator”. Whilst popular appeal is important for a channel that seeks to attract advertisers, this cannot be at the expense of the Channel’s values, or the quality of its programmes.

Ever since the ITV regions chose to abandon a genuine commitment to local people, and ever since content became deregulated, a large minority of people have felt left behind by television. Neither the Internet nor on-demand digital services have stepped in to fill the gaps. We are also increasingly being exposed to differing forms of undue political bias – and from ALL parts of the political spectrum.

Indeed, the promise of “on demand” *hasn’t* meant more genuine choice. When TV schedulers no longer have to schedule properly or keep quality high, they invariably fill up the blank airtime with more of the same moronic content. One of the things we insist on is a return to ***proper quality scheduling*** – and the excitement of waiting for what is coming up next, or waiting for the next repeat of your favourite episode.

Mostly, it’s the over-60s that feel left behind. However, in the case of younger audiences, there is a growing awareness that “on demand” invariably means American imports or poor home-grown imitations – often just repeated variations on the same, worn-out formats. ***We’re going back to a traditional scheduled TV Guide-based format*** – with different programmes targeting different audiences at different times – hopefully, with a traditional 8pm to 10pm watershed for edgy, challenging content.

Very often, the only option is to switch off, or watch something just to fill time. That’s not the way it should be – and we say **“Enough is Enough!”**

3. MANAGEMENT AND BOARD OF GOVERNORS

For more on Financial Governance, see the section in this document, “FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE – PUTTING COMMUNITIES FIRST”

Vision-Led Management

We’ve heard a lot of criticism of the BBC during our many long months of meeting the public. We understand. We’ve been listening. We get it.....

However, occasionally, the BBC gets things right. And we reckon that the old pre-1990s BBC **Board of Governors** system with its own **Director-General** creates that right sense of traditional authority for our channel. Plus, unlike ITV’s governance model, or that adopted by Channel 4, it’s a system that many people are very familiar with, and which can attract “the great and the good” of our region’s creative and intellectual talent. However, unlike the old BBC model, the Director-General and some members of the Board of Governors would also be involved in programme decisions and/or financial decisions. Just like at the old BBC, we would also propose having Controllers put in charge of particular programme content areas. There should be specific executives involved in financing.

The proposed channel will promote itself through both free and paid online advertising and social media, and through offline advertising. So in a way, it’s a mixture of the “*best of both worlds*”: commercial television, with all of its many innovations, and the traditional “public service” model that we used to find in both the BBC and in Channel 4.



Community Media Champions - Every Volunteer Counts

We organised with a view to getting bigger – and with a fairly traditional management structure - but every volunteer has a vital role in making this channel possible. We want everyone with talent to feel included – and where possible, rewarded. Whether you’re building a set, editing videos or doing liaison work, your role matters to us. And we want you to **wear your channel logo badge with pride** when you’re out in the community.

4. QUALITY, INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY

KEEPING PROMISES - BENCHMARKS FOR QUALITY AND INTEGRITY

As a region, and as a country, we've become used to broken promises – from companies, public organisations, and, perhaps, from politicians.

On such a tiny budget, we can't always guarantee that we'll be able to keep every single promise. We can only set out how we intend to make sure that we stick to our principles, and deliver on our promises wherever possible.

Our **Four Guiding Principles** – the “4 Fs” - are easy to remember:-

Families

– a balance between traditional and modern families, between “edgy” and child-friendly, educational content. A mostly Cert 12 output at pre-watershed times.

Fairness

- the promise to try to maintain neutrality and impartiality wherever possible

Fun

- genuine heartfelt entertainment, not “political correctness”

Freedom

- Valuing freedom of expression, wherever possible

(Exceptions may apply in some very controversial cases)

We also plan to “shadow” the **National Union of Journalists' Code of Conduct**. This states that a journalist:

1. At all times upholds and defends the principle of media freedom, the right of freedom of expression and the right of the public to be informed.
2. Strives to ensure that information disseminated is honestly conveyed, accurate and fair.
3. Does her/his utmost to correct harmful inaccuracies.
4. Differentiates between fact and opinion.
5. Obtains material by honest, straightforward and open means, with the exception of investigations that are both overwhelmingly in the public interest and which involve evidence that cannot be obtained by straightforward means.
6. Does nothing to intrude into anybody's private life, grief or distress unless justified by overriding consideration of the public interest.
7. Protects the identity of sources who supply information in confidence and material gathered in the course of her/his work.
8. Resists threats or any other inducements to influence, distort or suppress information and takes no unfair personal advantage of information gained in the course of her/his duties before the information is public knowledge.

9. Produces no material likely to lead to hatred or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age, gender, race, colour, creed, legal status, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation. (This is subject to a very strict interpretation)

10. Does not by way of statement, voice or appearance endorse by advertisement any commercial product or service save for the promotion of her/his own work or of the medium by which she/he is employed.

11. A journalist shall normally seek the consent of an appropriate adult when interviewing or photographing a child for a story about her/his welfare.

12. Avoids plagiarism.

5. NETWORK NEUTRALITY – NOT POLITICAL CORRECTNESS:-

What do Ken Livingstone, Vernon Coleman, Nigel Farage, Germaine Greer, David Icke and J.K Rowling all have in common?

Not much, you might think. The answer is that despite their differing views, they've all been censored or banned at some point for expressing their views. They've been prevented from speaking, or denied an Internet platform (e.g. banned from Facebook)

Many complain about "left wing political correctness": such as constant, repeated mentions of feminist and minority concerns and protest movements. But it's all-too-common to overlook examples of "right wing political correctness" on the new "alternative news" channels: an over-emphasis on whiteness, conservative values, masculinity and traditional religion. Replacing one form of political correctness with another is not the basis on which we should run our new channel – *and it never will be.*

It's important to add that poets, playwrights and comedians have also been banned or marginalised, not just politicians.

Not on our channel. The only exceptions to our "neutrality" ruling are when something is likely to bring intolerable legal pressure onto our channel, cause widespread distress or breach our values – but censorship is something we would wish to avoid wherever possible. Where appropriate, we want to challenge conventions, to ensure that everyone gets their say. We don't think that every extreme view is necessarily a violent one. It's our duty to cover challenging views where appropriate, even if we may have to modify the language used in order for those views to be aired (especially for family audiences)

GB News and RT clearly weight their opinions towards a conservative bias, and it's clear that the BBC and Channel 4 have a liberal bias – and not just when it comes to news. We say that ***countering bias with bias is still bias*** – no matter what side you are on – and it's something to be avoided, wherever possible.

During the COVID-19 crisis, many mothers expressed concerns about vaccinating their young children. Others – including scientists – worried about the effects of lockdown on other health outcomes. Some wanted even tighter lockdowns. *We have no views either*

way on any of this, but we feel it's very important that people in our region and beyond can air their grievances: every bit as much those with opposing views.

6. COMMUNITIES, FAMILIES AND OTHER RELATIONSHIPS – A DIFFERENT VIEW

***** OUR VALUES in 4 Fs – Families, Fairness, Fun and Freedom**

Some broadcasters feel under immense pressure to be “inclusive” when it comes to certain portrayals of relationships and families – often at the expense of telling a good story. There's also a tendency to be needlessly vulgar for the sake of it – even when it comes to children's television.

We like to see people in happy, stable relationships, and we think that in these troubled times, people need comforting stories as well as challenging ones. ***We think that a television community that promotes a sense of comfort and reassurance may also further good mental health.*** (For more on mental health, see Chapter 7)

Smart appearance matters too. And so does clear, calm speaking. This may seem a small point, but getting the right presenters and actors that can dress smartly, speak clearly and show empathy is likely to raise aspirations - and perhaps more so if those presenters come from varied parts of your local community.

Our project takes the “open-minded” end of the 1950s-1990s as its main inspiration. An empathic, therapeutic approach to sensuality and relationships means friendship, love and stable families too. ***Our vision can accommodate people whose relationship outcomes may differ from our own.*** But *some* television writers and producers seem over-concerned with vulgarities, or the excesses of “camp” or hyper-masculinity - a world away from how many individuals and communities actually live and love.

There is often nothing better than watching a wedding or seeing lovers' pledges to stay together to help lift people's hearts. This is why so many religious (& non-religious) communities make marriage central to their lives.

And when it comes to **children**, whilst we love modern, **progressive** ways of showing children's lives and interactions with the wider world, it's also important that they grow up with **healthy role models**, and a sense of reassurance. It's also probably true that the 9-15 age range isn't getting enough intelligent, engaging programmes: forever patronised with “dumbed down” content, cartoons and (far too often), vulgar humour (especially on the BBC, strangely enough!). We want to see kids making things, enjoying outings and holidays, and enjoying family life in general.

7. THE PROGRAMMES – PRODUCTION AND DELIVERY

IDEAS FROM THE PAST, IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

The strapline that appears on our Gab page and on other social media is “*ITV as it should be*”. We’re going back to ***ITV’s original values*** of popular, quality entertainment, but with a strong commitment to education and regional programming – *plus* more than a hint of the early Channel 4’s willingness to experiment and take risks. Sadly, both ITV and Channel 4 have changed out of all recognition: and generally, not for the better!

Mental health remit

A key part of our channel is our Mental Health Remit – and this reflects in our content. We think we have great programme ideas that focus on this without being “gloomy”.

We’ve just been through - and are still facing - some of the worst social and economic crises in living memory. The last thing people need is to be needlessly unsettled or lectured at by “politically correct” broadcasters.

“*Surprise! Surprise!*” – Light Entertainment formats

A long-term aspiration of the channel is to bring back “weekend television” as being at the heart of family entertainment – with a mix of old and new programme ideas. With your help and support, we want to bring the local social club, student common room or seaside holiday camp atmosphere to your computer or smart device – just like ITV and Channel 4 used to do. Just imagine *if* we could bring back shows such as (or similar to) *Surprise! Surprise!*, *Small Talk*, *Saturday Night at....* and an expanded version of the popular 1960s ITV game-show, *Beat The Clock*. We also have new reality TV and game show ideas such as *Fairground*, *Crossword* and *Take Your Lucky Break*.

Many younger viewers have said they miss Top of The Pops. We hope to bring it back....as *Ready Steady Go!* And it won’t just be old, recycled tunes from the past!

Arts, History and Heritage

We know from talking to people that there are a lot of history and heritage enthusiasts out there. Our planned programme formats include *Heirloom* – a combined local history and antiques dealing show, and *Rural Rides* – our very own answer to the BBC’s Countryfile. Our policy documents contain a commitment to including Shakespeare as a part of our arts output. We also plan to feature local classical, jazz and folk musicians.

These and other programme ideas won’t happen at once. Volunteers would be assigned to various departments (e.g. News, Light Entertainment etc) to make projects happen. (For more about the governance aspects of this project, see Chapters 3 and 10)

8. CHEERING ON YOUR LOCAL TEAMS

The North-West is rightly proud of its many famous sporting teams. In football and rugby, we have the mighty Manchester United and Manchester City, the glorious Liverpool and Everton, St. Helens, Wigan Warriors, as well as many other sides that perhaps get less television coverage.

And you see, that's a real problem. When it gets down to non-league sporting sides, or your local school teams, who seems to care? Who's out there giving you the coverage you want and deserve? The non-league games, or other games such as badminton or pool that maybe get less coverage than tennis or snooker.....Well, why not give them a bit more airtime?

If you run a local sports team, or know someone that does, why not get in touch with us by telephone (Ask for our number) or via the links on <https://gab.com/takepartintv> ?

9. BRITAIN AND THE WIDER WORLD

As far as reporting on news in your region, in Britain or other parts of the world goes, we have no plans to copy the same news agenda of other news outlets if we think they're too narrow. We will try to cover the kinds of local, national and international news that often receive scant attention, as well as the stories you're all familiar with. We will also try to be balanced between all sides of any given news story.

Brexit and current concerns about the role of the UN and World Economic Forum raise wider questions of Britain's place in the world.

On the one hand, it might be said that leaving the European Union and loosening our relationship with other international organisations only leaves Britain cut off and isolated from the world. On the other, it might be said that these global organisations tend to act in ways that undermine Britain's ability to act freely as a country. *Again, we have no view either way.* We want both patriots and internationalists to feel at home on our channel.

We note how little of Britain's news focuses on rural life, or other kinds of communities – and also, how infrequently news portrays the efforts communities are making to make their areas happier, friendlier places. We hope to set the record straight.

When it comes to established black communities in Britain, we have no need to engage in virtue-signalling - creating entirely separate programmes or channels narrowly focused on particular racial or cultural groups. **You won't see us saying that “Black Lives Matter” because our friendly actions should speak for themselves. Our door is always open to the best talent from all sections of the community** – and that ought to be enough. Just imagine if we turned away the next Trevor McDonald or Krishnan Guru-Murthy. Well, of course, we wouldn't. That ought to be obvious.

However, we should have the courage to say that – for example – some subcultures (regardless of colour) have more in common with Britain’s culture and history and that others are often more divisive. When we are able to see something of ourselves in those of another colour, rather than resorting to “ghettoised” American-style representations of any race, then that is clearly one effective way to create friendly community relations in the long-term.

10. FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

– PUTTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES FIRST:-

- We can help advertisers invest in our region’s future

****Communities come first – every time!****

Our proposed channel will always welcome donations – BUT (and this is very important) – it’s about GIVING TO the North-West region in terms of content, NOT TAKING OUT!

We’re starting out life as an **Unincorporated Association** – NOT as a PLC with shareholders – and we’re putting local people before profit. An Unincorporated Association is a form of organisation that allows maximum flexibility in setting up. Eventually, the aim is to develop into a *co-operative*, owned in whole or in part by local communities.

We already have initial funds to invest. That may go on equipment: e.g. cameras. It may go into paying volunteers’ travel expenses. Because we will use high quality, portable, off-the-shelf equipment that you can typically buy in the high street, initial investments can go into **Vision-Centred Content** – not flashy computer graphics and pointless gimmicks, wasting money that could be better spent elsewhere.

Some people think – wrongly – that Take Part in TV would be based on an expensive subscription model – similar to Sky or Virgin TV contracts. People even ask if that they would be expected to pay a lot of money just to join as an ordinary volunteer!

Actually, **for Online Volunteers, it’s usually free.** For those wanting to commit a bit more as **Full Volunteer**, you’ll only ever be required to pay one amount only - **£1 a year.** One pound. That’s it. For advertisers, it may be more or even less, depending on what kind of advertising you are asking for.

For the most part, the £1 from members is just to underline any existing legal commitments made by Full Members to the Channel.

We will ensure that full volunteers are protected by legally binding contracts. You can be sure that your £1 goes where we say it goes. And if you’re in any doubt, you can get in touch via social media, and ask us any questions you like (See Chapter 11)

11. GETTING INVOLVED – IT’S EASIER THAN YOU THINK!

We know how daunting it can be joining a new social media site you’re not used to. But once you know how to use our social media, it’s easy to connect, ask questions and find out more.

We often get criticised for not having accounts with Facebook, Instagram, Google and so on. But there are some very good reasons for that.

We want people to join us that can think just that little bit differently, and also, people that can commit to us. We’re also committed to using social media that protects the neutrality and privacy of all members, and those that interact with us externally.

All sites allow you to sign up easily with e-mail, and many also allow you to join with Facebook, Google and Apple. The Gab page lists many other social media platforms we’re on: such as Tumblr & Parler (takepartintv). The Gab page also has a lot of other useful information and links you can click on, even if you don’t sign up with Gab.

GAB - OUR MAIN SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM:

Find us at: gab.com/takepartintv (sign up with e-mail only)

****FOR FACEBOOK USERS**:**

Many of our social media pages are Facebook and Google-compatible, or look similar, even though we don’t have hold accounts with either. We’ve listed some of them here:-

PINTEREST:- pinterest.co.uk/takepartintv

The Web’s very own Internet collage, if you’re a fan of anything, there’s a pinboard for you. To join, click **Log In**, then look for the options to sign up or use Google/Facebook.

BEHANCE:- behance.net/takepartintv

Stylish and upmarket, this is the site to be seen on if you’re creatively minded. For mobile users, you’ll find the option to sign up next to the **Be** sign (icon with 4 lines)

VK:- vk.com/takepartintv
IT LOOKS LIKE FACEBOOK (but it isn’t): (sign up with e-mail only)

Russia’s English-speaking answer to Facebook, right down to the blue and white screen! If you’re a Facebook fan, you’ll feel very much at home here.

or TEXT/VOICEMAIL: **Number available on request**