

Parliamentary Questions

Debate Pack: The BBC's relationship with the Met Office

A Westminster Hall debate on the BBC's relationship with the Met Office has been scheduled for Tuesday 27 October 2015 at 1430hrs. The member in charge of the debate is Mr Ben Bradshaw.

A debate pack has been prepared to support this debate; it provides a brief history of the relationship between the BBC and the Met Office, a summary of the recent announcement that the Met Office had lost the contract to provide the BBC with data for its weather forecasts, and selected relevant media articles. The following Parliamentary Questions are provided as a supplement to the debate pack.

The debate pack may be viewed online at:

researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CDP-2015-0081

The following is a selection of recent PQs asked in relation to the BBC and the Met Office. To search for other parliamentary business, please use [Parliamentary Search](#).

Questions: BBC: Met Office [9205], BBC: Met Office [9209], BBC: Met Office [9208] & Met Office: Research [9223]

Asked by: Mr Chuka Umunna on 7 September 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, when Ministers were informed of the BBC's decision to terminate its contract with the Met Office; and by what means they were so informed. [9205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, what assessment he has made of the budgetary implications for the Met Office of the termination of its contract with the BBC. [9209]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, what discussions (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have had with (i) their counterparts in the Department for Culture Media and Sport and (b) the BBC on the termination of the BBC's contract with the Met Office. [9208]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, what proportion of the funds generated by the Met Office's contract with the BBC was spent on research in the last 12 months; and what research projects undertaken by the Met Office in that period the BBC has (a) collaborated with or (b) participated in. [9223]

Answered by: Joseph Johnson on 24 September 2015

The BBC's decision not to shortlist the Met Office for its next contract was a commercial decision by the BBC and was communicated by Met Office to my officials and myself as soon as they became aware that they were not being selected for the next stage of the procurement. The ending of the contract in autumn 2016 is not expected to have significant budgetary implications.

Since the communication of the decision I and my officials have been in dialogue with the Met Office and colleagues elsewhere in government in connection with National Severe Weather Warning service, and in turn with the BBC. The Weather Services Agreement between the Met Office and BBC does not include a research element.

Met Office: Maritime and Coastguard Agency [9551]

Asked by: Mr Chuka Umunna on 8 September 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the value is of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's (MCA) contract with the Met Office to provide the shipping forecast; what the terms and termination date of that contract are; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the decision by the BBC to terminate its weather contract with the Met Office on the latter's contract with the MCA.

Answered by Mr Robert Goodwill on 15 September 2015

The value of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's (MCA) contract with the Met Office for provision of The Shipping Forecast is: £188,000 (excl. VAT). This is one element of a wider marine weather service that the Met Office delivers on behalf of the MCA. The total contract value for these combined services is £725,000 (excl. VAT). The current contract term is for one year and will expire on 31 March 2016.

With respect to the BBC's decision not to renew its weather contract with the Met Office, this is a separate provision to the arrangements in place for The Shipping Forecast. Consequently, there will be no impact and the BBC will continue to broadcast The Shipping Forecast using data supplied by the Met Office.

Emergencies: Meteorology [9819]

Asked by: Mr Ben Bradshaw on 9 September 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, what assessment he has made of the effect on (a) Government and (b) emergency responders of those organisations receiving different information about the weather in an emergency to that provided by the BBC to the general public.

Answered by: Joseph Johnson on 16 September 2015

The BBC's contract with the Met Office is currently due to end in autumn 2016. The Government is putting arrangements in place to enable consistency of information provided about severe weather to emergency responders and that provided by broadcasters.

Questions: BBC: Met Office [9833] & BBC: Met Office [9717]

Asked by: Mr Ben Bradshaw on 9 September 2015

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for national security and resilience to extreme weather of the BBC broadcasting weather forecasts supplied by an overseas company.

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for (a) national security and (b) resilience to extreme weather of the BBC's decision no longer to use the Met Office's weather forecasts and expertise in its broadcasts.

Answered by: Mr Oliver Letwin on 14 September 2015

The BBC procurement process for a new weather provider is understood still to be underway. The Government is considering the implications for national security and resilience caused by the decision by the BBC not to use the Met Office after autumn 2016 as its forecast provider. The Government will continue to work closely with both the BBC and the Met Office to ensure national security and resilience are protected.

BBC: Met Office [9718]

Asked by: Mr Ben Bradshaw on 9 September 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, what assessment he has made of the (a) cost and (b) value for money implications to the Met Office of the BBC no longer using the Met Office for weather services.

Answered by: Joseph Johnson on 14 September 2015

The financial implications are expected to minimal.

BBC: Met Office [9716]

Asked by: Mr Ben Bradshaw on 9 September 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what representations she has made to the BBC on the potential implications of its decision no longer to use the Met Office's forecasts and expertise on resilience to flooding; and what response she has received to those representations.

Answered by: Rory Stewart on 14 September 2015

This is a commercial matter between the Met Office and BBC. This decision will not affect our work to reduce flood risk or our free flood warnings service. Defra, the Environment Agency and the Flood Forecasting Centre will continue to work closely with the Met Office to forecast rainfall impacts and the risk of flooding.