



Press release from Voice of the Listener & Viewer
For immediate release: 15 September 2016

The Draft BBC Charter: The Voice of the Listener & Viewer welcomes Draft BBC Charter but still has some concerns.

The VLV welcomes the broad thrust of the Draft BBC Charter which was released today and in particular the commitment to a strong and creative BBC and the certainty the 11 year charter will bring.

However, some concerns remain. While there is a broad commitment to accountability, we are concerned that more detailed proposals in the White Paper for the BBC Board to improve audience engagement and hold itself responsible for BBC accountability have been largely omitted. VLV needs to be convinced that the new unitary BBC Board will engage adequately with licence fee payers and take into account their views, continuing the valuable work the BBC Trust has conducted. The role of the non-executive directors, and their ability to hold the executive to account as necessary, will be vital.

Another concern is that the definition of distinctiveness in the Draft Charter states that BBC output has to be *significantly different* from other providers in the market. This could force the BBC down a market failure route whereby it only provides content which, however valuable, is less popular. We believe a more aspirational definition should be devised.

VLV supports the BBC Trust's proposal for an amendment to the Draft Charter that future licence fee settlements are open to Parliamentary scrutiny. The two most recent settlements have undermined the BBC's ability to deliver a high quality, comprehensive service as well as undermining its independence from Government. This would be a real step towards greater transparency.

Colin Browne, Chairman of VLV said, "There is much to welcome in the Draft Charter. Our primary concern is that the BBC continues to deliver high quality content for all audiences across the UK and is accountable to those who fund it. We are concerned that the draft Charter today provides no detail as to how these rather general commitments on accountability will be met and we will be scrutinising the detailed proposal as they are developed."

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Notes to Editors

Further information from Colin Browne on
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Notes to Editors

1. The Voice of the Listener & Viewer (VLV) is an independent, non-profit-making membership association, free from political, commercial and sectarian affiliations, working for quality and

diversity in British broadcasting content. VLV represents the interests of listeners and viewers as citizens and consumers across the full range of broadcasting issues. VLV is concerned with the structures, regulation, funding and institutions that underpin the British broadcasting system. VLV is a charitable company limited by guarantee.

2. For 30 years VLV has played a unique role in keeping a citizen's eye on major legislative proposals and action taken by regulators and broadcasters, enabling the voice of consumers to be heard, independently from the interests of political parties, industry players and other pressure groups.

3. VLV is run by a board of Trustees, chaired by Colin Browne. Dame Colette Bowe is its President. She succeeded Jocelyn Hay, who founded VLV in 1983, its president until her death in 2014.