



Voice of the Listener & Viewer

Championing Excellence and Diversity in Broadcasting Summer 2015

Bulletin 117

A NEW GOVERNMENT AND SECRETARY OF STATE: THE BBC CHARTER REVIEW STARTS



Rt Hon John Whittingdale OBE MP, Secretary of State since May, with Chancellor Osborne, is now driving through at speed the BBC's Charter Review and licence fee settlement process.

Previously he had chaired the Culture Media and Sport Select Committee since 2005 and instigated their review on *The Future of the BBC*. The Committee concluded (*February 2015*) that there was no realistic alternative to the licence fee for the next settlement period, but that it was unsustainable in the longer term; it considered other options, including a household tax; and that the BBC was still a valued and important feature of national life but in need of stronger governance and more challenging, independent oversight if it is to be held accountable. Jesse Norman MP is the new CMS Committee Chair.

Whittingdale's announcement on 6 July about the BBC's licence fee settlement, including the funding of free licences for the over 75s, caused widespread outrage, not least because of the complete lack of promised consultation. You can read reactions from VLV members (*pages 9,10*).



Chris Bryant MP is the new Shadow Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, seen above, speaking at VLV's Spring Conference.

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DAME COLETTE BOWE BECOMES PRESIDENT OF THE VOICE OF THE LISTENER & VIEWER



Dame Colette Bowe became VLV's President in April 2015. Colin Browne, VLV Chairman, said "We are delighted that Colette has agreed to take on this role at a time when such critical decisions are being taken about the future of public service broadcasting. Her knowledge and experience in the sector and as a consumer champion, including as a distinguished past chair of Ofcom and of its Consumer Panel, make her uniquely well placed for the role most recently filled by our founder, Jocelyn Hay."

Colette Bowe said: "I am honoured to be asked to follow in Jocelyn's footsteps, especially at a time when the future of public service broadcasting will, rightly, be the subject of intense debate."

Colette Bowe is chairman of the Banking Standards Board. She was previously Chairman of Ofcom, from 2009 – 14, and chaired its Consumer Panel from 2003 – 2007. She has worked in Whitehall and the City and has sat on a number of boards in the private and public sectors. In the mid 1980s, she worked at the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

She has also been appointed to Secretary of State John Whittingdale's Advisory Group for BBC Charter Review (*see page 8*).

VLV AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN BROADCASTING 2014

Anton du Beke collects the award for *Strictly Come Dancing* for Best TV Entertainment Programme. For full list of Awards (*see page 11*).





Voice of the Listener & Viewer

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Dame Colette Bowe

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Voice of the Listener & Viewer (VLV) represents the citizen and consumer interests in broadcasting and works for quality and diversity in British broadcasting. VLV is free from political, sectarian and commercial affiliations. VLV is concerned with the issues, structures, institutions and regulation that underpin the British broadcasting system and in particular to maintain the principles of public service broadcasting.

VLV does not handle complaints.

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN, COLIN BROWNE



The events of the last few weeks have produced more anger and outrage among VLV members than any issue in recent times.

Despite all the assurances that the process to determine the BBC's future would be transparent and subject to widespread consultation, a shabby deal was done in complete secrecy to determine the future level of the BBC's funding. If anything, this was even more disgraceful than the previous licence fee settlement, despite calls from all concerned – including from Secretary of State

John Whittingdale, when he was Select Committee chairman – that this should never happen again.

Unfortunately, no one seems to have told the Chancellor, whose raid on the BBC's finances to fund an aspect of welfare policy was political expedience of the worst kind.

The BBC was to an extent between a rock and a hard place – agree to this or potentially face something worse. Certainly, the agreement that future licence fee settlements should be linked to the Consumer Price Index is potentially important – if it is delivered – and the agreement to phase out funding from the licence fee for the roll-out of superfast broadband is to be welcomed: it should never have been there in the first place. However, there is no escaping the fact that the net effect of the agreement will be to reduce the BBC's funding, at a time when its commercial rivals are seeing significant increase in revenue.

Members will hopefully have seen the letters we sent to the Secretary of State John Whittingdale and to Tony Hall, Director-General of the BBC, complaining about the undemocratic process and lack of transparency in reaching this agreement. However, we are at least now getting the opportunity to comment on the shape and scope of the BBC – although these have to an extent been pre-empted by the funding agreement – in the context of the Government's Green Paper on Charter Review and the BBC Trust's own consultation, as well as two other Parliamentary consultations. All these are described in more detail by Sophie Chalk elsewhere in this *Bulletin*. To help us with our responses, we have included a questionnaire for members to complete. It is important that we reflect your views on the kind of BBC we want and that we recognise it may have a changing role in a changing media. Please return the questionnaire if you can. It is also really important to send in individual responses, which the consultations are also seeking.

As I mentioned at the outset, we have had a strong reaction from members on the events of the last few weeks. Thank you for your emails. I hope we have managed to respond to all of them, but forgive us if any have slipped through.

I am also pleased to say that the publicity has led to a number of new members joining us. The VLV is needed as never before if we are to ensure a healthy future for public service broadcasting and the BBC's role within it.

**LETTER FROM COLIN BROWNE TO SECRETAY OF STATE JOHN WHITTINGDALE OBE MP
14 JULY 2015**

Dear Secretary of State

Re: BBC Licence Fee Settlement

I am writing on behalf of the Voice of the Listener & Viewer following the Government's statement last week regarding the new licence fee settlement.

We are extremely disappointed by the lack of public transparency and consultation during the negotiation process which has led to this settlement, especially in light of recommendations made by your own Select Committee in March this year.

In the Select Committee report on the future of the BBC, as I am sure you are aware, you wrote: "No future licence fee negotiations must be conducted in the way of the 2010 settlement", "It was wholly wrong that the 2010 licence fee settlement [...] was not subject to any public or parliamentary consultation", "The 2010 settlement demonstrated that the BBC's independence can be compromised by negotiations with the government of the day that lack transparency and public consultation".

It would be fair to say that the announcement this week has led to a greater reaction from VLV's members than any other issue in recent years. There is universal outrage among VLV members on behalf of licence fee payers.

VLV opposes the move to use licence fee payers' money to fund free licences for the over 75s, a welfare commitment made by a government at a time when pensions were being cut. Using licence fee payers' money to fund other activities, such as broadband rollout or government social policy, undermines the fundamental purpose of the licence fee which is supposed to be collected to pay for BBC services for the benefit of licence fee payers.

It is VLV's view that the process by which the licence fee has been negotiated, both in 2010 and now in 2015, undermines the independence of the BBC. This is government interference which the BBC is unable to resist. While it may be 'legitimate', in Rona Fairhead's words, it is unacceptable.

Despite assurances to the contrary we are far from convinced that this is a 'flat' settlement and would welcome any greater detail you might be able to provide on projections of income for the BBC which arise from this settlement.

In particular, may we have clarification on the statement you made in the House on July 6th. In an interview with *The Guardian*, published on the same day you were quoted as saying: "If the conclusion of charter renewal is that the BBC should not be doing all the things it is doing now, then it will not be going up with inflation." This clearly suggests that the licence fee will only be linked to CPI if the BBC continues providing exactly what it provides currently, whereas it is widely accepted that with this settlement it will be virtually impossible to preserve current services intact. Will this mean that the Chancellor's promise to link the licence fee to CPI will be effectively negated? I would welcome any clarification you can make on this point.

Yours sincerely

Colin Browne

Chairman, Voice of the Listener & Viewer

WHAT THE VLV HAS SAID SO FAR

As well as responding to the many consultations, reviews and surveys being carried out (*see page 5*) the VLV has also issued press releases swiftly - in response to the announcement of the transfer of funding and licence fee 'settlement' (6 July 2015) and in response to the publication of DCMS's Green Paper on BBC Charter Review (10 July 2015). These are put up on VLV's website, as well as links to other useful documents - for instance the recommendations of the Perry Report into TV licence enforcement links with VLV's submission and TV Licensing's latest Annual Report. These pages will be regularly updated.

LETTER FROM COLIN BROWNE TO TONY HALL, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE BBC 8 JULY 2015

Dear Director-General

Re: Licence fee settlement

As you may have seen from the statement VLV released on Monday, we are extremely disappointed by the lack of public consultation and transparency during the recent licence fee negotiation process. We were assured by the Secretary of State that this would be a more transparent process than was followed in 2010. I do realise that the speed and nature of the settlement process was undoubtedly due to the Government's approach rather than any strategy on your part and that you must have been under extreme pressure to reach an agreement.

It would be fair to say that the announcement this week has led to a greater reaction from our members than any other issue since I became Chairman of VLV. There is universal outrage among VLV members on behalf of licence fee payers.

We have examined all the figures as they have been reported but as yet are unable to understand how this is a 'flat' licence fee settlement and it would be very helpful for us to understand the figures better. We would be very grateful if you could share a breakdown with us of the BBC projections of expenditure and income so that we can better understand how the BBC will be able to effectively continue to deliver its public purposes.

Additionally, we noticed from the Hansard transcription of the statement in the House of Commons that John Whittingdale appeared to be caveating the rise of the licence fee in line with CPI on the basis that the BBC will have to continue to deliver all that it currently does under the new licence fee agreement. It is not clear to us how this will be possible and we would welcome any reassurances you can offer on this matter.

Colin Browne,
Chairman, Voice of the Listener & Viewer

Blog from James Heath, Director of Policy, BBC on the Licence Fee (9 July 2015)

The Government's decision to transfer the cost of the over 75s TV licence fee concession to the BBC has been widely reported – less so, the other elements of what has been agreed. To understand the net financial impact on the BBC, both sides of the equation need to be considered. In short, the effect of the agreement will be flat cash funding for BBC content and services over the first five years of the next Charter period, after implementing a programme of £1.6 billion of cumulative savings over this Charter period by 2016/17.

The agreement means we will continue to make tough choices and simplify the BBC in the next Charter, building on the savings already planned to close the BBC's £150 million per annum funding gap and manage the on-going inflationary pressures in our cost base. But, alongside, we now have the planning certainty we need to give the BBC financial stability and the opportunity to continue our reform programme.

Let's first look at the cost part of the equation. The cost of over 75s TV licences will be transferred to the BBC on a phased basis, starting in 2018/19 with the full liability met by the BBC from 2020/21. We estimate this will reduce the BBC's licence fee income by around £725m pa. We will give those eligible households an opportunity to voluntarily pay for a TV licence and so make a contribution to the cost of the BBC's services. In the next Parliament, the BBC will take-on responsibility for the over 75s policy and how this balances with funding services to audiences. As part of the new arrangements, the BBC has agreed a package of funding benefits to compensate for the over 75s obligation. In yesterday's Summer Budget speech, the Chancellor said: "the BBC has agreed to take on responsibility for funding free TV licences for the over 75s and in return we were able to give our valued public broadcaster a sustainable income for the long term."

The new arrangement includes a commitment to:

- modernise the licence fee, to adapt it to cover catch-up as well as live TV. This will make the licence fee model sustainable, fairer and safeguard the funding available for our content and services over the period. We estimate that the financial benefit will be around £100 million pa against our baseline. The Government has said it will bring forward legislation within 12 months to make this happen;
- phase-out the 'ring-fenced' money from the licence fee – £150m a year – which is being used to support broadband roll-out; and
- increase the licence fee in line with CPI over the next Charter period, subject to Charter Review conclusions on the purposes and scope of the BBC and us undertaking equivalent efficiency savings to other parts of the public sector. The licence fee has been frozen for seven years at £145.50. Linking the licence fee to CPI would deliver income of around £350 million per annum, at the Bank of England's target inflation rate of 2%. If CPI is below this level over the period then the planned efficiencies in the BBC's cost base will be available for offsetting the loss of over 75s income rather than offsetting inflationary pressures.

(continued on page 6)

HOW VLV MEMBERS CAN MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD

#yourBBC



Since the speedily arranged licence fee settlement in early July, there has been a whirlwind of response. VLV has been inundated by letters and emails from its members asking how

we all might contribute to the debate (see page 9).

In his introduction to the Government's Green Paper *BBC Charter Review - a public consultation* which was published on 16 July, Secretary of State John Whittingdale said, "I want to hear from people all over the UK, so I can understand what this country wants from and for the BBC."

In response, Colin Browne said "We welcome the opportunity the Green Paper will provide for the public to be involved in the debate about the future of the BBC. The recent licence fee settlement did not allow for any public debate and was an unacceptable raid on the BBC's income to fund government social policy, namely licence fees for the over 75s.

The preamble to this debate has not been edifying, with leaks and political point scoring. The BBC is too important an institution to be a political football. Now citizens must have their voice."

VLV will be working hard in the coming months to ensure that we represent the views of our members in this debate, but if you want to do something yourself, then here is some advice on what you, as a VLV member and licence fee payer, can do to ensure that our voices are heard during the process of Charter Review.

Firstly – if you feel you are able, please complete the questionnaire which we have prepared for VLV members on the future of the BBC and return it in the self-addressed envelope enclosed. It is crucial for VLV that we know what our members think so that our submissions to policy consultations genuinely reflect the views of our membership. For the past 30 years VLV's credibility has relied very much on the well-informed views of its members. We need you now, more than ever, to join us in the battle to ensure the BBC is not stripped down in terms of its scale or purposes.

Secondly - you may also consider submitting your views direct to the BBC Trust in response to a consultation which is open until 18 September. The response so far has been very encouraging with over 4,000 people submitting their views in the first 24 hours of the consultation.

We would encourage you to participate in this if you feel able. You can complete the consultation online at <https://consultations.external.bbc.co.uk/bbc/tomorrows-bbc>. To request a questionnaire in audio or braille please call 0800 0680 116 or Textphone 03700 100 212.

Thirdly – if you feel very strongly we have also been advised that we should encourage people to respond individually to the Green Paper itself. Then the Government will not be able to ignore our views.

The main areas of concern in the Green Paper are the BBC's mission, purpose and values, the BBC's scale and scope, how the BBC should be funded and BBC governance and regulation. VLV will obviously be sending in a submission on behalf of its members. The deadline for submissions is 8 October and more details are available online at: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/bbc-charter-review-public-consultation.

You can email your responses to the consultation questions to BBCCharterReviewConsultation@culture.gov.uk or you can write to the DCMS at: BBC Charter Review Consultation, DCMS, 100 Parliament Street, London SW1A 2BQ.

Decriminalisation of the Licence Fee

Alongside the Green Paper, the **Perry Review** has been published. Led by David Perry QC, it examined whether non-payment of the licence fee should remain a criminal offence. In line with VLV's recommendations to the review, the report has concluded that the current system of enforcement should be maintained if the licence fee remains in place following charter renewal. It said the current regime is a broadly fair and proportionate response to the problem of licence fee evasion and provides good value for money both for licence fee payers and taxpayers.

Calling former BBC staff and freelancers

Are you a former BBC staff member or freelancer? Would you like to receive the monthly BBC Alumni e-newsletter containing special offers, ballots for BBC events and shows, BBC updates and regular blogs?

If you would, simply email alumni@bbc.co.uk with your old BBC staff or NI number, last BBC building and job title, and the first half of your current home postcode. Or you can subscribe via our webpage: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/whoweare/alumni>

Natasha Maclean | Alumni Relations Manager

OFCOM REVIEW

Channel 4 found to be delivering its purposes and Public Service Broadcasting healthy



According to Ofcom's Third Review of Public Service

Broadcasting published in June, public service broadcasting (PSB) is alive and well. The PSB Review provides us with an overview of how the public service broadcasters are meeting the objectives set out in the 2003 Communications Act and is carried out every five years. The VLV submitted evidence to the Review and our full submission can be found on the VLV website.

PSBs still valued: In its 2015 report Ofcom found that viewers value PSB programmes, and audience satisfaction is high. Close to eight in ten viewers (79%) believe PSB is delivering on its purposes - a notable increase from 69% in 2008. Over half of all TV viewing is to the main PSB channels - BBC One, BBC Two, ITV, UTV, STV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 - rising to over 70% when all the channels PSBs broadcast are taken into account.

Channel 4: Ofcom's assessment of Channel 4's delivery of its remit which was conducted alongside the PSB Review was largely positive. It found that C4C is performing well and continues to make a broad range of high quality media content of wide appeal. The Channel 4 portfolio has maintained its share and its investment in original UK content has remained stable. It was particularly noted that Channel 4 appeals to a younger audience than any other PSB.

Trends: The most dominant trend identified in the report is for audiences to view content increasingly online. The growth in news consumption online and on mobile devices is especially noted. While the trend is for younger people to increasingly view content online, the vast majority of audio visual viewing is still done live (85%) or recorded (10%) with only 5% viewed online.

Problem areas: There has been a drop over the past five years in investment in public service content by the PSBs of a further 15% on previous spending which was also down. Economies have been made and it is suggested that any further cuts in budget will have an impact on what we see on screen. There are also concerns about some genres which are not being adequately delivered – such as religion, children's content beyond the BBC and drama which has seen a drop of 44% in budget. Another issue which is highlighted in the report is that certain communities feel under-represented on screen, especially ethnic minorities and those in the nations and regions.

Recommendations:

Ofcom has recommended that Channel 4 should be allowed to deliver its remit across all its platforms, rather than its delivery being assessed purely on the output of its main channel. It has also highlighted that we need children's provision beyond the BBC which funds 97% of all UK originated children's content. VLV will be holding an event to explore this issue on 3 September (*see page 9*) in London to which all VLV members are invited. Ofcom recommends that new regulation is considered to ensure appropriate prominence for public service content however we view it.

Retransmission fees Ofcom broadly supports the principle of PSBs being paid for content when it is broadcast on other platforms but highlights that if this is to benefit viewers there will have to be new regulation put in place to ensure that any additional funds accruing to PSBs are invested in public service content. The VLV has stressed that the PSBs' prominent position on electronic programme guides (EPGs) must be preserved.

See the full review on Ofcom's website

James Heath's Blog (*Continued from page 4*)

Forecasting how all these factors will add-up over the period is complex; we anticipate that the new arrangements will result in flat cash funding for BBC services over the first five years of the next Charter period. In real terms, the licence fee funding available for BBC services will be down by around 10%. The way the financial settlement is structured gives the BBC some room for investment in digital transformation in the early years of the next Charter before the full cost of over 75s is absorbed. This will help us to manage the transition we all know is coming to an online world.

We believe that the substance of what has been agreed is a strong deal for the BBC in very tough circumstances.

Of course, once the Charter Review process starts there could be further pressures faced by the BBC such as decriminalising the licence fee which would, in our view, lead to an additional cost of £200m pa. As part of the agreement, the Government has said it will consider decriminalisation in light of the Perry Report and the need for the BBC to be funded appropriately.

James Heath writes a series of blogs about Charter Review issues - see the About the BBC/ Blog



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REACHING OUT TO ALL AUDIENCES

A personal view by journalist Maggie Brown

Along with Voice of the Listener & Viewer members I rely heavily on Radio 4 and BBC television services - thankfully advertising free. The iPlayer and radio version are simple to use. But I also know BBC audiences for the output I love are skewing towards the middle-aged like me and elderly and its support is greatest in England. So, acting as a critical friend, it is obvious the best way to approach the Charter debate – however emasculated by the appalling licence fee deal forced through pre Budget - is to ensure the BBC has the widest possible support. The BBC must focus on serving the many tribes of the UK in the coming decade. What does this mean in practice?

First, it has to make sure that all people who pay the licence fee are represented on screen. It is the best means of defence. So, in terms of renewing its governance and organisation, the BBC must embrace a more federal system. This should be seen, not as a threat, breaking up a great institution, but moving with the times and our democracy, now a multi-party system.

If you watched Jonathan Dimbleby's (BBC Two) series on *The BBC at War* in June, he explained how in World War 2, the BBC won the trust and respect of both the Government and the people, by careful but vivid radio reports, including Richard Dimbleby's account of the liberation of Belsen.

In the 21st century it means striving for a BBC which gives more control over the shape of schedules and tone to the regions and nations, especially Scotland, where its Audience Council is well advanced down the road of constructive criticism. There should be a greater allocation of funds for Scotland and Wales to make bespoke programmes, especially in the case of Wales, programmes for the nation in English. The control and concentration of power centred on London, including the huge newsroom at New Broadcasting House, has to be reduced. Let us also hear more regional English accents. Birmingham is right to feel neglected.

Second, it must improve the representation of all Britons on and off screen, which includes the employment of people of colour and different creeds, the BAME issue, younger people as well as older women and those with disabilities. I recently attended two meetings on this subject and heard many grievances, led by well-educated and talented people in their 20s and 30s. They have ploughed through the lengthy application forms, participated in BBC initiatives, but got nowhere, not

even a polite response or any feedback to their failed efforts to land a job. At one meeting, distinguished voices suggested boycotting the licence fee.

Third, the collapse in viewing by younger adults is a massive issue. I agree that the future lies in people accessing programmes to suit themselves. But scheduled, targeted channels also provide exposure, a showcase. So, closing BBC Three to reinforce BBC One drama sends out a dreadful message. Especially since the vision for what supposedly will replace it online - with or without an alliance with Radio 1 and commissioning of short form videos - is so vague. Self help does not mean simply aiming for the biggest audience shares.

VLV BENEFITS FROM ANTARTIC WALK



VLV Trustee Patrick McIntosh hands over a cheque for £29,268.70 to VLV Chairman Colin Browne during the Spring Conference - a major contribution to VLV's funds. Patrick raised money by walking to the South Pole in January 2015 for VLV, Bowel Cancer UK and Prostate Cancer UK (see *Bulletin 116*). We are all very grateful to Patrick and again congratulate him on such an amazing feat.

THE BBC AT BAY - AGAIN

A chance to hear four authors of books about the BBC discuss the BBC and Charter Review from a historical aspect at the Chiswick Book Festival (run by Torin Douglas and VLV Trustee Dinah Garrett). A panel of experts and ex-insiders chaired by VLV Patron **Will Wyatt** (*The Fun Factory: A Life at the BBC*) with **Charlotte Higgins** (*This New Noise: The Extraordinary Birth and Troubled Life of the BBC*), **Roger Mosey** (*Getting out Alive*) and **Professor Jean Seaton** (*Pinkoes and Traitors - The BBC and the nation 1974 - 1987*). Jean Seaton gave the Jocelyn Hay VLV Lecture in May.

Saturday 12 September 2015 from 5.30 - 6.30 pm at St Michael & All Angels Church, Chiswick, London W4 (opposite Turnham Green Tube Station). **Tickets can be booked online at www.chiswickbookfestival.net.**



BBC THREE - A STEP NEARER TO BEING MOVED ONLINE

In June the BBC Trust published its provisional conclusions on the BBC Executive's proposals to reinvent BBC Three as an online-only service. VLV immediately announced that it deeply regretted this decision. Colin Browne, Chairman of VLV, said "BBC Three provides a real alternative for comedy and factual programming. Moving it to an online-only platform disenfranchises many viewers and undermines the case for universal programming supported by a universal licence fee."

In its response to the BBC Trust's consultation in February 2015, the VLV said it opposed its closure as a broadcast channel. High quality, engaging content on television across a range of genres which appeals to a range of different ages and demographics is essential if we are to be a well-informed society and maintain our democratic engagement with the world around us.

The VLV values the contribution BBC Three makes in engaging a younger adult audience (16-34 year olds) with issues which are important to all of us. It achieves its most important purposes through current affairs and factual output which are distinctively different from other programming available on television in the UK.

While the VLV welcomed the proposals to be more innovative with the iPlayer, reflecting trends in the rest of the market, its response said that it did not believe that this should be at the cost of BBC Three remaining on a broadcast platform. The VLV believes that the BBC's online platforms should play a complementary role to the BBC's broadcast services.

The Trust will carry out a further round of consultation on its provisional conclusions before it reaches any final decisions and the VLV hopes that the BBC Trust will reconsider its position during its second phase consultation later in the summer.

At the same time as its announcement about BBC Three, the Trust turned down the proposal to create a BBC One +1 channel because it would have an adverse impact on the commercial public service broadcasters.

SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN WHITTINGDALE SETS UP BBC CHARTER REVIEW ADVISORY PANEL

John Whittingdale has named the members of his BBC Charter Review Advisory Group - which includes VLV President Colette Bowe. He said that the group will play an important role in the government's plans to deliver a transparent, open and democratic Charter Review. Its remit will be to provide expertise, innovation and advice for the process and policy of the review of the BBC Royal Charter by:

- providing strategic independent oversight and challenge to the Charter Review programme of work; and

- bringing to bear their own personal experience and expertise on the policy debates.

He said that the group has representatives from a range of backgrounds, with different experiences and differing views about the BBC. They are:

- **Dawn Airey** – Senior Vice President of Yahoo's business in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, and formerly Chairman and Chief Executive of Channel 5.

- **Dame Colette Bowe** – Chairman of the Banking Standards Board, President of the Voice of the Listener & Viewer, and former Chair of Ofcom.

- **Andrew Fisher** - Executive Chairman, Shazam.

- **Darren Henley OBE** – CEO of Arts Council England and former Managing Director of Classic FM.

- **Ashley Highfield** – CEO of Johnston Press, one of the largest local media groups in the UK, and former director at the BBC.

- **Alex Mahon** – former CEO of Shine Group, global television content production company.

- **Lopa Patel MBE** - digital entrepreneur and founder/CEO of NewAsianPost.com and Diversity UK.

- **Stewart Purvis CBE** - British broadcaster and academic, and former Editor-in-Chief and CEO of ITN.

Members have been appointed in a voluntary capacity and on the basis of their personal experience, not as representatives of their respective organisations. They will meet up to six times a year, with additional members co-opted as and when required by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

The VLV has become a member of the **Wider Spectrum Group**, an alliance of organisations lobbying in Europe and at the World Radio Conference to ensure that the broadcasters retain sufficient access to spectrum to enable free-to-air television to thrive and to resist the rapacious demands of the mobile telephone operators. Other members include the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and Digital UK.

STARING INTO THE ABYSS

Where will children's TV be in 10 years' time?

Public service, plurality and personalisation

After the BBC's shock funding deal with DCMS and the Treasury, it is sometimes easy to forget that public service broadcasting, and the BBC in particular, are also supposed to serve children and young people. However the young are often forgotten because they don't have a vote and they are less vocal in their protests.

The BBC Trust has already approved the BBC's plans to move BBC Three, a youth-oriented service, online, and at the Children's Media Conference in July, BBC Children's Head Alice Webb did not rule out a similar online move for the BBC's children's services. It is true that the BBC accounts for almost all the UK's spend on original children's programming, but its budgets are under pressure, as they have always been, and there are few signs that others in the industry have the will or the finances to make up the funding gap that occurred when ITV virtually withdrew from the children's sector in 2006. Much hope is being placed on government tax breaks for animation and live action children's programming, but tax breaks, while welcome, have a tendency to support more globalised content than content aimed specifically at a UK audience.

At a crucial time for children's television in the UK and reflecting the new battleground for young audiences between "traditional" television, video on demand services and social media platforms, the VLV, the Children's Media Foundation and the University of Westminster have joined forces to bring you key children's content experts to debate what children's television might look like in a decade's time. Where will current policy-making lead the children's audience and what impact is this likely to have on the range and diversity of children's content provision in the long term? As the Government appoints an industry advisory group to deliver an apparently 'transparent, open and democratic Charter Review' (in stark contrast to the recent funding settlement), will children and young people be once again pushed to the margins, or is there scope to forge better public service provision for children that also meets changes in the media landscape?

This is a public-facing event that will take place on 3 September, from 6-9pm at the University of Westminster's Marylebone Campus (opposite Baker Street Tube). We expect it to feed into the discussion of children's television as well as the debate about the future of children's services on the BBC as part of Charter Renewal.

Professor Jeanette Steemers, VLV Trustee

VLV MEMBERS' VIEWS ABOUT OVER 75s LICENCES, THE PROCESS OF BBC CHARTER REVIEW AND WHAT REALLY MATTERS

Here is a selection from emails VLV has received from members and others over the past three weeks. And we've had new members joining! Please note that these are individuals' views and do not necessarily reflect those of VLV as an organisation.

- I strongly support your initiative on behalf of the VLV. The government has behaved appallingly (what's new?), but it also highlights a point I have been trying to make at VLV meetings for several years, which is that under successive arrangements of the nature and chairmanship of the BBC Trust, at no time have ordinary licence-fee payers felt they had anyone representing their interests. No-one has spoken for licence-fee payers in the way that for example, elected representatives could. Trust members specifically appointed to do that job would have been another way to go about it. It may well be too late for licence-fee payers as a whole to have any say at all except via their local MPs, with the message adjusted by the political party machines. I am very suspicious of the motives of this government and I see no sign that anyone wants licence-fee payers any say at all.
- We should certainly protest in the strongest possible terms. At the same time, why is it so difficult for the Government to arrange for licence fee to be collected from all those watching BBC on non-TV devices? I don't agree with a household blank charge because it is regressive - better to charge a flat fee for every device that is capable of receiving the BBC.
- Just as it is ridiculous for the Government to be giving £200 per year in "winter fuel allowance" to everyone over 70, so it is madness for everyone over 75 to be let off the BBC licence tax. There has to be a way to means-test these well-meant but unaffordable give-aways. If it is a Government decision to let people off the BBC tax, then it ought to be up to the Government to administer it.

RADIO TIMES ASKS FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

Radio Times 1 - 7 August asks you for your views on the BBC - you can answer online at radiotimes.com/bbcviews. In the same issue David Butcher offers ways for the BBC to save money (*page 41*).

- I too am absolutely outraged at this move, and especially the sneaky way it was done. I'm perfectly able, and willing, to pay for myself, but I cannot see how to 'refund' this sum to the BBC (when the time comes). There needs to be a way to opt in. The whole attack on the BBC is utterly reprehensible – it is as if the nation-as-a-whole had no idea of the treasure at its heart, whereas the individuals in the nation value it in the highest degree. It is far too precious to be the plaything of politicians who know the cost of everything and the value of nothing.

Almost the worst aspect of the anti-Beeb campaign is the way it is being forced to have one eye (at least) watching its back and is therefore trimming its philosophy, its way of doing things, and what it ought to be doing. Here's wishing you success in defending our precious asset.

- It should have been discussed – too much to hope for in present circumstances. However, I suggested 2/3 years ago that over 75s should send their licence fee equivalent to VLV, I did that. I am inclined, now, as the Government proposal will be implemented without doubt, to suggest that those many, many over 75s who can afford the fee should send it to the BBC. It would at least indicate our commitment to the BBC.

- I too think this is an utterly disgraceful move, especially after making BBC pay for the World Service. Free licences were a government bit of welfare and that's where they should stay. I deeply regret the way the BBC is being bullied and moreover has to cave under in the face of it. Please continue to make representations on our behalf. I would gladly pay the licence fee back to the BBC if they had a suitable account for it – I don't know what else I could do!

- It's a disgrace. Most pensioners are happy to pay the fee (at 40p a day it is ludicrously cheap) and only pensioners on very low income need it paid for them. To facilitate all of this it could be done on our self-assessed tax returns. Stupid government don't they realise they are biting off the hand that on the whole supports them! All major journalists on BBC TV and Radio are certainly not on the left!

- If I remember correctly, the free TV licence for those over 75 years of age was given as a sweetener to compensate for the lack of an increase in the state pension at that time. For this reason, I feel that the government should continue to fund this, and not the BBC.

- I fully agree with Colin Browne's statement that the decision by the Secretary of State on funding the licence fee for the over 75s is "disgraceful". There has been no consultation with BBC licence payers. In addition the former Chairman of the BBC, Christopher Bland, put the issue correctly when he said that remission of the fee for the elderly was a matter of government social policy and should be paid for by the government, not by the licence fee payers. The Chairman of the Trust and the DG of the BBC have both made a bad mistake in principle, compromising the BBC's independence, in accepting this dictat from the government.

- Could I suggest a resistance campaign by OAPs or at the very least the possibility of being able to opt out of the Government's cut by continuing to pay the licence fee post 75?

The VLV welcomes your comments and it helps us to formulate responses to all the current consultations. It really matters that the Government, regulators and broadcasters listen to the voice of their audiences and licence fee payers.

**FORMER VLV BOARD MEMBER
PROFESSOR BRIAN GROOMBRIDGE**



Professor Brian Groombridge died early in July 2015. He was a great supporter of VLV, had been a board director for a time and come to conferences until recently. He was Head of Educational

Services at the IBA, Professor of Adult Education and Director of Extra-Mural Studies at the University of London. He worked with the EBU to shape their adult education programming and worked very closely with the University of Finland. He co-founded the University of the 3rd Age - U3A - and was the first chairman of U3A in London. He argued tirelessly for 50 years on behalf of older learners and was influencing public policy into his 80s. He was Professor Emeritus of the Educational Centres Association. Professor Jay Blumer said "I've known a few people (but not all that many) in my long life who have held the right values and reflected them fully in everything they did and in all their personal relations, and in my book Brian was tops in that regard."

VOICE OF THE LISTENER & VIEWER AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN BROADCASTING

Distinguished broadcasters and programme makers joined conference delegates in June to receive their VLV Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting 2014, presented by James Naughtie, a previous award winner himself.

Now in their 23rd year VLV's Awards are especially valued by their recipients. VLV Chairman Colin Browne said: "The wide range of nominations proposed by our members illustrate the tremendous quality and diversity to be found in UK broadcasting. Winners tell us they particularly value these awards as they are chosen by the people who really matter - engaged listeners and viewers."

This year the categories were slightly changed to reflect the changing media landscape. The VLV was delighted that Arqiva has supported three new awards - for Digital Free to Air TV Channel of the Year, Digital Radio Station of the Year and for the Most Innovative Contribution to the Use of Digital Media.

This is the full list of VLV Awards (nominated and voted for by VLV members)

Radio



Best Radio Drama and Comedy Programme: *The News Quiz*, BBC Radio 4 (left)

Best Radio Factual Programme: *Germany: Memories of a Nation*, BBC Radio 4

Best Radio Music and Arts Programme: *Composer of the Week*, BBC Radio 3

Best individual contribution to Radio: Martha Kearney

VLV Arqiva Digital Radio Station of the Year: BBC World Service

Television



Best TV Drama Programme: *Downton Abbey*, ITV

Best TV Factual Programme: *Countryfile*, BBC One

Best TV Children's Programme: *Newsround*, CBBC

Best TV Entertainment Programme: *Strictly Come Dancing*, BBC One

Best Individual Contribution to Television:

Professor Brian Cox OBE

VLV Arqiva Digital free to air TV Channel Station of the Year:

BBC News Channel HD



Special Awards

The VLV Naomi Sargent Award: Michael Mosley who, as a science producer has worked with presenters who ranged from Lord Winston to Jeremy Clarkson. More recently, as a presenter of medical programmes, he has submitted himself to research which revealed that he shares characteristics with psychopaths, and has popularised the 5.2 diet.

The VLV Arqiva Most Innovative Contribution to the Use of Digital Media: *Springwatch*

The Special Award went to BBC Two's *Springwatch* which, together with its sister programmes *Autumnwatch* and *Winterwatch*, makes extensive use of social media, the Red Button, live webcams, linked websites reaching out beyond the live programmes so that people can learn and engage beyond transmission. The programme's Facebook page has recorded 172,000 'likes' and they have 119,000 followers on Twitter. They also make good use of Flickr, Instagram and Soundcloud.

The VLV Robert Radio Special Award: Neil MacGregor OM, AO, FSA, the retiring British Museum Director for his outstanding radio series *Germany: memories of a nation* and his *History of the World in 100 Objects*.

The VLV Special Trustees Award: Gillian Reynolds MBE




The VLV Special Award, awarded by the Trustees, went this year to journalist and broadcaster Gillian Reynolds MBE in recognition of her support for the concept of public service broadcasting, and of course in particular for radio.

Radio critic of *The Daily Telegraph* since 1975, she previously held the same post at *The Guardian* for seven years. In between these two jobs she was the first programme controller of Radio City in Liverpool. She has also been a great supporter of the VLV from its foundation.

Advertisements

Please refer to VLV when responding to advertisements. VLV cannot accept any liability or complaint in regard to the following offers. The charge for classified ads is 30p per word, 20p for members. Please send typed copy with a cheque payable to VLV. For display space please contact Sue Washbrook on 01474 338716.



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VLV Address and Office Hours

Tuesday to Thursday
9.30 am to 3.30 pm
Tel: 01474 338716

All mail should be sent to:

The Old Rectory Business Centre
Springhead Road
Northfleet
Kent DA11 8HN
Administrator: Sue Washbrook
Sue.washbrook@vlv.org.uk

Keeping up to date with the BBC Charter Review

VLV will be sending out regular updates by email - so please ensure that Sue Washbrook has your up-to-date email address or else keep looking at the website www.vlv.org.uk

Pre-1922 Music

Pre-1922 Music

Approx. 80 unlabelled reel tapes recorded on REVOX machine offered for a contribution to "Help Musicians UK" Also AKAI 4000DS and Tandberg 3600XD tape recorders £100 o.n.o. email szomba@btinternet.com

Diary Dates

VLV will be announcing other events over the next few months - watch email alerts and the website for details

Thursday 3 September 2015
Staring into the Abyss - Where will children's TV be in 10 years' time?

Hosted and organised by the University of Westminster in association with VLV and CMF
University of Westminster Marylebone Campus
6.00 pm - 9.00 pm

Tickets available online on www.thechildrensmediafoundation.org

Or use enclosed booking form.
Free for VLV Members

Tuesday 1 December 2015

VLV's Autumn Conference

Keynote Speaker: **Rona Fairhead**,
Chairman of the BBC Trust
Further details will be announced nearer the time

For other events during the year please look at the website www.vlv.org.uk

BBC Charter Review VLV's Questionnaire

VLV Members will have had a questionnaire included with this mailing. Do please complete it and return your response before **1 September 2015** to VLV.



NEW SUBSCRIPTION / DONATION / CHANGE OF ADDRESS* (delete as appropriate)

VLV Subscription - Individual £30 Joint (two at same address) £45 Student e-membership £10
Please make cheques payable to VLV and send to The Old Rectory Business Centre, Springhead Road, Northfleet, Kent DA11 8HN

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