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The Radio Listener's Guide 2006

- 160 pages
- Frequencies for all BBC and commercial radio stations, plus DAB digital transmitter details.
- Radio Reviews Independent reviews of over 130 radios including DAB digital radios.
- News from both BBC and commercial radio stations.
- Digital Radio (DAB) The latest news and information.
- Sky and Freeview radio information and channel lists.
- Advice showing how to get the best from your radio.

Ordering details:

The guides cost £5.95 each - (this includes postage and packing). Please make your cheques payable to Radio Listener's Guide, and send them to:
Radio Listener's Guide, PO Box 888
Plymouth PL8 1YJ



The Television Viewer's Guide 2006

- 160 pages
- Digital TV details of what you need to pick up Sky, Freeview or cable
- Transmitter sites for all analogue and digital television transmitters.
- Equipment advice covering TV sets, VCRs, DVD players and recorders, Sky and Freeview.
- Freeview set-top box guide.
- Channel lists for Sky and Freeview.
- Advice covering aerial installation, connecting equipment and avoiding picture problems.
- News about analogue to digital switchover, high-definition TV and TV over broadband.

Diary Dates

Wednesday 26 April

VLV Spring Conference
The Royal Society, London SW1
10.30am – 5.00pm

Wednesday 26 April

Presentation of VLV's Awards for Excellence In Broadcasting
The Royal Society, London SW1
1.45pm – 2.30pm

Thursday, 11 May

An Evening with Joan Bakewell
One Whitehall Place,
London SW1
6.30pm – 8.20pm

Thursday, 18 May

VLV Evening Seminar with Mark Thompson, BBC Director General
Overseas House, Park Place
London SW1.
6.00pm – 8.00pm
please note revised date

Friday, 9 June

VLV postponed visit to ITV
Newsroom Newcastle
12.45pm

Thursday, 22 June

VLV postponed visit to BBC Radio
Leicester. Leicester
11.30am

Thursday, 6 July*

VLV Summer Conference
OverSeas House
Park Place, London SW1
*to be confirmed

Thursday, 6 July*

VLV Summer Reception
London

Tuesday, 11 July

An Evening with Adam Hart-Davis
One Whitehall Place, London SW1
6.30pm – 8.20pm

Thursday, 2 November

VLV's Annual Conference on
Children's Broadcasting
The Royal Society, London SW1
9.45am – 5.00pm

Spring Competition

You could win a copy of Michael Berkeley's Private Passions by answering the question below.

Question: On which channel is Michael Berkeley's programme Private Passions broadcast?

Replies on a postcard to: Spring Competition, VLV, 101 King's Drive, Gravesend, DA12 5BQ. Or by email to: info@vlv.org.uk by 1st June 2006. The Editor's decision is final.

WINTER COMPETITION – Delia's How to Cook – Book Three

Winner: PL Barnard, Sudbury, Suffolk



VLV GIFT MEMBERSHIP

Give VLV membership as a gift to a friend or relative. We will add an appropriate greetings card and a FREE copy of the Radio or TV User's Guide worth £5.95.

Single member: £14.50
Two at same address: £22.50
Overseas: £21.50



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A for Andromeda and Adam Adamant Lives!

Were you a fan of these programmes in the 60's? Do you have any videos, photographs, audio recordings, memorabilia or a story to tell about the making of the Andromeda series or about Adam Adamant? As little exists in the archive, the BBC would like to hear from you for a documentary and DVD being made this year.

Please contact Ralph Montague, Producer DVD Features on 020 8743 8000, via VLV, or by email, care of claire.barrett@bbc.co.uk



**Voice of the
Listener & Viewer**

Bulletin

Working for Quality and Diversity in Broadcasting

Spring 2006

Issue 85

Controller BBC 1 and Chief Executive Channel 4 will speak at VLV's Spring Conference

Wednesday, 26 April

The Royal Society, Carlton House Terrace, London SW1

After the BBC Charter: What Future for Pluralism in Public Service Broadcasting?



Peter Fincham, Controller BBC 1, will give the morning keynote speech at 11.00am: with Matt Wells, Guardian Media Editor, in the chair. His theme will be *Mainstream Television in a Multi-channel World*. He will consider the future role of the BBC's flagship channel and take questions.

Now that the White Paper has set out a clear role for the BBC over the next decade, it is important to consider how plurality of PSB provision may be sustained in the years ahead. Andy Duncan will set out his views on public service broadcasting and the central role that Channel 4 will play as we move towards a fully digital world and take questions.

The conference takes place just two days before the end of the public consultation on the Government White Paper on BBC Charter Review and with just two years before the process of switching off of analogue television transmissions begins in Border region. A capacity audience is anticipated comprising broadcasters, regulators, academics, consumer and civil society representatives and VLV members, listeners and viewers.



Andy Duncan, Chief Executive of Channel 4 will give the afternoon keynote speech at 2.45pm. Kate Bulkley, journalist, broadcaster and writer on new technology, will be in the chair. His theme will be *Public service plurality in the digital age*.

Tickets available from VLV office or website.
Corporate £100, charities £55,
individual concessions £25, students £12

After the Charter, what Plans for the BBC?

Thursday, 18 May

Over Seas House, Park Place, St James, London SW1. 6.00 for 6.30pm



Mark Thompson, BBC Director General will be the speaker at the last of VLV's Evening Seminars on the Government White Paper on BBC Charter Review.

The formal consultation on the Government

White Paper will have ended by the time that the BBC Director General speaks to VLV members and guests in May but it is highly unlikely that the new Charter will have been signed by then. Nevertheless we expect him to take the opportunity to outline his vision for the future

of the BBC and to give his views on its role and funding in the much more competitive environment to come. Jocelyn Hay, VLV Chairman will take the chair.

Tickets available from VLV office or website.
£15, include wine reception from 6pm

New Director for VLV



For the first time, VLV has appointed a full-time Director. This very important step in the development of the organisation has been made possible by the support of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The Board of VLV is extremely grateful

for the Foundation's generosity, an expression of confidence in the role which the organisation continues to play within the broadcasting community.

Peter Blackman is to take up his post on 19th June. He has previously held positions as Assistant Director, British Bankers' Association; Executive Committee Chairman and Head of Public Relations for the Small Firms Lead Body, and Director of the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) Association. His experience also includes extensive management, business and financial consultancy and the provision of training to a range of organisations. His current appointment is as Director of the Churches' Media Council. He is married with two grown-up children and an 18-month old granddaughter.

VLV chairman, Jocelyn Hay, announcing the appointment, expressed her delight at welcoming Mr Blackman. She said that VLV needs to develop fast to confront changes in the rapidly changing media field and it must prepare itself for an even more important role as advocate for the citizen and consumer interests in broadcasting. Mr Blackman brings, she said, 'a range of experience which will be essential as VLV expands to meet the increasing demands placed upon it.'

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PD James and John Simpson gave the first of VLV's Lectures in 2006

Voice of the Listener & Viewer

Working for Quality and Diversity in British Broadcasting

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which supports VLV's educational work

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VLV office hours:

9.00am - 5.00pm Mon-Thurs

Voice of the Listener & Viewer Ltd (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 in broadcasting.

VLV does not handle complaints.

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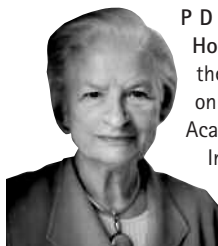
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P D James (Baroness James of Holland Park OBE) opened the VLV 2006 Lecture series on 31 January at the British Academy in London SW1.

In a revealing discussion with Sue Macgregor, the broadcaster and journalist so sorely

missed from the Today programme, Lady James talked about the very great privilege she felt in being first a member of the BBC's General Advisory Committee and then a BBC Governor. She felt the role of the BBC would be even more important in future and that it was absolutely essential for the BBC to set the highest standards in all areas of broadcasting but this was especially so in news and journalism.

John Simpson, the BBC's World Affairs Editor gave the second in the series on 28 March to a packed audience at One Whitehall Place, London SW1. Charles Wheeler, the veteran BBC journalist and broadcaster was in the chair.



John Simpson spoke of his many experiences when reporting from the world's trouble spots. He also felt that the BBC should be setting the standard in all areas but especially news reporting. He felt the Hutton Enquiry was very damaging and deplored the recent cuts in BBC News 24, saying that morale within the BBC had fallen due to constant attacks and recent economies.

James Purnell MP and Sir Christopher Bland spoke at the first of VLV's seminars on the BBC White Paper.



James Purnell MP, Minister for Tourism and the Creative Industries was the speaker in the first of VLV's London Seminars on the Government White Paper on BBC Charter Review on 21 March. In the absence of VLV chair Jocelyn Hay due to illness, VLV Board

Member Professor Vincent Porter took the chair.

In a session lasting well over an hour the Minister explained the thinking behind the White Paper and the fact that it incorporated many of the policies first set out in last year's Green Paper. However, in giving the BBC a ten year Charter and secure funding from the licence fee, he also said it would be up to the BBC to justify a renewal of its Charter and these privileges at the end of that period when the environment would be much more competitive.

Sir Christopher Bland was the speaker in the second of the London series on the White Paper just two days later on 23 March. Professor Patrick Barwise of the London Business School was in the chair.



Sir Christopher, Chairman of BT and a former chair of both London Weekend Television and of the BBC, gave qualified support to the proposals in the White Paper, with reservations over some of those pertaining to future BBC governance. He also felt that the BBC must justify its role and status not only by setting the highest standards but by being distinctive.

Carol Catley has accepted an invitation to join the Board of VLV



Carol, who has a BA Hons degree from the Open University, has worked and travelled widely as a journalist in a variety of roles, both in this country and overseas.

For a decade in the eighties, she collaborated with her late husband in producing a fortnightly newsletter on African political and financial affairs. She has a particular interest in Art and set up the Goodwill Art Service which has now been providing resources for teachers for the past thirty years. Taking this interest in education forward, she is also conscious of the need for media and technical literacy in the converging media environment and is one of the members who represents VLV at events on this increasingly important subject.

VLV Visit to ITV News

A party of VLV members visited ITV Meridian at Whiteley (Hants) on 2 March. They were welcomed by Alison Pope, Head of Regional Affairs, and she and other members of staff explained the role of this regional headquarters, opened in December 2004 with a complement of about 150. The Whiteley Centre, which replaced three local centres, broadcasts three local news bulletins, each covering a different area of South East England, and commissions some other Meridian programmes.



Before the end of this most interesting and enjoyable visit, the party were able to watch the broadcasting of the Meridian lunchtime news and weather forecast from studios in the building.

VLV's Summer Lecture Programme



Joan Bakewell, the journalist and television presenter, will give the next in VLV's evening lecture series at One Whitehall Place, on Tuesday, 9 May. Sue Cook, broadcaster and journalist will take the chair. The evening will start with a wine reception and book signing session.

Joan Bakewell first became known for her work on Late Night Line-Up in the sixties and seventies when she was irreverently dubbed 'The thinking man's crumpet' by the late Frank Muir. Since then her career has involved many television appearances and also radio, including presenting the documentary series Heart of the Matter. Her autobiography The Centre of the Bed was published in 2004.

Adam Hart-Davis will be the speaker on Tuesday, 11 July, also at One Whitehall Place starting at 6.30pm with a wine reception and book signing session.

Adam Hart-Davis, author, broadcaster and photographer is well-known for his quirky personality. His TV career began with Yorkshire Television in 1977. He has since gone on to become one of the best-known presenters of popular science and history programmes. He is most-loved, perhaps, for his television series Local Heroes, What the Romans did for Us and its sequels: What the Victorians, Stuarts, Tudors and Ancients did for Us.



VLV's Summer Conference

Thursday 6 July
Over Seas House, Park Place,
London SW1

VLV's Summer Conference will consider the relationship between broadcasting and the arts.

Tony Hall, Executive Director of the Royal Opera House, threw down a challenge in the Winter edition of this Bulletin regarding better collaboration between those running Britain's major cultural institutions such as his own, the Royal Ballet, British Museum, Royal Philharmonic, National Gallery and Royal Shakespeare Company to collaborate more closely in packaging, presenting and promoting the UK's cultural heritage to the rest of the world.

Britain has such a uniquely rich cultural heritage and choice of performances and venues - far greater than any other capital, even New York. But do we do enough to promote it? Broadcasting is the ideal medium and although the BBC, the World Service, Channel 4 and ITV already do a lot in their own individual ways, couldn't they co-operate more closely and thus achieve even more? Sir Christopher Frayling, Chairman of the Arts Council has voiced much the same concerns so where do we go from here? Is there something VLV can do to facilitate better co-operation between these often competing institutions, the broadcasters and those who simply enjoy the fruits of their labour?

VLV's Summer Conference will explore these and other arts themes so make sure you do not miss what promises to be a rare and stimulating event. We are not in a position to confirm the final speakers as we go to press but more information will be available shortly so do keep in touch, via the office or via our website: www.vlv.org.uk.

VLV's 2005 Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting

Michael Palin, broadcaster, actor and comedian, himself one of last year's winners, will present VLV's 2005 Awards during the Spring Conference at the Royal Society in London on Wednesday, 26 April.

One of the distinguishing marks of VLV's Awards is that the winners take particular pleasure in them because they are chosen by VLV members - listeners and viewers - not by their industry peers. The winners also take particular trouble to collect them in person. Among those short-listed this year are Jeremy Paxman, Jon Snow, Charles Wheeler, Dan Cruikshank, Nick Clarke and Peter Day.

The Awards are sponsored by the Voice of the Listener Trust and organised by VLV members, John & Carey Clark. The handsome engraved crystal trophies are kindly donated by Dartington Crystal.



VLV Summer Reception

London, Thursday 6 July

We are also planning a summer social event in conjunction with the conference. The aim is to provide an entertaining break at which members and their guests can meet and socialise and also to raise some funds for our campaigning work. Again, the details have yet to be confirmed but will be available via our website and the office.



Who's Who & What's What in Broadcasting

Scottish Television has agreed with Ofcom to aid the establishment of the proposed Gaelic Television channel.

S4C: Iona Jones has succeeded Huw Jones as Chief Executive of S4C, the Welsh fourth channel.

BBC: Rober Mosey moved from Controller of BBC Radio Five Live to become Director of BBC Sport.

Peter Horocks has moved from BBC News 24 to become Editor of Television News.

Kevin Bakhurst replaces him as Controller of BBC News 24.

Ceri Thomas has succeeded Kevin Marsh as Editor of Radio 4's Today programme who moves to the BBC journalism training centre.

Ofcom: Lord (David) Currie of Marylebone has been re-appointed chair of the Ofcom Board for a further three years; Ian Hargreaves and Sara Nathan have been re-appointed to the Ofcom Board

Ofcom Content Board: Adam Singer has been appointed Deputy Chair of the Content Board (Philip Graf replaced Richard Hooper as chair in January); Kath Worrall has been appointed chair of the Fairness Committee.

Editorial Comment



The Government White Paper on BBC Charter Review is at first sight reassuring for the future of the BBC and its funding through the licence-fee. We are glad because the BBC is not only the nation's greatest patron of the arts, but increasingly a stout bulwark of British democracy.

It would be foolish, however, for anyone, in the BBC or VLV, to feel complacent. The new BBC Charter and Agreement are not yet signed. There could still be changes. Even more in doubt is the level at which the promised licence-settlement will be fixed. It is possible that the proposal to

top-slice the licence revenue in the interests of other broadcasters will be revived. Also possible is some success for the lobbying by commercial interests to cap the BBC's income to maintain what they claim is fair competition. And if these immediate concerns are resolved, James Purnell MP, the Minister responsible for broadcasting and the creative industries, warned a VLV seminar last month that, in ten years' time, it will be up to the BBC to earn its right to its privileged status and assured funding beyond that date.

The BBC's role and funding, in any case, is to come under renewed scrutiny long before that. Ofcom, the communications regulator, will hold a review of all the terrestrial public service television channels – including the BBC – in just four years' time (after the next general election).

The BBC's commercial rivals, already active as we have seen, are lobbying for restrictions on the BBC's income, but also on the range of its activities, claiming that their own business plans and commercial activities are at risk and, with them, their ability to produce 'public service' programming.

VLV will need to be vigilant, therefore, in its advocacy on behalf of listeners and viewers not only over these issues, but also because of the BBC's dependence on the licence fee, first, to be advertising free and second, to maintain its unique radio services. Other issues are raised by digital switch-over, a process beginning in two years time and fraught with difficulties, as you will see elsewhere in this Bulletin.

Lucy King

BBC Charter Review – The Government White Paper



The BBC White Paper is a tricky document to analyse. The good news is that the BBC has been promised a further ten years of licence-fee funded existence, which means the survival of one of the world's great cultural and journalistic institutions. So VLV members, who value the BBC's radio

services and the benefits of watching advertisement-free programmes, can breathe a sigh of relief.

The apparent price, however, of the renewed Charter and Licence – and the bad news – is that the BBC is now tasked with a range of digital switchover responsibilities which threaten the BBC's constitutional independence by making of it an

administrative agency of Government, leading switchover and carrying the costs of targeted assistance to the disabled. Bad too is

the fact that the BBC will, for the first time, be subject to permanent scrutiny by the National Audit Office, and its political master, the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons.

These developments herald a worse deal for the individual licence-payer. Previously everyone paid the same and had the same entitlement. Now most will pay more to subsidise a small minority. It may be good social policy to help vulnerable viewers switch from analogue to digital, but it should not be down to the BBC. That will violate the proven principles of the BBC accountability link with the public:

universality, equality, transparency. No longer shall we have a straightforward licence fee, but one diluted by what amounts to a stealth tax funding a government-driven switch from analogue to digital television broadcasting. This portion of the 'licence fee' should, we believe, properly have come out of the budget of the Department for Work and Pensions, and VLV is gratified to note that both the House of Lords Committee on the Review of the BBC Charter, and the House of Commons Committee on Culture Media and Sport, now share our view.

We reject the Government view, as recently expressed in the House of Lords by Viscount Davies of Oldham, that this is not social welfare but technical help. If it were merely the latter, then logically it should be open to everyone. Nobody, not even the BBC, has any precise idea of how much this 'technical help' will cost each licence payer, although the Daily Mail recently estimated it would be an additional £38.

Returning to the broad picture, VLV feels that, in supporting the Government's proclaimed end – a renewed Charter and Licence-fee for a strengthened BBC – it would be churlish not to give a fair wind to the proclaimed means of achieving that end. We appreciate the attempt to develop, through the proposed BBC Trust, a more satisfactory mechanism for combining autonomy and accountability. We believe too, however, that we best serve the public interest by giving voice to our reservations. In some important respects the new 'constitution' signally fails to resolve the continuing conundrum around the BBC

sovereign body – a Trust facing both inwards and outwards – and the tensions between the sovereign body (whether Trust or Governors) and the Executive Board: what the other media players see as the "poacher-gamekeeper" dilemma. This conundrum raises a number of questions yet to be fully debated. When the Trust issues service licences for programmes, how much discretion has the Board in delivering them? Before a court of law, or a complaints commission, who carries liability as editor and publisher? Where precisely lies ownership of the BBC brand? How will delivery of public accountability be measured?

The devil is in the detail of these and other questions. In the interests of BBC licence-payers – and of UK public service broadcasting as a whole – it is vital that we get robust and satisfactory answers to them. We encourage our members to make their views known to us or to the Government in this crucial period before Parliament proceeds to a vote. Details of the Draft Charter and Agreement can be viewed on the DCMS web-site: www.culture.gsi.gov.uk VLV as a body will, of course, be submitting its views. Individual members wishing to respond, should note the April 28 deadline.

VLV opposes the Government's aim to make licence fee payers meet the costs of switching vulnerable viewers to digital

VLV Responses to Consultations:

VLV has responded to:
European Union re Proposed Revisions to the **TWTF Directive** – February.

Ofcom's Annual Plan – February.

Ofcom: re Product Placement in Television Programmes – March.

Ofcom: Analysis questionnaire on Spectrum Use – March.

Current Consultations:

DCMS

BBC Charter Review: **Deadline 28 April.**

For further information call: 020 7211 6200 or visit: www.bbccharterreview.org.uk

Send responses to: BBC Charter Review Consultation, DCMS, 2-4 Cockspur Street, London SW1Y 5DH or by email to: bbccharterreview@culture.gsi.gov.uk

Ofcom

Retail Price Controls Explanatory Statement and Proposals: **Deadline 30 June**

Ofcom's Consumer Policy: **Deadline 19 April.**

Ofcom's proposal to make regulations in connection with the award of 412-414 MHz paired with 422-424 MHz. **Deadline 17 May.**

The sponsorship of television channels and radio stations: **Deadline 20 April.**

Regulation of VoIP Services: **Deadline 30 May.**

TV advertising of food and drink products to children – Options for new restrictions: **Deadline 6 June.**

Television access services review: **Deadline 8 June.**

TV Appeals for Donations to Make Programmes or Fund Services: **Deadline 15 June.**

Award of available spectrum: 1452 – 1492 MHz 2: **Deadline 9 June.**

BBC News 24 – What the Future Holds by Guest Contributor, Kevin Bakhurst, Controller, BBC News 24



Now is the time for the BBC to look to the future and set out our creative vision for the next ten years of public service broadcasting, paid for by the Licence Fee. For BBC News, that future is exciting – yet it is a real challenge.

The BBC1 bulletins remain our biggest audience programmes and are still key to our reputation. But increasingly, our audiences are demanding the news when they want it and they are looking to make their contributions to debate and coverage.

So the vision for BBC News over the next ten years is focused increasingly on what we call 'News on Demand' – that is news when you want it and how you want it. We are putting more resources and effort into the BBC News website, news on mobile phones, interactive news and our 24 hour TV News channel – BBC News 24.

In many ways, that is why I chose to leave

the Ten O'Clock News in January this year after a fantastic two years as Editor to become Controller of News 24. The channel is in very good shape and we have had a successful few months. News 24 won the Royal Television Society News Channel of the Year award in March this year for the first time: the judges said News 24 had come of age. News 24 now reaches around 5.9 million people every week against 4.1 million who watch Sky News.

However, we're not complacent and exciting changes are in the pipeline at News 24. We have a terrific new line-up of presenters starting on April 10 that which makes the most of our existing talent but brings in new household BBC faces like Huw Edwards, Emily Maitlis and Ben Brown. The BBC's top management has made it clear that News 24 is now the main priority for BBC News and we are using the top BBC correspondents in the UK and around the world. Also from April, News 24 will show the One, Six and Ten O'Clock News bulletins.

This is all part of my vision to establish News 24 as clearly the best News Channel in the UK. We should be a showcase for the very best of BBC journalism. Our audiences should continue to

expect fast, accurate and impartial news from a news provider with no vested interests. But they should also find ambitious international coverage to provide a greater understanding of our world; more comprehensive coverage of business and sport; presentation from the scene of major news stories; a greater depth and range of UK stories from around the country. In short – more ambitious journalism.

News 24 should also establish a reputation for a new kind of breaking news: it's not simply a race with Sky to see who can put news agency copy on the air fastest. I want us to break original news stories and we have started doing this, using our specialist correspondents and bureaux in the UK and around the world. We were first to tell viewers that Charles Kennedy was going to resign when our Political Editor, Nick Robinson had the story. We were first to confirm from our Baghdad Correspondent Andrew North that Norman Kember had been released.

It is my hope that BBC News 24 will play a key role in defining the reputation of BBC News in the years to come: News 24 will provide a unique service to our viewers and licence payers in this information-rich age: a service that deepens understanding of the world around us and brings reliable, fast and accurate news – when you want it – in a truly compelling way.

digital update

With only two years before analogue TV signals are switched-off in Border Region, the pace is accelerating. Several major reports have been published in the last quarter, each of which raises – or in some cases fails to raise – issues of importance to viewers and consumers. We are still assessing the implications of these highly technical matters and will give detailed summary and comment in the next Bulletin. More than half of Border Region, for instance, lies in Scotland where planning permission for the erection of satellite dishes is a devolved matter. The relaxations introduced in England and Wales in December 2005, therefore, will not apply unless endorsed by the Scottish Executive.

Meanwhile we have other concerns about how things are going. They arise, for example, from the likely cost of helping vulnerable viewers to make the switch-over and the fact that, even after analogue switch-off, many viewers may not be in a position to receive the free-to-air Freeview service. In the first case, the Government intends to pass the cost to licence fee payers, which will affect the scale of the next licence-fee settlement. This makes it even more important that the BBC and the public service broadcasters get on with the launch of an independent free-to-air satellite service. Yet it seems that plans for its launch have been put back until the end of the year.

Our concerns can only be increased by an early report of the results of a trial of switch-over recently conducted in Bolton.

When purchasing digital equipment look for the logo



Help for the Over 75's and severely disabled

In this the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) estimates 6.5 million people in these categories, of whom only 35% have converted to digital; half the national average. To assess the cost of the help needed for these viewers a trial was undertaken in one council ward in the Lancashire town of Bolton; 457 households took part.

In most cases family or friends were able to help with the installation but 25% needed a visit from an engineer. It took quite a long time for viewers to be satisfied with the new equipment. One week after installation 78% were very unhappy with the equipment; after four weeks the figure dropped to 42% but after seven weeks over 20% were still not happy. Another finding was that 91.5% opted for the Freeview option. There was dissatisfaction with the 300 page user manual (printed in seven languages) but the DCMS step by step leaflet was very helpful. This supports anecdotal evidence coming to VLV from people of all ages and abilities reporting problems with digital TV receiving equipment. A more positive note was sounded by Tessa Jowell the Secretary of State. She said that once these special groups had Digital TV working in their homes they were very pleased with it.

The special assistance for these target groups is expected to be the equipment to convert one television set and all the assistance needed to install and to use it. Around half of those in the targeted groups are in receipt of income support, a means tested benefit, and the provision will be free. For the remainder a charge equivalent to the cost of the set

top box will be made. This scheme does not help those retired on low incomes under 75. If the provisions of the White Paper on the Renewal of the BBC Charter are implemented, the cost of this scheme, estimated to be £800 million, will be met by the BBC from the licence fee.

Among the reports that we are currently studying are:

House of Lords Select Committee – Further Issues for BBC Charter Review Available from TSO, telephone 0870 600 5522 or at www.tsoshop.co.uk (HL Paper 128-1) price £12 with separate written evidence submitted to the Committee price £34.

House of Commons Culture, Media & Sport Select Committee on Analogue Switch-off Also available from TSO (HC 650-1) price £12.

Consumer Expert Group, (on which VLV is represented) – Digital TV Equipment: Vulnerable Consumer Requirements published by the DCMS and the DTI – for information phone Leen Petrie, RNIB 020 7391 2314 or email: leen.petrie@rnib.org.uk

Ofcom's Annual Work Plan 2006/7 Available from Ofcom 020 7981 3000 or via its website www.ofcom.org.uk

A Householder's Planning Guide for the Installation of Antennas, including Satellite Dishes published by ODPM, December 2005. 020 7844 4400 or email: enquiry@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

Book Reviews



MY TRADE

by Andrew Marr, published by Macmillan 020 7014 6000 h/b price £20. ISBN 1 – 4050 0536X.

Journalists are not taught what news is, says Andrew Marr, the BBC's former Political Editor. In an autobiographical survey of the journalist's trade, he claims that they learn by copying, gradually acquiring a 'nose' for news. While most news is merely based on facts, with journalists obliged to fill space with a fundamentally false sense of urgency and drama, hard news, founded on solid facts, is instantly recognisable. Not only does it stick in the mind, it has an almost physical effect, causing fear, interest, laughter or shock. For example, the death of Diana was hard news, Marr says. So were the first atom bomb, the shooting of John Lennon, the fall of Margaret Thatcher and England's 1996 Cup victory. In a fascinating glimpse of the pressures faced by print and broadcast journalists, he reveals many tricks of the trade, highlighting the ways in which powerful people seek to manipulate the news agenda.



HARM AND OFFENCE IN MEDIA CONTENT

A review of the evidence by Andrea Millwood Hargrave and Sonia Livingstone. Published by Intellect Books, PO Box 862, Bristol BS99 1DE, UK for Enterprise LSE Ltd., price p/b

£9.99. ISBN 1 – 84150 – 161 – 1 Available from booksellers or online at www.publicconnection.org
As debate continues in both Europe and the UK about the future regulation of broadcasting and the internet, pressing questions arise regarding the media's potential for harm, especially in relation to children. This book, made possible by funding from AOL, BBC, BBFC, BT, ICSTIS, ofcom and Vodafone Group Marketing, offers a unique and comprehensive analysis of the latest research on content-related media harm and offence. For the first time, the authors provide a balanced, critical account that brings together findings on both established and newer, interactive media. They argue against asking simple questions about media effects and make a case for contextualising media content and use within a multi-factor, risk-based framework in order to guide future research and policy formation.

Do You Have Strong Views about BBC News Programmes?

Then Newswatch is the programme for you.

Presented by freelance Raymond Snoddy, on BBC News 24 every Friday at 2045hrs and 0045 GMT and repeated on Saturdays at 0745 GMT on BBC Breakfast, Newswatch gives you the chance to put questions directly to the editors and journalists who make BBC news programmes. As well as putting questions you can also find out how editorial decisions involved in the BBC Six O'Clock News, Breakfast News or Panorama are made – including both the subjects chosen and the presentation style. **How to get in touch:** by phone: leave a message on 0870 010 6676 (national rates apply); by post: Newswatch, Room 4252, BBC TV Centre, London W12 7RJ; by email: newswatch@bbc.co.uk

The Future of Broadcasting in Wales: Radio, Television and Public Service in the Digital Age

VLV's 8th annual Welsh conference on 16 March was held at Cardiff in association with the Cardiff School of Journalism Media and Cultural Studies.



A crowded conference heard Huw Roberts, Head of Public Policy BBC Wales, Roger Lewis, Managing Director, ITV Wales, Professor Elan Closs Stephens (left), Chair, S4C, and Rhodri Williams, Director Ofcom Wales, respond to the

White Paper on BBC Charter renewal which had been launched by Tessa Jowell in the House of Commons just two days earlier.

In a lively debate about radio services in Wales, Julie Barton, Editor, BBC Radio Wales, Aled Glynne Davies, Editor, BBC Radio Cymru, Andy Carter, Managing Director, Real Radio, and Andrew Jones, Manager of community station GTFM, reported on the growing vitality, range of programming and expanding audiences for all sectors of radio in Wales: but especially in the Welsh language.



In a session on political reporting in Wales, Assembly Member Jenny Randerson (left) criticised media reporting of the new Assembly, while BBC journalist Wyre Davies regretted the declining television coverage of Welsh affairs, post devolution.

In a speech read in her absence due to family bereavement, VLV Chair, Jocelyn Hay, welcomed the decision to continue funding the BBC by licence fee until 2016. However, she cautioned that 'If the BBC wants to survive in an ever more competitive environment, it must earn and retain its place in the public's heart by serving the public and putting the interests of the audience above all else.' She added: 'I hope it will, because I believe that the quality of all our lives and that of the cultural and democratic life of our nation are affected by it'.

Broadcasting in Scotland: Technology, Culture and Enterprise

VLV's 15th annual conference in Scotland – 23rd February, Edinburgh

VLV's 15th annual conference in Scotland, chaired by Ann Packard, Chair of the Royal Society of Arts Scotland, took place in the prestigious surroundings of the Scottish Parliament by kind permission of the Presiding Officer George Reid and at the invitation of Robin Harper MSP.

Organised in association with Napier University and the Royal Society of Arts, the title enabled a large and committed audience to address the topical issues of digital switchover, BBC Charter Review and the extent to which the Scottish Executive and Parliament had powers and policies that could be applied and be representative of, viewers and listeners in and across Scotland

In this regard, it was significant that the politicians' panel – which concluded the day contained only MSPs from the Scottish National Party, the Scottish Conservatives and the Green Party. We were grateful for their contributions but if devolution is to work better, Scottish Labour and Liberals (the coalition running the Executive) also need to take part in such debates.

Presentations were given by Ford Ennals, CEO of Digital UK, Dr Hugh Mackay, Open University (presented by Robert Beveridge on his behalf as Dr Mackay was ill), Professor Vincent Porter, VLV Board Member, and Trisha McAuley of the Scottish Consumer Council.

Since Border Region is to be the first to achieve digital switch-over in 2008, there was a lively interest and debate surrounding the many issues involved in technical and financial support, reception and technology as well as consideration of the forthcoming consumer publicity which will feature the cartoon character DIGIT-AL as a marketing device.

Unsurprisingly, the feeling of the meeting was that many questions remain to be answered, not least in how the budgets and eligibility for financial and technical support will be determined and shared.

The next session dealt with BBC Charter Review in the context of Scotland. The speakers were Ken McQuarrie, Controller, BBC Scotland, Professor Neil Blain of Paisley University and Jocelyn Hay, Chair of VLV, who outlined VLV's concerns and sought the views of Scottish listeners and viewers to include in VLV's response to the White Paper.

It was hoped that contributions from BBC Scotland to the Network might increase in future.



Ken McQuarrie, Controller BBC Scotland

Letters to the Editor

Letters do not necessarily represent the views of the Association and may be shortened for publication.

THE BBC AND RELIGIOUS BROADCASTS

Jean and Barrie Berkley made a valid point with regard to the disproportionate amount of time allotted to religious broadcasting, most notably evident in *Thought for the Day* (VLV Bulletin 84). A huge number of people in Britain are concerned about moral and ethical issues without their adhering to any religious belief.

The constant failure of the BBC to include the viewpoints of these people in 'TFTD' is both biased and reprehensible. Their unyielding attitude persists despite repeated, polite requests for inclusion from Atheists and Humanists who are as concerned as religious people about moral questions.

Local BBC and independent radio stations tend to be more inclusive, giving non-believers as well as those of religious persuasion, air-time in their equivalent of *Thought for the Day*. (for example, BBC Radio Suffolk and BBC Radio Leeds)

All moderate viewpoints, religious and non-religious, should surely be included but the BBC's carefully named 'Religious and Ethics Department' seems reluctant to give due recognition to the ethical area of their responsibilities. Moral behaviour is not the exclusive preserve of those with religious convictions.

Wendy Sturgess, Somerton, Somerset

In reply to Jean and Barrie Berkley's point about 'Thought for the Day' I rarely find them of low quality.

As to the representation of the views of non-religious people, it seems to me that the vast majority of mainstream programmes do in fact promote a non-religious view of the world. Even the one Christian character in 'Coronation Street' is being portrayed at the moment as having a crisis of faith. I do not think the bias of broadcasting in this country is too religious

Anne Duffy, Greenock, Renfrewshire

A SENSE OF PROPORTION

I cannot quite understand what Jean and Barrie Berkley of Hexham are saying to us in their letter about 'Thought for the Day', other than 'Why don't you become like us, Humanists.' - see letter Winter Bulletin.

I love 'Thought for the Day'. Even the so called religious speakers are ordinary folk inside, sharing their own convictions and concerns, thank God not their problems - we have our fair share of those. Saying 'excessive time is devoted to religion' is hardly appropriate to 'Thought for the Day' which lasts two minutes. Come on, Jean and Barrie!, get your proportions right!

Let's get Christianity straight, and keep it so. It's not just a religion; it's a religious way of life we choose, just as you have chosen Humanism. Let's work together for balance, appropriateness, right from wrong, etc, etc, but on a basis of what is right not who is right - there's a big difference, and a better difference if we are truthful - no matter where we come from and are involved in to better our lot.

God is here to stay, who actually owns and loves, not only the VLV Bulletin, but the whole universe, even, and maybe especially, Humanists like Jean and Barrie, did they but know it.

Bob Bedwell, Sidcup, Kent

DIGITAL ISSUES

ANALOGUE SWITCH-OFF: A SIGNAL CHANGE IN TELEVISION

I have just read the above report published by the Parliamentary Culture, Media & Sport Select Committee to which I made a submission last year. I was dismayed by how few individuals responded to the consultation and sought clarification of the wording in paragraph 4 of the conclusions and recommendations and of paragraph 48 of the text to which it refers.

I queried whether the phrase 'free-to-view' in these paragraphs was a simple mistake where free-to-air is really meant or, if not a mistake, does it really imply

that the putative BBC/ITV free satellite will carry some mainstream channels which will be encrypted? If some mainstream channels are to continue to be encrypted on satellite then this needs to be made very clear to potential free satellite viewers. Encryption carries with it the need for access cards and also provides scope for what is in effect blackmail of the consumer. This is because of the provider's ability, if exercised, to change the encryption algorithm from time to time and to cut off non-compliant consumers in order to extract the regular payment of fees for replacement cards.

Rowena Macdonald, Secretary to the Committee, replied that the author of the report, Graham Danby, wrote 'My understanding is that the BBC Freesat proposal will be both free-to-view and free-to-air. The BBC's evidence implies (Ev 60) that the public service channels (at least) will be unencrypted.'

Mike Howe. By e-mail.

DIGITAL RECEPTION

Do you have any news on the launch of the BBC/ITV Free satellite service please? As an official reception reporter for both the transmitters of ITV and BBC, I called the TV people today due to a loss of picture. It turned out to be scheduled maintenance but I also asked whether our local relay station would go digital when the analogue switch-off happened in 2012 in this area. The engineer thought that it would as all relays are presently being surveyed for that purpose. This is unofficial of course, but hopeful.

Philip Kelly. By e-mail

Editor's Note: the launch of Freesat, - originally planned for this spring - has been postponed until the autumn

THE LEVEL OF THE LICENCE FEE

Having won more years of secure funding the BBC should not have the audacity to ask for a 2.3% rise in the licence fee.... The Corporation must look to its own resources to fund the switch to digital. After all, it is the BBC's idea. I for one did not ask for it and was not asked either. As for upgrading our TV sets, I feel increasingly angry at all the extra expense. My son has digital and I can see little difference in the quality. I would rather have a black and white or no TV altogether.

Mr A Christoforou, Harrow, Middlesex

Editor's note: The switch from analogue to digital transmission is Government policy. The BBC was given a 1.5 % increase in the licence fee at the last settlement in order to enable it to facilitate and promote the move. This it has done through the roll-out of DAB radio and Freeview television. Now the BBC (and the licence payers who fund it) are being asked also to bear the costs of helping vulnerable viewers and those aged over 75 to make the move.

RADIO 4 AND THE ACCURACY OF NEWS

Mark Damazer, Controller of Radio 4, should not get rid of the UK theme. The medley must continue - 30 years have cemented this perfect theme.

Some changes must never happen. Parliament is causing the most horrific changes but we do not wish to mimic the USA at all. 'Olde English' is the best. The BBC's origins are of paramount importance like the World Service. I remember listening to that service in 1940. The truth was naturally given. Long may it - and you - continue that quest.

I have taught students since 1956 and still persist in guiding grand children and other young people to always insist on accurate news, not how governments want us to perceive it. When rulers wish to suppress the truth and pass laws etc, freedom of thought and actions are curbed. The BBC Charter is so precious!

Margaret Murray, Halesworth, Suffolk

I have been a VLV member for some years and have greatly admired your work and enjoyed some of your events. However, failing sight means I can no longer do so.

I find it disappointing too, that there seems to be no voice loud enough to protest about some of the things happening on the radio and television these days. I feel that much of the BBC's energy is being wasted on providing programmes on other (digital) channels, and object to the constant advertisements, both on BBC radio and television for other programmes. I do dislike the BBC 1 idents which seem to come with awful frequency! Between them and the advertisements for channels, which many people cannot get, much time seems to be wasted.

We are constantly told about the benefits of living in a democracy, yet individuals can often have their way no matter how many people object. I am not much concerned about the early morning music on Radio 4 about which there has been such an outcry but would it not have been nice if it had been put forward as a proposal for public comment? So much change seems to be introduced by those new to power for its own sake when surely the customer should have a voice? In Feedback the cool (and arrogant) responses of producers to criticisms of their programmes are depressing: they always know best.

Wishing VLV a strong and assured future and thanks for all the work you do.

Ruth Hampton, Croydon, Surrey

TOO MUCH BACKGROUND MUSIC

I am constantly annoyed by the high volume of background music, drowning narrative in documentary programmes - can you help? I love music and am an amateur orchestral player but I do want to hear what presenters are saying.

Ben Thomas, Wrexham, Clwyd

Editor's Note: We have even had complaints about the high level of background music in the spectacular current series 'Planet Earth'. As VLV does not have the resources to handle individual complaints if you wish to compliment or complain about a programme see below.

How to Comment or Complain about Programmes

BBC: BBC Information or BBC Complaints via www.bbc.co.uk/information or write to them at PO Box 1922, Glasgow G2 3WT. 00870 010 0222 Or to the Chairman at 35 Marylebone High Street, London W1V 4AA.

ITV: via www.itv.com. For England and Wales write to: Gas Street, Birmingham B1 2JT or telephone 0870 600 6766. For Scotland: 0141 300 3000. For Ulster 028 9032 8122.

Channel 4: via www.channel4.com or write to: 124 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2TX. 020 7306 8333.

S4C: via www.s4c.co.uk. Or write to: Parc Ty Glas, Llanishen, Cardiff CF4 5DU. 00870 600 4141

Five: via www.five.tv. Or write to: 22 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LY. 00845 7050 5005.

Ofcom: for complaints about independent radio or television or about taste, decency, harm or offence and privacy on any channel: via contact@ofcom.org.uk. Or write to: Riverside House, 2a Southwark Bridge Road. London SE1 9HA. 0845 456 3000.

Advertising Standards Authority: via www.asa.org.uk or write to ASA, Mid City Place, 71 High Holborn, London WC1V 6QT. 020 7492 2222.

Deadline for next issue: 14th June, 2006

Write, fax or e-mail your letters to the Editor at:
info@vlv.org.uk