

*“Working for quality
and diversity in
British broadcasting”*



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RESPONSE BY VOICE OF THE LISTENER & VIEWER (VLV) TO

THE BBC TRUST REVIEW OF PURPOSE REMITS

6 December 2012

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Voice of the Listener & Viewer (VLV) is an independent, non-profit-making association, free from political, commercial and sectarian affiliations, working for quality and diversity in British broadcasting. VLV represents the interests of listeners and viewers as citizens and consumers across the full range of broadcasting issues. VLV is concerned with the structures, regulation, funding and institutions that underpin the British broadcasting system.

Summary

The Voice of the Listener & Viewer (VLV) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the BBC Trust's Review of the BBC Purpose Remits.

VLV is delighted that the BBC Trust puts at the centre of this review the needs of listeners and viewers in making the BBC Purpose Remits *more easily understood by licence fee payers*¹. While we acknowledge it is important that licence fee payers should be able to understand the remits, it is VLV's understanding that the primary goal of the purpose remits is to explain the priorities the BBC Trust considers most important to the Executive Board of the BBC in order for the BBC to fulfil the public purposes as set out in the BBC Charter.

The comments in this submission are made with this dual ambition in mind – that the goal of this review should be to ensure that the purpose remits clearly express what the BBC needs to do to promote the public purposes as set out in the BBC Charter, both for the understanding of BBC staff and the licence fee payers.

It is VLV's view that the remits need to be comprehensive, understandable and engaging so that BBC staff are inspired to deliver the public purposes as imaginatively and effectively as they possibly can.

In general terms VLV supports the proposals to simplify and shorten the remits to make them more easily understood. However, VLV disagrees with the removal of Annex II.

VLV believes that Annex II strengthens the remits by explaining the rationale behind them and therefore should be retained, because this rationale is not expressed anywhere else in the remits.

¹ BBC Trust, Purpose Remit Consultation, Public Consultation, 13 September 2012, page 4.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES TO THE PURPOSE REMITS

Scoping Paragraphs

We welcome the proposal to replace the current introductory text with shorter, more factual summaries of what the BBC Agreement requires.

Incorporation into one document

We support the suggestion that all the BBC Purpose Remits should be incorporated into one document.

Annex I

We agree that Annex I for each remit is repetitive and that the Trust can include its methodology for monitoring the BBC's delivery of the Public Purposes whenever it releases research findings.

Annex II

VLV is concerned by the proposal to completely remove Annex II for each remit. As stated by the Trust in the purpose remits documentation – *Annex II explains the priorities and how they have been developed in more detail*. We believe this background information should remain an essential element of each purpose remit.

VLV agrees that the *Introduction, Section 1*(Scope of the Public Purpose) and *Section 3* (Priorities) of Annex II should be deleted because they are repetitive of other sections in the purpose remits.

However, *Section 2, Market Context and the BBC*, for each purpose remit should be retained but updated where out of date.

This information is necessary if both the BBC Executive, commissioners and producers within the BBC as well as the public are to understand why the BBC should fulfil the six public purposes at all. It also provides the background and rationale behind each remit and therefore is useful in order to explain the different priorities.

DETAILS OF PLANNED CHANGES TO THE PURPOSE REMITS

Proposed Introduction and Measurement Statement

We approve of the wording of the proposed introduction and measurement statement.

Sustaining Citizenship and Civil Society

Scoping Paragraph: we welcome the strengthening of this paragraph which makes the obligation of the BBC and the Trust more explicit in promoting understanding of the UK political system.

Priority Change: we approve of the change but would prefer that the title of this priority should remain 'encourage' rather than 'enable' which is, in our opinion, a more passive verb.

Promoting education and learning

Scoping Paragraph: we approve of the change to this paragraph.

Stimulating creativity and cultural excellence

Scoping Paragraph: we welcome these changes because promoting interest in culture among new audiences should be a BBC priority.

Priority Change: We approve of this simplification of the second priority.

Representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities

Scoping Paragraph: We approve of these changes because they make the purpose to promote awareness of different cultures and alternative viewpoints more explicit and we believe this is an improvement.

Priority Change: We approve of this change.

Bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK

Scoping Paragraph: We welcome these changes because they make the commitment to this purpose more explicit across all genres.

Priority Change: We understand that this change is due to a desire to discontinue online discussion and debate. We acknowledge that, under current budgetary pressures, this is a necessary cut back and therefore approve of the change.

Helping to deliver to the public the benefit of emerging communications technology

Scoping paragraph: We approve of the changes to the scoping paragraph.

Priority Changes: We approve of all the proposed changes to the purposes.

Sophie Chalk
Board Member
Voice of the Viewer & Listener Ltd

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