

"Working for quality  
and diversity in  
British broadcasting"



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## **Culture Secretary, Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP to address Viewers Tuesday, 8 February, 6-7.30pm in Palace of Westminster.**

**Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt** will speak and take questions from listeners, viewers and media users generally at a Voice of the Listener Westminster Seminar in the House of Commons on **Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> February from 6 - 7.30pm. There is no charge to attend but tickets must be obtained in advance from VLV. See details below.**

**Roger Bolton, Independent Producer and Presenter of Radio 4's *Feedback*** programme, will be in the chair.

The seminar will provide one of the first opportunities for listeners and viewers to hear and question Mr Hunt, Secretary of State for Culture, Media, the Olympics and Sport, on last November's BBC Licence Fee Settlement - including the additional responsibilities laid on the BBC and their implications for licencepayers as the BBC's funders.

The BBC will in future be expected to fund the World Service, the Monitoring Service, Welsh language TV service S4C, the roll-out of broadband in rural areas and the establishment of a new chain of local television stations: all in addition to completing the digital switch-over of existing television and radio services. So, to make the sums add up, what will be cut at the BBC, what will be altered or developed, and by what criteria will these decisions be taken?

In November's Comprehensive Spending Review changes were also announced to Channel 4's status and to the remit of Ofcom, the media regulator.

A particular issue concerning VLV and its members is the abolition of Ofcom's independent Consumer Panel and of the statutory watchdog Consumer Focus. Both are to be subsumed into the Citizens' Advice Bureaux, which have no special expertise in this area, and will not be reinforced by the transfer of any extra funds from Ofcom to match their new important responsibilities. This means there will be no statutory consumer representation in the media and communications area, leaving Voice of the Listener & Viewer as the sole consumer advocate covering the whole crucial field.

Commenting, VLV Honorary President, Jocelyn Hay said: 'These decisions were taken behind closed doors without the public and Parliamentary debate that would normally precede a new Communications Bill. The manner and the nature of the changes greatly concern VLV, raising questions not only about the new demands on the BBC but also about applying licence fee payers' money to finance services previously funded by Government. These changes seriously impact on the democratic process, which is why VLV will, over the coming months, be providing opportunities for licence fee payers to debate them and to hold key decision-makers to account. All these events will be open to the public.' End

For tickets and details contact [Linda.Forbes@VLV.org.uk](mailto:Linda.Forbes@VLV.org.uk) or phone 01474 338711 or 338716