

*"Working for quality  
and diversity in  
British broadcasting"*



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## **VOICE OF LISTENER & VIEWER RESPONSE TO BBC TRUST REVIEW OF THE BBC NEWS CHANNEL AND BBC PARLIAMENT**

*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*

### **INTRODUCTION**

VLV welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We have considered the two services in the light of the BBC Public Purposes as outlined in the BBC 2006 Charter and Agreement. These services are central to the three Public Purposes: sustaining citizenship and civil society; representing the UK, its regions and communities; bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK.

### **THE BBC NEWS CHANNEL**

VLV values the BBC News Channel as an addition to the provision of news on the main TV services. With the reservations below we consider that the service fulfils its service remit to *deliver up-to-the-minute, accurate, impartial and independent news, analysis and insight. It should provide fast and comprehensive coverage of local, UK and international events as they unfold and specialist analysis to put the news in context.*

The key value of the BBC News Channel is the availability of news when the viewer wishes to access it as against having to rely on a few traditional bulletins at fixed times. This is especially useful if there are newsworthy events unfolding over a period of time, which the rolling news service is able to cover more or less as events happen.

Other advantages of the dedicated news channel include:

- a) A greater coverage of sports news than can be provided in the traditional bulletins.
- b) A more detailed coverage of the background to news events.
- c) A treatment of issues at greater length and depth than in the bulletin format.
- d) The news channel also provides a number of regular features which include interviews with prominent commentators or experts from various countries in a magazine format.

VLV has some concerns:

- The coverage of news from outside the UK is still not adequate. News from the USA often takes precedence over news from Europe. We hope the merger of the World Service into news provision will lead to a greater coverage of news from other countries and continents.
- We consider that a function of the BBC News channel should be to provide even greater explanatory background to events, rather than by the less demanding, and less helpful activity, of speculation.
- Some times the news agenda seems to be driven by the pictures available rather than any intrinsic news value.
- The special features noted at (d) above could be better exploited with careful cross trailing across the main BBC television and radio services to make viewers and listeners more aware of their existence.
- There could be more sharing of programming with BBC 1,2, 3 and 4 in terms of material being originated for one of these channels -including BBC News Channel.

We hope that when the recommendations of the 2010 *Putting Quality First* strategy are fully implemented the above concerns will be addressed.

## **BBC PARLIAMENT**

VLV commends the remit of this service: *to make accessible to all the work of the UK's parliamentary and legislative bodies and the European Parliament. The service should also analyse and set in context the issues and politics behind parliamentary debates.* Given the many different overlapping activities that take place in the various legislatures and the small budget we are generally content with this service. We make the following comments:

- There is very small coverage of European affairs; 100 hours a year including repeats, from both Brussels and Strasburg each year. We hope this can be extended and the programmes shown at a more popular time.
- The apparent lack of regular summaries of the work of the devolved legislatures. We are not sure the service is fully making the rest of the UK aware of the devolved legislatures.
- The profile of the service could be raised by some limited and careful trailing in other parts of the BBC.
- The restriction of the availability of the programmes to just seven days on iPlayer seems unduly restrictive and should be reviewed. If this cannot be extended then the iPlayer schedule should carry a message that the material is available on the Parliamentary website.
- We commend the use made of the archive material in special programmes.

## **Contact for this response**

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## **Confidentiality Statement**

No part of this submission is confidential

July 2011