

"Working for quality  
and diversity in  
British broadcasting"



PO Box 401, Gravesend, Kent DA12 9FY  
Telephone: 01474 352835 Fax: 01474 351112

E-mail: [info@vlv.org.uk](mailto:info@vlv.org.uk)  
Web: [www.vlv.org.uk](http://www.vlv.org.uk)

Founded in 1983 by Jocelyn Hay CBE

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## **Press Release**

Voice of the Listener & Viewer (VLV), the principal citizen and consumer group working for quality and diversity in British Broadcasting, has today voiced its concerns over plans to build a "contained contestable element" into the BBC Licence Fee, so that from 2013 commercial broadcasters would have access to part of the Licence Fee. The plans were unveiled as part of Communications Minister Lord Carter's final *Digital Britain* report.

VLV's Chairman, Richard Lindley, said: "We are glad to see that *Digital Britain* so clearly supports a strong, independent BBC in the digital age. However, the proposal to top-slice 3.5% from the Licence Fee to fund other broadcasters or services after Digital Switchover in 2012 represents an erosion of the BBC's funding base.

"Lord Carter says he wants the BBC to remain 'the gold standard', but VLV is worried that one slice of the Licence Fee will lead to another – and ultimately damage the BBC's independence and its programmes. However, VLV welcomes Lord Carter's commitment to consult on his proposal to top slice the Licence Fee. Listeners and viewers – who pay the fee - must be at the heart of that debate.

"With the rapid expansion of the commercial media sector VLV believes that the funds available to public service broadcasters should be increased, not decreased, in order to ensure that the UK's public service content can complement the wide range of new programmes and services available as a result of new, digital technology. We are not suggesting that this should be funded by an increase in the Licence Fee, but would urge Government to explore other methods of generating funds – such as industry levies – to preserve a truly plural public service broadcasting landscape in the UK."

VLV welcomes plans to update the remit of Channel 4 in order to "re-invent its public purposes for the digital age". But while *Digital Britain* wants the new remit for Channel 4 to include a solid commitment to children's content, with priority

given to older children, it is not yet clear how that obligation is to be adequately funded.

Richard Lindley also expressed VLV's concerns for the Report's proposals on radio in the UK, saying: "We are surprised and also concerned about the announcement that by 2013 the analogue radio signal will be turned off - despite Government assurances that there were no plans to make such a move. There is still an argument as to whether the DAB system is the best way forward for digital radio. Many older listeners for whom their existing analogue radios are a vital link with the outside world will look on this proposal with alarm."

(ends)

### **Notes to Editors:**

- Voice of The Listener & Viewer (VLV) represents the citizen and consumer interests in broadcasting, and speaks for listeners and viewers on the full range of broadcasting issues.
- For further information contact Richard Lindley, Chairman, VLV, Tel: 020 7267 5870, or mobile: 07967 012955