

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



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News Release
Immediate

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'Broadcasting: where are we going?'

Your chance to ask the BBC Director General and the Chair of Channel 4

Wednesday 24 November, 10.30 – 7.40pm, *The Geological Society, London W1*

The past month has seen the publication of proposals for radical change to the status of the BBC World Service, the Monitoring Service and S4C, the Welsh language service, with unprecedented demands on licence payers to fund these and other initiatives.

At the same time, proposals were announced to change the remit and powers of Ofcom, the media regulator set up under the 2003 Communications Act, and to transfer some of Ofcom's powers to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport.

These decisions were taken suddenly announced as part of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, without any Parliamentary debate or public consultation.

VLV, the independent watchdog representing listeners, viewers and licence payers, is therefore arranging a series of events across the country to inform the public of the implications of these changes for the future of British public service broadcasting and licence payers; and to give the public the opportunity to question key decision makers.

At the first, VLV's conference : ***'Broadcasting – where are we going?'***
on Wednesday, 24 November, the speakers will include:

Morning session: 10.30 – 12.30pm – registration: 10.15am

Lord Burns, Chair, Channel 4

**Patrick Barwise, Professor Emeritus, London Business School and visiting professor
University of Sassari**

Chair: Damian Tambini, Senior Lecturer, London School of Economics

Afternoon session: 13.30 – 15.40pm

Richard Klein, Controller, BBC Four

Chris Woolard, Partner, External Affairs and Governance, Ofcom

Robert Beveridge, Lecturer, Edinburgh Napier University

Sylvia Harvey, Visiting Professor, University of Leeds.

Chair: Roger Bolton, independent producer and presenter, *Feedback*, Radio 4

Evening Session: 18.15 – 19.40 – registration & coffee: 17.45

Mark Thompson, BBC Director General

Chair: Lionel Barber, Editor, The Financial Times

More follows/2

On Tuesday, 8 February 2011, Jeremy Hunt MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media the Olympics & Sport, will speak in the second event in the series, at a VLV Westminster Evening Seminar in the House of Commons, 6pm

Commenting: VLV Honorary President, Jocelyn Hay, said:

“These decisions were taken behind closed doors without any Parliamentary debate or public consultation, yet they have far reaching implications for licence payers who are now being asked to fund services some of which, like the World Service and S4C, were previously funded through general taxation, others of which, such as local television and the roll-out of broadband in rural areas, are designed to implement Government policy. The proposed changes also have implications for our public service broadcasters whose independence may now be threatened; and for the regulation of media which have a profound influence on the democratic and cultural life of our nation.

VLV is most concerned that some of the measures built into the 2003 Communications Act to safeguard the independence of the media regulator, Ofcom are now being altered. These changes will give the Secretary of State unprecedented power to introduce further change without prior Parliamentary debate. These alterations are included in the Public Bodies Bill, currently being debated in the House of Lords.

British broadcasting is admired throughout the world for its quality and for the independence of its institutions, including the BBC, Channel 4 and the media regulator, Ofcom. We are gravely concerned that the proposed changes could threaten that independence and that quality. VLV is therefore organising a series of events to inform public debate and to enable licence payers and the public to hear and question key decision makers about them. “

Ends:

Editors' Note

Autumn Conference Venue: The Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1.

Date and time: Wednesday, 24 November, 10.30 – 15.40 and 17.45 – 19.40pm

Reporters and photographers welcome. Please ask for a pass.

Further information from: Linda.Forbes@VLV.org.uk 01474 338711 or 01474 338716

Voice of the Listener & Viewer (VLV) is an independent, not-for-profit association, free from political, commercial and sectarian affiliations, working for quality and diversity in British broadcasting. VLV represents the interests of listeners, viewers and increasingly new media users, as citizens and consumers across the full range of broadcasting issues. VLV supports the principles of public service