

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, Wednesday 12 October 2011

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING – WHAT DO WE REALLY, REALLY WANT?

People in the North of England will have an early chance to voice their views on the BBC cuts announced last week when, on **Saturday October 22**, the Bishop of Manchester, the **Rt Rev Nigel McCulloch**, chairs a free public meeting on the future of public service broadcasting. Organized by the **Voice of the Listener & Viewer** this timely forum asks what do we really, really want from the BBC and other public service broadcasters? What kinds of programmes do we value most, and how can quality and journalistic integrity be maintained in the face of increasing deregulation, reduced budgets and job losses?

It has been said that the effect of these cuts will not be immediately clear to listeners and viewers. However, the proposed changes to local radio, already the cause for concern, cutbacks in the coverage of news and sport and reductions in music and drama mean that listeners and viewers face serious changes in the direction of 'free-to-air' broadcasting - changes that will have major consequences for our society in terms of democracy, culture, creativity and learning.

The proposals outlined by the BBC are now the subject of a public consultation. This is focused on the impact that they would have on the content of BBC services. Many will want to respond, and this meeting offers listeners and viewers in the North of England a unique opportunity to question, in person, leading decision makers and programme makers from the BBC, Channel Four and the independent sector, about the ways public service broadcasters can best serve licence fee payers in what are dangerous and uncertain times. It is an opportunity not to be missed by anyone who values local and national broadcasting and wants to engage in the current debate.

Panel: **Sophie Jones**, Head of Corporate Relations, **Channel 4**; **Mark Covell**, Head of External Affairs, **BBC North**; **Cat Lewis**, MD and Executive Producer, **Nine Lives Media** and **Professor Sylvia Harvey**, Visiting Professor, **University of Leeds** and Trustee, Voice of the Listener Trust.
In the Chair: **Rt Rev Nigel McCulloch**, Bishop of Manchester

'British Broadcasting in the Public Service – what do we really, really want?' will take place from 2pm – 4pm on Saturday 22 October 2011 at the Friends' Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester (near the Town Hall). Admission is free.

To reserve your seat, email elspeth.eggington@hotmail.co.uk or phone 0114 230 8755.

If you have views on the proposed cutbacks which might change the services you enjoy, VLV is collating the public's views. Contact:

VLV Ltd, PO Box 401, Gravesend, Kent DA12 9FY, or email info@vlv.org.uk

Alternatively, you can contact the BBC Trust at:

Delivering Quality First, BBC Trust, 180, Great Portland Street, London W1W 5QZ, or email dqf.consultation@bbc.co.uk

For all press and media enquiries please call:

Linda Forbes or Sue Washbrook (Monday to Thursday during office hours)

VLV Office 01474 338711/338716; email: info@vlv.org.uk or

Dinah Garrett (Friday to Sunday and out of office hours)

0208 994 7252 or email: ddinahg@supanet.com

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. **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. VLV does not handle complaints but is in touch with Members of Parliament, Government, media regulators and broadcasters; publishes briefings, responses to public consultations and a quarterly newsletter; holds conferences and other events in different parts of the UK, open to the public at affordable prices; organises visits for its members to broadcasting centres and holds annual Student Essay Competitions and Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting.