

## Advertisements

Please refer to VLV when responding to advertisements. VLV Ltd cannot accept any liability or complaint in regard to the following offers. The charge for classified advertisements is 30p per word, 20p for members. Please send typed copy with a cheque made payable to VLV Ltd. For display space please contact Linda Forbes on 01474 352835.

### VLV GIFT MEMBERSHIP

Give VLV membership as a gift to a friend or relative. We will add an appropriate greetings card and a FREE copy of the TV User's Guide worth £5.45.

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## Do You Hate Piped Music? Detest the way you can't escape it? If so, join Pipedown – The Campaign for Freedom from Piped Music

Pipedown has helped persuade Gatwick Airport to abolish piped music & Tesco & Sainsbury's not to install it. We are now fighting the threat of piped music/television in hospitals, trains & buses and excess music on radio/TV.

Pipedown supporters include:  
Alfred Brendel, Julian Lloyd Webber, George Melly, Prunella Scales, Claire Tomalin.

Membership costs £15 pa. Details: PO Box 1722, Salisbury, SP4 7US  
01722 790622. Email: [newpipedown@btinternet.com](mailto:newpipedown@btinternet.com) [www.pipedown.info/](http://www.pipedown.info/)

## Diary Dates

**Wednesday, 7 September**  
VLV visit to Channel 4, London WC1  
10.30am

**Friday, 16 September**  
VLV visit to Met Office, Exeter  
1pm - FULL

**Wednesday, 12 October**  
An evening with Tim Marlow  
1 Whitehall Place, London SW1  
6.30pm – 8.30pm

**Friday, 14 October**  
VLV visit to ITV, London WC1  
10.30am

**Late October**  
VLV visit to CBBC TV Centre  
London W12 - tbc

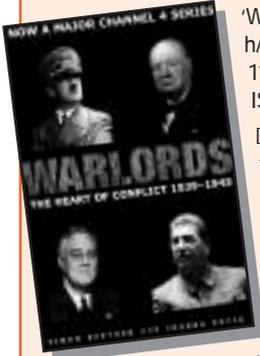
**Wednesday, 2 November**  
11th Annual conference of the VLV  
Forum for Children's Broadcasting.  
The Royal Society, London SW1  
9.30am – 5pm

**Tuesday, 8 November**  
An Evening with Michael Palin  
The British Academy  
Carlton House Terrace, London SW1  
6.30pm – 8.30pm

**Wednesday, 30 November**  
VLV Autumn Conference  
Hamilton House, London WC1  
10.30am – 3.30pm

**Wednesday, 30 November**  
VLV Ltd AGM, Hamilton House,  
off Euston Road, London WC1  
4pm

## Summer Competition



'WARLORDS' by Simon Berthon & Joanna Potts, h/b. £19.99. Published by Politico's, 11-12 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB. ISBN 1 884275 135 2.

During the Second World War, while their nations fought battles with weapons, the four great warlords of the twentieth century – Hitler, Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt – fought a war of the mind. Watch out for a new Channel 4 series, starting on 31 July, based on the book, which tells this remarkable story of psychological duels in which charm, flattery, deceit and lies were used to greater effect than ever before.

You could win a copy of 'Warlords' by answering the question below.

Question: *What were the four nations led by the great warlords?*

Replies on a postcard to:  
Warlords competition, VLV,  
101 Kings Drive, Gravesend, DA12 5BQ  
Or by email to: [info@vlv.org.uk](mailto:info@vlv.org.uk)  
by 1 September 2005.

The editor's decision is final



The winner of the Spring Competition: 'And Finally ...The News from ITN' by Richard Lindley was R. M. Dauncey of Minsterworth, Gloucestershire.

## CAN YOU HELP?

### Celebrate Volunteering!

From sports coaches to special constables, school governors to animal rescuers, Volunteer Britain, co-ordinated by CSV, is giving you a chance to tell your story. You can create a film, a radio feature or a digital story telling how you, or someone you know, has made a difference by volunteering.

For more details log onto [www.csv.org.uk/volunteerbritain](http://www.csv.org.uk/volunteerbritain) or send an sae to: Volunteer Britain Entry Forms, CSV, 237 Pentonville Road, London N1 9NJ

**Have you had a bad experience with a garage?** Unknowingly bought a stolen car, been given a dangerous repair, or been ripped-off by a car-hire firm? Granada TV would like to know for a TV documentary. Call 020 7633 2537 or email: [garagesfromhell@granada.com](mailto:garagesfromhell@granada.com)

**Are you moving abroad?** Five is bringing back its series, *Build a New Life*, and would like to hear from people just about to start on renovating a property abroad. Call 0871 210 8871 or email: [build@shinelimited.com](mailto:build@shinelimited.com)



## NEW SUBSCRIPTION / DONATION / CHANGE OF ADDRESS\*

\*please delete as appropriate

VLV subscription - individual £14.50, two at same address £22.50, student/concessionary £10.00. VLV overseas subscription - individual £21.50, student/concessionary £15.00. Newsletter only subscription (non members) UK £22.00, overseas £26.00. Please make cheques payable to VLV Ltd and send to 101 Kings Drive, Gravesend, DA12 5BQ.

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Card No.  /  /  /  Amount £

Signature of Cardholder

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Voice of the  
Listener & Viewer

# Bulletin

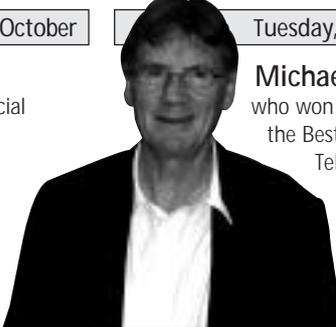
Working for Quality and Diversity in Broadcasting

Summer 2005

Issue 82

## VLV's Autumn Programme

### VLV 2005/2006 Evening Lecture Series

 <p style="text-align: center;">Wednesday, 12 October</p> <p><b>Tim Marlow</b> who won VLV's Special Award for Excellence in 2004, will give an evening presentation for us on broadcasting and the visual arts, at One Whitehall Place, London SW1.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Tuesday, 8 November</p> <p><b>Michael Palin</b> who won VLV's Award for the Best Contribution to Television in 2004, will share an evening conversation with us at The British Academy, Carlton House Terrace, SW1.</p>
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VLV has planned a busy programme of events for members and the public in the next six months. It will include many different activities, some serious some entertaining, in different parts of the UK, including seminars, conferences, evening social events, lectures and visits to broadcasting centres, starting with visits to Channel 4 and the Met Office in September. (See diary dates on the back page of this Bulletin for other VLV visits).

### VLV 2005/2006 Conferences

<p style="text-align: center;">Wednesday, 2 November</p> <p><b>Kids Media – a Cultural Force or a Cash Cow?</b> The VLV Forum for Children's Broadcasting will hold its 11th annual conference at the Royal Society, Carlton House Terrace, SW1. See further details on page 3 inside.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Wednesday, 30 November</p> <p><b>VLV 22nd Annual Autumn Conference in London.</b> The programme will look ahead to some of the implications of digital switch-over – by then only two years away in Wales, the south-west of England and the Scottish Borders. Stephen Carter, Chief Executive of Ofcom will be the afternoon speaker, two years after the communications regulator becomes fully operational. The conference will be followed at 4pm by the 3rd AGM of VLV Ltd.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Monday, 12 December</p> <p><b>VLV's 2nd Christmas Concert</b> The music will kindly be provided by the BBC Elstree Concert Band under its Musical Director, Mike Crisp. The programme will also include a presentation by the choir of the Sir William Burrough Primary School, Tower Hamlets, London.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Late Autumn 2005</p> <p><b>VLV's 8th Annual Conference on the Future of Broadcasting in Wales</b> Will be held in association with the School of Journalism at Cardiff University – more details in the autumn Bulletin.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">February 2006</p> <p><b>VLV's 14th Annual Conference in Scotland</b> Will be held in association with Napier University, Edinburgh – more details in the autumn Bulletin.</p>
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### Inside

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### VLV Chairman made CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours



In the Queen's Birthday Honours, VLV Chairman and Founder, Jocelyn Hay, was appointed a CBE for services to broadcasting. In 1999, she was made an MBE and also in the same year received the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association's Elizabeth R Award for an outstanding contribution to public service broadcasting.

Commenting, Mrs Hay said: "I am so delighted at this recognition of VLV and of what it has achieved. I am also conscious of the many, many people who have contributed to this honour and have helped me since VLV was founded in 1983, Without them, I could have achieved nothing. They include my husband who has been such a constant support, present and past Committee and Board members, the staff at the Gravesend office, and many, many more. My hope now is that we can use the honour as a further spur to putting VLV onto a sound financial footing to meet the challenges of the future.

### VLV's Student Essay Competition

Twenty-four students from twelve colleges and universities in England, Scotland and Wales have entered VLV's 2005 Student Essay Competition, which is supported by Channel 4 Television. The winners will be announced in October.

VLV received over a hundred enquiries about the competition which asked students to submit either a written 2000 word essay or a short video or radio feature 'The Future of Public Service Broadcasting in the Digital Age'.

The judging panel, chaired by VLV Board member, Professor Vincent Porter, also includes: Professor Steven Barnett, University of Westminster, Roger Graef, Managing Director, Films of Record, Andrea Millwood-Hargrave, Principal, Millwood-Hargrave Ltd and Jon Snow, presenter of Channel 4 News.



## Voice of the Listener & Viewer

*Working for Quality and Diversity in British Broadcasting*

### VLV Patrons

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Dame Mary Peters DBE  
Lord Phillips of Sudbury OBE  
Lord Puttnam of Queensgate CBE  
Lady Solti  
Lord Thomson of Monifieth KT PC  
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Dr Andrew Taussig

### Company Secretary

Waterlow Registrars Ltd

### The Voice of the Listener Trust

(reg charity 296207)

VLV's sister charity

which supports VLV's educational work

Interim Chairman: Elizabeth Smith OBE

Interim Secretary: Jocelyn Hay CBE

Treasurer: Professor Naomi Sargent

Michael Barton

Professor Sylvia Harvey

Dr Andrew Taussig

### VLV office hours:

9.00am - 5.00pm Mon-Thurs

Voice of the Listener & Viewer Ltd (VLV) represents the citizen and consumer interests in broadcasting and works for quality and diversity in British broadcasting. VLV is free from political, sectarian and commercial affiliations. VLV is concerned with the issues, structures, institutions and regulation that underpin the British broadcasting system and in particular to maintain the principles of public service in broadcasting. VLV does not handle complaints.

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Website: [www.vlv.org.uk](http://www.vlv.org.uk)

# Changes at the Voice of the Listener Trust



Colin Shaw

At the Trust's AGM in July, Colin Shaw, at the end of the 18 months he had agreed to serve, stepped down as chair of the Voice of the Listener Trust. Elizabeth Smith was appointed interim Chairman in his place.

We shall greatly miss Colin's calm presence, and the benefit of the wide experience, which he so generously shared with members of the Trust and the Board. Colin was presented by the trustees with a print of the Gower peninsula.

We were also extremely sorry to record the resignation of Henry Rishbeth as Honorary Secretary of the Trust. At the AGM Jocelyn Hay was appointed interim Secretary.

Henry, one of VLV's earliest members, had served as Secretary of the Trust since it was founded in 1987. At that time he was also Minutes Secretary of the Management Committee of Voice of the Listener

(as VLV was then known). We shall miss his cheerful and efficient presence at meetings but understand how difficult the journey from Southampton has become for him. As a memento of his long service, the trustees presented Henry with a water colour of Yarmouth, part of the East Coast to which he is particularly attached. We are delighted that both Colin and Henry will continue to support VLV in other ways.

Michael Barton, a trustee of the Sandford St Martin Trust and former Controller of BBC Local Radio, has joined the board of the Voice of the Listener Trust.



Henry Rishbeth



Michael Barton

## VLV 'Healthcheck'

As the need for VLV's advocacy work grows and demands on VLV's resources increase, it is important for us to act as efficiently as possible, making maximum use of our resources, human and financial.

Our application to the Charities Aid Foundation for a grant to fund an organisational 'Healthcheck' was successful. As a result, members of the Board of VLV Ltd have recently given a lot of time to detailed discussions with the consultant whom CAF appointed, Fiona Baird. All aspects of VLV's management, organisation, administration and output have been under scrutiny.

An aspect of VLV which caught the consultant's eye, and distinguishes VLV from many other voluntary organisations, was the huge amount of voluntary work undertaken by VLV members on a pro bono basis. Ms Baird was surprised that all VLV's policy work and briefings were undertaken pro bono by members of the Board or its sub committees. VLV representatives at public events remark that they are often the only people present who are not salaried staff.

Relying so heavily on goodwill and voluntary effort, however, cannot sustain the current growth in our workload. VLV's administrative base and staffing have to be strengthened. With the support

of the Vol Trust, the VLV Board has agreed that the next step is to proceed with the appointment of a paid director to oversee the administration and provide more support for the work of the Board and its sub committees, following the departure of Eddie Tulasiewicz.

The CAF Healthcheck will help us to focus on priorities and develop the organisation more effectively. However, change and development cost money and the further success of the Anniversary Appeal, as well as the pursuit of fresh sources of income, is essential for future progress. As we stand on the threshold of the all-digital era, we believe it is vital to ensure that, with low annual subscriptions and low costs for attendance at VLV events, our contribution to the public debate reflects the widest possible range of voices.

Eddie Tulasiewicz, who has latterly carried out a broad range of tasks as Acting Director of VLV, will be leaving at the end of September to take up a post in the office of Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor in the Archdiocese of Westminster. Eddie, after being employed by the BBC and gaining an MA in information technology, had been working for the past 18 months on a part-time basis as VLV's first Education and Development Officer. During that time he worked with the VLV Board and staff to raise the organisation's profile through the 21st Anniversary Appeal and in many other ways. We shall greatly miss his energy and cheerful presence and wish him well in his new appointment.

## VLV's 21st Anniversary Appeal

VLV's 21st Anniversary Appeal, launched by Lord Puttnam in July 2004, raised a total of more than £25,000 in its first year. We would like to thank, most warmly, all those who have most generously sent donations.

# VLV Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting

## VLV Awards for 2004

The Radio 2 broadcaster, Ken Bruce, presented the 2004 VLV Awards for Excellence in broadcasting during VLV's annual spring conference on 25 April.

The Awards were organised by John and Carey Clark, assisted by Anthony Wills. The winners, who each received an engraved crystal trophy, kindly donated by Dartington Crystal, were:

### RADIO

- Best Programme – *Start the Week (Radio 4)* Executive Producer Olivia Seligman, Producer Sarah Taylor;
- Best New Programme – *Engineering Solutions (Radio 4)* Producer Sarah Taylor, Presenter Adam Hart-Davis;
- Best Individual Contributor – *Andrew Marr.*

### TELEVISION

- Best Programme – *Bremner, Bird and Fortune (Channel 4)* Producer Geoff Atkinson, Presenters Rory Bremner, John Bird, John Fortune;

- Best New Programme – *Venice (BBC 2)* Producer Sam Hobkinson and Basil Comely, Presenter Francesco da Mosto;
- Best Individual Contributor – *Michael Palin;*
- Special Award for Excellence – *Tim Marlow* for his outstanding contribution to Channel Five arts programmes.

VLV members were delighted that, with the exception of Adam Hart-Davis who was in New York at the time, all the winners came to receive their trophies in person, and all said how very special they felt them to be because they were chosen by viewers and listeners rather than by fellow professionals.

## VLV Awards for 2005

Knowing how much these Awards mean to the recipients, do make sure that your favourite programmes and presenters are included next year by making a note of them NOW. Don't rely on memory but send a postcard to VLV or an email to [info@vlv.org.uk](mailto:info@vlv.org.uk) every time you enjoy something special.

## Building Public Value in Broadcasting

VLV's 22nd annual Spring Conference was held in London on Monday, 25 April and attended by over 150 VLV members and guests. Michael Grade, Chairman of the BBC was the speaker in the morning session, chaired by Gillian Reynolds, Radio Critic of the Daily Telegraph. After the presentation of the VLV 2004 Awards at 1.45pm, the speakers in the afternoon session 'Building Public Value in Programmes' were Roly Keating, Controller of BBC 2 and Mark Damazer, Controller of BBC Radio 4. VLV Board Member Robert Beveridge was in the chair.

Both Controllers were delighted to see programmes broadcast on their channels featured in VLV's 2004 Awards – see photo left. Audio cassettes and CDs of the proceedings are available, Price £12.



## Kids Media – a Cultural Force or a Cash Cow ?

Wednesday, 2 November 0930 –5.00pm. The Royal Society, London SW1



SPEAKERS AT VLV'S 11TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN'S BROADCASTING ON 2 NOVEMBER WILL INCLUDE:

Alison Sharman, Head of CBBC;  
Estelle Hughes, Head of CITV;  
Professor Al Aynsley-Green (left), Children's Commissioner for England;  
and Jonathan Drori, Head of Culture Online, DCMS.

Children's TV and radio are rapidly changing but are the needs and interests of our children being properly provided for in today's multi-channel media, or are children at risk from media that are dominated by commercial imperatives?

Key sessions will consider why there are so few programmes for teenagers or on the arts; how multi-channel television is affecting children's viewing habits and programme budgets, and what we can do to maintain high quality programming for children in the new environment.

Further information and tickets from:  
[Linda.forbes@vlv.org.uk](mailto:Linda.forbes@vlv.org.uk)  
01474 352835. Or book online at [www.vlv.org.uk](http://www.vlv.org.uk).

## Who's now What - in and around Government

At the DCMS, Tessa Jowell remains Secretary of State but also has responsibility for the Olympics and for the victims of the July bombings.



James Purnell (left) is Minister for the Creative Industries & Tourism. David Lammy (below left) is Minister for the Arts. Richard Caborn remains Minister for Sport. Bill Bush, former special adviser on broadcasting to Tessa Jowell, has moved to the Premier League. Roger Sharp has been appointed in his place.



At the DTI, Alan Johnson has been appointed Secretary of State for Trade & Industry. Alun Michael is Minister of State at the DTI with responsibility for the Communications and Information Industries.

### NEW PEERS

Two former Secretaries of State with responsibility for broadcasting, Virginia Bottomley and Chris Smith, and former Ministers, Tony Banks, Lewis Moonie and Estelle Morris received Life Peerages in the Dissolution Honours.

### PARTY SPOKESPERSONS

In the Commons, Theresa May MP has been appointed the Conservative spokesperson on broadcasting; Don Foster MP continues to speak for the Lib Dems.

In the Lords, Lord Davies of Oldham is the Government Spokesperson on broadcasting. Lord Luke and Viscount Astor share responsibilities as Conservative spokespersons and Baroness Bonham Carter speaks for the Lib Dems.

## New Parliamentary Select Committee for Culture, Media & Sport

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

- Chairman: John Whittingdale MP (former Conservative spokesperson)
- Janet Anderson MP (Lab)
- Nigel Evans MP (Con)
- Paul Farrelly MP (Lab)
- Mike Hall MP (Lab)
- Alan Keen MP (Lab)
- Rosemary McKenna MP (Lab)
- Adam Price MP (Plaid Cymru)
- Adrian Sanders MP (Lib Dem)
- Helen Southworth MP (Lab)
- Tim Yeo MP (Con)



# Defending PSB in the UK and Beyond

VLV and its members are well aware of the immense changes which the digital age will bring, not only to viewers and listeners, but to society as a whole.

Broadcasting has been described as the national glue which helps to hold together an increasingly diverse population. That metaphor was seen at its most vivid during the Second World War, but I believe the concept of broadcasting as something that binds the community is still valid.

That's what public service broadcasting is – broadcasting that is universally and freely accessible, serves majorities and minorities, derived from a range of PSB players and motivated, whether publicly or commercially funded, by a public service ethos.

That is what we have enjoyed in Britain to date, but it's a broadcasting landscape that is now under threat – at regional, national and European levels.

### PSB IN EUROPE

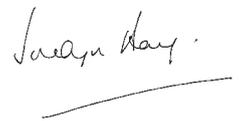
In September, whilst the UK holds the Presidency of the European Union, a joint UK/EU Media Conference in Liverpool will witness the culmination of a major debate about revisions to the 1989 European Television Without Frontiers Directive (TVWF). Revision is needed now to take account of a digital world with a growing diversity of both TV channels and advanced new media platforms. But revisions must be used to reinforce, not dilute, the protections that were built into the 1989 Directive – like those against commercialisation and product placement and for universal access to major listed events and the protection of children.

That's why I and my VLV colleagues will argue at the Liverpool conference against any absorption of the TVWF Directive into a general directive on a free market in services.

### PSB IN BRITAIN

Within the UK, we note how well and distinctively, commercial regional franchise-holders, for

instance Granada and Anglia, have served populations like those of North-western and Eastern England, with television programmes and personalities which the BBC (for all its other strengths) could not offer. The lifting of the requirement for these companies to provide such programmes in future, recently agreed by OFCOM and not blocked by the Secretary of State, is a matter of great concern to us. It poses a threat to the public service character of our whole broadcasting system – which depends on the participation of a variety of PSB players, both publicly and commercially funded. In the interests of quality content and informed citizenship, we believe that sustaining that PSB character and ethos in both the UK and European contexts must be a key objective for VLV at the conference and in the coming months.



## Current Consultations

### European Consultation

The European Commission has launched a consultation on its proposed revisions to the Television Without Frontiers (TVWF) Directive. Responses should be sent by 5 September to: [avpolicy@cec.eu.int](mailto:avpolicy@cec.eu.int)

The Commission has issued five Issue Papers on which it invites comments before it finalises new rules at the end of 2005. They cover new rules for audio visual content; advertising and sponsorship; protection of minors and human dignity, rights to information and right of reply cultural diversity.

Vivian Reding, the EU Commissioner responsible for the Information Society and Media said: 'My objective is to give Europe's media industry the most modern and flexible rules in the world.'

### UK Presidency of the European Union

The UK took over the Presidency of the EU in July. As part of its Presidency, the UK will jointly host a conference on audio visual policy and revisions to the Television Without Frontiers Directive in Liverpool 20-22 September. VLV chairman, Jocelyn Hay and Board Member Vincent Porter will attend and it is hoped that there may be an opportunity for VLV to hold a meeting in Liverpool at the time of the event. However, we are not yet able to confirm these plans as we go to press.

### Culture, Media and Sport Committee

The Committee will hold a new inquiry into analogue switch-off and is seeking evidence about the following aspects:

- the policy objectives and economic benefits and the role of different delivery platforms;

- the feasibility of the timetable and geographical coverage;
- the costs and how these are to be met;
- the protection of vulnerable groups.

Send submissions by 29 September to:

House of Commons Committee Office,  
7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA  
or email: [cmscom@parliament.uk](mailto:cmscom@parliament.uk)

### House of Lords Select Committee on BBC Charter Review

The House of Lords has appointed a Select Committee to inquire into the Review of the BBC Charter. The Committee is chaired by Lord Fowler and the members are: Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury, Baroness Gibson of Market Rasen, Lord Holmes of Cheltenham, Baroness Howe of Idlicote, Lord Kalms, Lord King of Bridgewater, The Bishop of Manchester, Baroness O'Neill of Bengarve and Lord Peston.

More information can be found on the Parliamentary website: [www.parliament.uk/parliamentary\\_committees/bbccharter](http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/bbccharter).

Members of the public are invited to send submissions to the Committee by 5 September. Send to: Chloe Mawson, Clerk to the Committee, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW.

### VLV Responses to Consultations

Following a written submission by VLV, VLV Chairman, Jocelyn Hay, was called to give oral evidence to the Committee at one of its public hearings in May.

VLV has responded to the following consultations:

- DCMS consultation on BBC Charter Review: May
- Ofcom Review of Public Service Broadcasting, Phase 3: June
- Scottish Parliament Enterprise & Culture Committee on the implications of BBC Scotland's Internal Reviews: May.
- European Commission consultation on Revisions to the Television Without Frontiers Directive: June

The responses are published on VLV's website: [VLV.org.uk](http://VLV.org.uk). They cost £5 by post and are free to members in return for a large SAE with 45p in stamps.

### Meetings and Conferences at which VLV representatives have recently spoken or participated

Robert Beveridge and Jeremy Mitchell presented oral evidence to the Enterprise & Culture Committee of the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. Other meetings include: Royal Society of Arts/BBC conference, Edinburgh; Digital Stakeholders' Group; three Westminster Media Forum seminars on BBC Charter Review; Westminster Media Forum conferences on revisions to EU TVWF Directive and Ofcom's Annual Report; EU Focus Group on TVWF revisions in Brussels; NGO meeting at Council of Europe Ministerial meeting in Kiev; Asia Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development annual conference, Kuala Lumpur; EURALVA meeting in Cologne; Social Market Foundation seminar on BBC governance; three BBC seminars on Charter Review; BBC and Channel 4 seminars on Adult Media Literacy; Oxford PCMLP international summer school; Ofcom seminars on Media Literacy; meeting with DCMS broadcasting officials.

# Digital Update - by Guest Contributor, Barry Fox

The statistics certainly look impressive. There are 25 million homes in the UK. Five million Digital Terrestrial TV (DTT) Freeview receivers have been sold, half a million homes have free-to-view satellite and there are nearly 7.5 million subscribers to Sky's satellite Pay-TV service. The cable companies NTL and Telewest claim another 2.5 million digital cable viewers between them.

Add it all up and you get Ofcom's claim that there are now over 15 million digital households in the UK. "Digital Television UK household penetration reaches just under 62%." Says Ofcom.

Well, you know what they say about statistics... Don't get me wrong. The 15m figure is a wonderful achievement for Sky, the BBC and Freeview. But it does not give a true fix on how easy it will be for the UK to switch off analogue TV.

Every time I see a gung-ho statement about digital penetration from Ofcom, the DCMS or DTI, I wonder whether these people really understand the situation but don't want to admit it, or just don't get it.

TV colour services began in 1967 but it took until 1985 before the last 405 line black and white TV transmitters were closed. In those days most homes had only one TV receiver (if that) and there were no 405 line video recorders (VCRs).

Today most homes have more than one TV, and usually only the main set will receive digital. The rest are analogue, often running off indoor aerials which can't pull in Freeview. Many homes have at least one VCR. It can be hooked up to a Freeview box, but is not so easy to use.

VCRs are now being replaced by Digital Video Recorders (DVRs) but there are several different DVD standards and the recordings do not always play back on an ordinary DVD player. Many DVD recorders still do not have a Freeview tuner, so



they are as awkward to use for time shifting as an analogue VCR. Why? Because they are made for a world market, not just for the UK. The Sky+ personal video recorder (PVR) is very easy to use but it only works if you pay a subscription to Sky.

**Notching up 15 million digital connections** was relatively easy because the DTT Freeview service is cheap and advertised by the BBC, Sky has done a hard-sell on its satellite Pay-TV service, and the cable companies have finally got into digital gear. It should be equally easy to sell another five or ten million, like scrambling up the middle slopes of a mountain. The hard part, like rock-climbing to the summit, will be converting those who can't afford to buy digital, or who on principle won't buy into digital.

In the end there will have to be some form of inducement. When Berlin went all-digital in 2003, the authorities gave free adaptors to anyone who claimed they could not afford to buy one. The system was abused, but politically expedient, because it was part of a scheme to make Berlin the capital of Germany again.

If the UK government even hints that there will be free TVs in a few years time sales before then will be decimated. But a VAT-free tax break on digital TV might work wonders.

But a big reception problem exists in areas where there is no cable service and Freeview can not be used until analogue switch off releases new frequencies. The solution requires a free-to-air satellite to fill the gaps. Ofcom and the DCMS admit this. They praise Sky's Freesat scheme but have obviously never tried to find out how easy it is to install one of the new free-to-view Sky systems for £150. A friend of mine did and ended up with a nice new receiver, dish and card for free reception. He was charged an extra £39.95 for dish brackets, and £15 for cable to link up his phone, making a total of £200, but the installers seemed surprised that he knew how to ask for Freesat.

Which didn't surprise us because we couldn't find any sign of it on Sky's web site, and we hadn't seen any adverts either. We finally did find it, on a completely different web site which Sky has set up to sell Freesat: [www.freesatfromsky.com/](http://www.freesatfromsky.com/)

When I asked Sky how people are supposed to find out about the offer if it's not on Sky's normal web site, and there seems to have been no advertising, a spokesman said "We are conducting some regional marketing for Freesat but the focus of our national advertising campaigns will remain the promotion of our core subscription products."

In the industry magazine *Digital News*, Richard Freudenstein of Sky made no bones about Sky's gameplan with Freesat: "Sky is a Pay TV company and this is a way of getting people onto a digital platform and converting them into Pay-TV over time....we definitely see Freesat from Sky as a Pay-TV strategy."

Which just might explain why the installers sold my friend a phone connection to the Sky box, even though free-to-air reception needs no phone line.

**When purchasing digital equipment look for the logo**



## Free-to-Air Digital Satellite

The findings of a recent VLV Seminar were that the Government and Ofcom must facilitate the launch of a Free-to-Air Digital Satellite if they want to achieve a smooth switch-over to digital.

The Government, Ofcom and the broadcasters must work together to create a competitive horizontal market in the provision and delivery of digital satellite services by the launch of an independent free to air digital satellite service to compete with BSkyB, if they want to meet the target of 2012 for switching the UK from analogue to digital television, was the finding of a high level seminar organised by VLV in May. Broadcasters, manufacturers and the nation would all benefit from the immediate launch of such a service, it found.

The seminar, which was chaired by Lord

McIntosh, the former Minister for Heritage and Broadcasting, was attended by representatives from the DCMS, DTI, Ofcom, BBC, Channel 4, Five, S4C and by several specialists in digital technology, law and media policy, as well as VLV Board members.

One of the barriers to achieving a smooth switch over is the fact that 27.5% of all UK households can not, and will not be able to, receive the free-to-air digital terrestrial television (DTT) service Freeview until after existing analogue transmissions have been switched off. In the meantime, the only choice for those who cannot receive Freeview is to sign up to BSkyB's satellite service if they wish to watch the five public service broadcasters (PSBs) - the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Five and S4C.

Sky currently provides a digital satellite service which includes all the PSBs and many other channels on a free-to-air basis but it is not widely publicised, as Barry Fox points out above. Moreover, Sky's viewing card guarantees free access only for the next five years and viewers who sign up today, could find they lose their right to access just as switch over is completed.

Following the seminar, the VLV chairman sent copies of the findings to the Secretaries of State for Culture, Media & Sport and for Trade & Industry, and to the Chairmen of Ofcom, the BBC and the other broadcasters, calling on them to work together to achieve the successful and speedy launch of such a service.

A full report of the seminar findings is published on the VLV website. VLV members may obtain a copy by sending a large SAE to the VLV office, marked Freesat Seminar report.

## VLV Visit to BFBS

Making a radio programme to go out at 7.00pm local time but also in each of ten or more other time zones, and dovetailing the national news into music and local reports in the 'portakabin' studio near Basra - are two of the many tasks being dealt with on a 24 hour basis by the broadcasters and engineers of British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS).

BFBS provides radio to British forces overseas, from Belize to Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Iraq, Afghanistan: 23 countries in all. Our guide at the Services Sound and Vision Corporation, based in Chalfont St Giles, Bucks, was Alan Phillips, Managing Editor of BFBS UK. He explained that the aim of SSV was to entertain and inform Britain's Armed Forces around the world. Although it works on contact to the MOD, SSV is an independent charity and by no means a voice for the MOD. It provides radio, television, live shows (the successor to ENSA) an archive library and retail shops.

Alan concentrated on BFBS radio, where he had cut his teeth in Bosnia, explaining that BFBS provides three radio stations: Radio 1 - mostly pop and rock with news slots aimed at a younger, mostly male audience; Radio 2 - more speech, much of it from the BBC, such as 'Today', 'The Archers' and sport from Five Live; and Radio 3 for the Gurkhas in the UK and Brunei. What came over so clearly was the understanding the journalists and presenters had of their audiences - whether a battlegroup in Basra or families in Germany. Feedback via texts, email and the website was excellent, typified by the Royal Marine who, coming across BFBS for the first time, thanked them 'for keeping us informed of what's going on in the real world.'

*Colin Stewart.*



## Book Reviews

### 'THE TIPPING POINT: HOW MUCH IS BROADCASTING CREATIVITY AT RISK?'

By *Will Hutton, Aine O'Keefe and Natalie Turner*, published by *The Work Foundation*, 3 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5DG. [www.theworkfoundation.com](http://www.theworkfoundation.com)

The authors argue that the present success of the mixed economy in broadcasting is under threat. The BBC's ability to acquire and retain rights to content is being put at risk by the growing strength of the Independent sector: for example, the opening-up of a further 25% of the BBC's output to independent production. As the global market grows, it becomes progressively more attractive to companies willing to provide low-

## Visit to Ofcom Field Operations Division

Around 20 VLV members visited Ofcom in June to hear a presentation by Paul Mercer about Radio Pirates - people who broadcast without a licence, interfere with legitimate broadcasters and cause problems for listeners. It is most serious when the pirates interfere with the radio communications of the emergency services or air traffic controllers but is most often noticed by the general public when legitimate VHF radio broadcasts suffer from interference.

Pirates operate in Birmingham and Manchester but are a major problem in London where often ten are operating on a weekday morning and up to 60 at weekends. They broadcast exclusively "pop music" often different from the legal broadcasters, and around half claim to provide a community service. The rest are run for money; promoting music and unlicensed illegal music events which also sell alcohol and drugs. All the profits from pirate radio and the events they promote are untaxed.

In Greater London special field operations teams deal exclusively with the pirates, working closely with the local councils and police. They need to find the temporary studios, transmitters and arrest the operatives. In 2004 about 149 stations and 1021 transmitters were removed, and there were 60 convictions. Unfortunately pirate operations are very small and relatively simple so new stations

start up all the time. They use empty flats for studios and the top of high rise blocks for aerials, often booby-trapping them, as much against other pirates as the law enforcement agencies.

The only solution for listeners affected by pirates is to switch to digital radio which gives interference free listening

The morning ended with a short presentation about the Ofcom Contact Centre and how it handles telephone enquiries.

*Robert Clark*

## Contacting Ofcom

Ofcom's Annual Report, published on 19 July, is available from the Ofcom Contact Centre, Riverside House, 2a Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA or its website: [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk)

## How to make a complaint

To make a complaint about any commercial radio or TV programmes, or about radio or TV interference contact The Ofcom Contact Centre on: 020 7981 3040 or 0845 456 3000 or Textphone: 0845 456 3003 or visit the Ofcom website: [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk)

## VLV visit to Birmingham Mail Box

Assembling in the BBC's attractive new Birmingham base in the Mail Box, VLV members were given a warm welcome. They were told that, unlike when at Pebble Mill, the BBC was now at the heart of the community, with shops and homes and the canal close by. The general public can walk in and interact with video screens employing the latest technology, some displaying jobs within the BBC and the Birmingham area. 65,000 people have visited the station since it opened six months ago, making use of the shop, café, and 'hands on' demonstrations of chroma keying and interactive programming.

After a video presentation and guided tour which included a radio drama studio. Simon Moorcroft, the studio manager, demonstrated the sound effects and how it worked, including its 'dead' acoustics area, by walking a few paces while his voice gradually disappeared.

A video presentation by Anita Bhala gave an insight into the Corporation's response to the Green Paper on the future of the BBC. Another, by the enthusiastic Ian Myers from BBC Interactive, showed that the BBC is very much at the centre of the latest technology. He demonstrated the experimental community service which can be accessed from the internet and mobile phones, as well as through direct digital broadcasts. The BBC media buses traveling the country have helped many individuals and communities to feel more comfortable with new technology and the huge changes occurring in communication

Around one third of Radio 2's output comes from the Mail Box, as well as Radio WM, the Asian Network, Gardeners' World, the Archers, Midlands Today, the Politics Show and many documentaries and dramas. The staff are keen to do more.

*Shirley Hambleton*

budget format-based programming which makes fewer demands on creativity. It may become more difficult, suggest the authors, to justify BBC in-house production and fend off the arguments for top-slicing the licence-revenue. Will Hutton proposes that a reduction to 40% or 30% of the BBC's obligation to commission outside production would help reduce the developing imbalance between public and commercial broadcasting.

**INTERNATIONAL NEWS IN THE 21ST CENTURY**  
Edited by *Chris Paterson & Annabelle Sreberny*  
published by *John Libbey for the University of Luton Press*. p/b. ISBN No. 1 86020 596 8. *John Libbey Publishing, Box 276, Eastleigh, Hants, SO 50 5YS.* [www.johnlibbey.com](http://www.johnlibbey.com)



In the aftermath of September 11, a group of influential journalists and scholars together probe the future of international news and the central place it holds in media debates and political analysis. Topics include the rise of powerful new media conglomerates and of non-Anglo news channels; ethnocentric imbalances in news reporting and news rhetoric; approaches for reconstructing the international news agenda, and the impact of new technologies of production and diffusion.

# Letters to the Editor

Letters do not necessarily represent the views of the Association and may be shortened for publication.

## IN MEMORIAM

*My husband Denis, who died in June, was a keen supporter of VLV. Having attended a fascinating visit to the BBC in Bristol through VLV, and shared many enjoyable hours of radio and TV with him, I am sending a donation in his memory. I would also like to take over his membership.*

Wendy Summers, Wincanton, Somerset

## BBC PROGRAMMES

*I am a new member and felt I must write to say how delighted I was to see 'Country File' on BBC 1 recently advocating buying local food. I am writing to John Craven to congratulate him. If BBC TV can do this I am high in praise of their service.*

Mary Colby, Norwich

*In VLV's Winter Bulletin, it stated that the BBC's plans entitled 'Building Public Value' involve... a new focus on the arts... I wonder what plans there are for Photography, as a fine art form, to be included in BBC programmes?*

Margaret Gatter, Surbiton, Surrey

## SPREADING THE WORD

*Here in Wales it is not easy for us to get to VLV meetings in London but I, like many VLV members, am a member of the University of the Third Age (U3A). Through our U3A monthly meetings and current events discussion group we meet a very broad cross section of people and I am sure we could encourage responses to consultations like the Green Paper.*

*For instance, the possible switch-off of analogue television broadcasts in Wales in three years time is worrying. I have Freeview – complete with an appropriate new aerial – but reception is frequently erratic. I am told this is caused by 'bounceback' from the plethora of transmitters in Wales and South West England. It seems to be a problem beyond individual viewer's power to solve but I hope it will be cured before switch-off.*

Susan L Barnes, Llandaff, Cardiff

## DIGITAL PROBLEMS

*I found out about VLV from an article about television reception in Wales.*

*I live in an area of Wales that cannot get cable or receive the Digital Terrestrial service Freeview and, due to the fact that I live in a valley, I (very frustratingly) cannot use a satellite dish either. This means that I (and a lot of other people in my village) are limited to four TV channels: BBC 1, BBC2, ITV1 and S4C – and reception on those is not good. Can you help or advise me of any hardware I can buy that might be able to help, please?*

Paul Evans, By e-mail

## EDITOR'S NOTE

We suggest Mr Evans writes to the DCMS pointing out his problem, and that he gets in touch with Ofcom and with the Confederation of Aerial Installers, both of whom may be able to suggest a solution. We have also given him the number of a VLV member who may be able to give advice.

*I was very glad to see that you are pressuring Ofcom and the Government about the need for a free to air digital satellite service...*

*I have complained to Ofcom about BSkyB... not about its programming but about its hardware, and especially the EPG (electronic programme guide)... I can get a Freeview PVR (personal video recorder) for £179 with similar functions to Sky+, for no extra cost. Because Sky control the hardware they charge for functionality like this but if set top box suppliers were in control of the hardware, they could make these functions for free and provide competition in the set top box market...*

Damon Conway, By e-mail

*It is difficult to see any valid reason for changes to the way weather forecasts were shown on the BBC. My only complaint about radio and TV forecasts would have been that they should not have been shortened.*

*The way the British Isles are now distorted makes no sense... there are no meaningful North Atlantic synoptic charts: isobars are few and far between and weather fronts – warm, cold, occluded – seem to have been removed. Why are they no longer deemed necessary for understanding contemporary weather patterns?*

*...It was inconceivable to me that the weather forecasts on ITV should be better than those on the BBC. The irony is that domestic viewers do not pay for ITV programmes, whereas we are obliged to pay the ever-increasing regressive tax which the BBC collects in the form of the TV licence fee.*

R. Geoffrey Rose, By e-mail

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Many viewers have complained about the BBC's new weather maps but Mr Rose should realise that ITV and commercial radio programmes do not come 'free'. Everyone of us pays for them through the hidden cost of advertising and sponsorship of programmes over which we not only have no control, but are actually the commodities being delivered by the broadcasters to their paymasters.

## THE BBC GREEN PAPER - A SELECTION FROM THE LETTERS VLV HAS RECEIVED

*Since its inception in 1922, the BBC has proved to be a unique organisation. It is important that it continues to be so in the future. The BBC is important to the political, cultural and social health of the nation and internationally through the World Service and its online services. It has been, and continues to be, a standard bearer for public service broadcasting (PSB)...*

*Consequently, it is important that nothing should be done to weaken or reduce the standards and values of the kind of PSB for which the BBC is world renowned.*

*Recently, the Government intimated that the BBC should become less populist in its programming...*

*The principal objection to this is that unless the BBC's programmes are watched by a substantial number of people the case for the licence fee, as a tax levied on all viewers, is undermined. This problem could be resolved by allowing BBC1 to remain a populist channel in pursuit of high ratings whilst retaining a public service element, thus leaving the other channels to carry more of the public service remit.*

*With regard to revenue it is important the licence fee should remain the Corporation's main source of income. To take advertising or subscription would subject the organisation to the kind of commercial pressures that are inimical to its status as the world's foremost PSB. It is also important for viewers and listeners to be able to enjoy dramas, concerts and documentary programmes without being urged to buy this or that soap powder every twenty minutes or so.*

Peter Tomlinson, Shipley, West Yorkshire

*The BBC must be absolutely independent of Government. Therefore, inter alia, the members of the proposed new BBC Trust must not be recommended by the Prime Minister but possibly by a small committee of MPs chosen from the three main parties.*

*There should not be any specific percentage of programmes that the BBC should outsource. This should be left to the BBC to decide.*

*There should be no advertising on the BBC or pay-to-view. The licence fee should be increased to cover all programmes. Some people will not be able to afford the full licence fee or be able to equip themselves with new digital equipment but it would be easy to set an income limit below which people could be helped with switch-over through the tax system. For example, those who do not pay itax.*

*The World Service (WS) is one of the best promoters of this country. It should be paid for by the Government through the FCO as now. Despite all the new ways of reading or listening to the WS (internet, satellite and doubtless many others in the near future) I think that*

*radio should be kept, as many people, and not only in the poorer countries, cannot afford advanced equipment. Also in countries where the Government does its best to stop its citizens hearing news, short wave radios can be hidden more easily than satellite dishes. The WS should be broadcast in a range of languages. English is the international language but it requires a certain level of education to understand it.*

Mary M Ledzion, Cambridge

*I trust this consultation is genuine and will be acted on by HM Government. Recalling the 2003 Communications Act I heard reports – I believe reliable – that HM Government bowed to pressure from US interests to remove all restrictions on foreign media ownership, with no reciprocity and against public opinion and other advice. That's not democracy!*

*I strongly support the licence fee as value for money. Subscription reduces the joys of freely scanning the airwaves; sponsorship has dangers for public service broadcasting; and I hate advertising on TV and radio, which would also bring grave danger to BBC independence...*

*I do not agree with broadcasting or webcasting meetings of the BBC Trust. Trustees deserve privacy to debate and make decisions without being under constant media glare. Quite enough is done already to appease the great gods of competition that rule our lives!*

Henry Rishbeth, Southampton

**Deadline for next issue:  
20 September, 2005**

Write, fax or e-mail your letters to the Editor at:  
info@vlv.org.uk

## How to Contact the BBC

The BBC Board of Governors have moved their office to 35 Marylebone High Street, London W1V 4AA.

The Board of Governors now has its own website and the minutes of their meetings will in future be posted on it: [www.bbcgovernors.co.uk](http://www.bbcgovernors.co.uk)

The BBC Annual Report for 2004, published on 19 July, is available at local libraries or from BBC Information, PO Box 1922, Glasgow, G2 2WT. It is also posted on the BBC website: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

Presenting the BBC's 2004 Annual Report, BBC Chairman, Michael Grade, said there was no excuse for the BBC to show repeats on BBC1 and BBC2 in the age of digital television. Viewers really 'resent repeats' on the BBC's two main channels, he said.

The BBC Executive Board, chaired by Director-General, Mark Thompson, is based at Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA.

The BBC's new Editorial Guidelines are available at local libraries or on its website: [www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguideline](http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguideline)

## BBC receives approval for the sale of BBC Broadcast

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport has given approval for the BBC to sell its subsidiary BBC Broadcast Limited to an Australian consortium including Macquarie Capital Alliance Group and Macquarie Bank Limited