



**Voice of the  
Listener & Viewer**

# Bulletin

Working for Quality and Diversity in Broadcasting

Winter 2006/07

Issue 87

## Fresh Visions from Familiar Faces – sustaining quality content into the digital age

Thursday, 19 April, London, SW1



VLV's 24th Spring Conference will present members and guests with an opportunity to hear at first hand about the future plans of ITV, BBC Radio and Ofcom and to have an update on progress towards digital switch-over now due to start in less than a year.

At 10.40am, Michael Grade, until November Chairman of the BBC Governors, now the new Executive Chairman of ITV, will give the opening address. He will share his vision of the future of the company, until recently able to compete with, and quite often beat, the BBC in the range and high quality of the programmes it commissioned and broadcast. 2006 was a low point for ITV with falling audiences and threats of take-over. Will he be able to redirect the company and restore it to its former glory?



At 11.45am, Jenny Abramsky, once Director of BBC Radio and Music, but recently appointed BBC Director of Audio and Music in accordance with the BBC's re-structuring plans designed to meet the challenges of new and converging technologies.

BBC Radio audiences are riding high at the moment and choosing to listen more and more via new means of delivery, including the internet, mobile phone and digital television. But will BBC Radio, already run on very tight budgets, suffer from the lower than expected licence fee settlement? How does she see its future?

### Presentation of VLV's 2006 Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting



Sue MacGregor, the distinguished broadcaster and journalist will present the winners of VLV's 2006 Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting with their trophies. The Awards are kindly organised by VLV Board member, Terry Glover, and sponsored by The Voice of the Listener Trust. The names of the winning programmes and individuals are all nominated and chosen by VLV members. They are drawn from a very wide range of genres and interests for the pleasure they bring to viewers and listeners. Almost all the winners attend in person to collect them. We look forward to seeing and congratulating the lucky ones this year.



At 3pm, Ed Richards, the new Chief Executive of the regulator Ofcom will outline how he sees his future role in discharging Ofcom's responsibilities three years after it was established by the 2003 Communications Act. The pace of change in

broadcasting is now so rapid that Ofcom is already finding it difficult to maintain the positive public service remit imposed on ITV by the Act, and has given ITV permission to cut its obligatory hours of regional, children's and religious programmes. He will also look at the need for negative regulation in protecting consumers and vulnerable viewers.

At 3.45pm, Ford Ennals, Chief Executive of Digital UK, the company responsible for ensuring the UK makes a smooth switch-over to digital by 2012, will give an update on progress to date.

At 4.20pm the conference will end with a VLV members' forum.

### Inside

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## Voice of the Listener & Viewer

*Working for Quality and Diversity in British Broadcasting*

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### 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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# VLV Board Enlarged a

More than 50 people attended the 4th AGM of VLV Ltd in London on 28th November, which followed the Autumn Conference. The Chairman recalled that 2006 had been a sad year with the death of Professor Naomi Sargent and her own bereavement. On the positive side she welcomed the opportunity to introduce VLV's first Executive Director, Peter Blackman, who, thanks to a generous grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, took up his appointment full time on 19th June.

Mrs Hay gave her special thanks to her colleagues on the Board of Directors and the VLV Trust who so freely gave their time and expertise, and also to all those members who so kindly continued to give support to VLV and herself. VLV could not exist without that generous help and interest, whether moral, in kind or financial, she said, adding particular thanks to all the contributors to VLV's 2006 Appeal 'Promoting the Public Interest in Broadcasting'. The Appeal was launched by Melvyn Bragg (Lord Bragg) at the end of September and was now over half way to reaching its target of £30,000.

Mrs Hay also thanked the Gravesend staff and the interns, Amy Peters and Peter Elms, who had given invaluable help with the website, with research and in the office.

The first Resolution which increased the maximum number of Directors on the Board from 10 to 13, reflected the fact that VLV now had directors based in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. As all the directors do a huge amount of voluntary work for VLV in formulating policy, drafting responses and, those in the nations, also organising conferences and other events, it had been decided to enlarge the Board in order to increase the representation, widen the breadth of expertise and experience, and spread the load.

The second Resolution added the new Executive Director to the approved list of those who can be co-signatories to cheques.

### RESIGNATION OF DR ANDREW TAUSSIG & PROFESSOR BOB FRANKLIN

We were very sorry to receive the resignation of Dr Andrew Taussig who has been such a valuable member of the Board for the past three years. We are delighted that he will be staying on as a member of the Voice of the Listener Trust. We were also very sorry to lose Professor Bob Franklin in January. Professor Franklin joined the Board in November 2005, just after moving to the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media & Culture. He organised a very successful conference for VLV in Wales in March 2006 but now finds his new duties leave him insufficient time to play an active role. We are glad he and his Department remain members and we look forward to seeing him at future events.

Jocelyn Hay was unanimously re-elected as Honorary Chairman and thanked for all her work on behalf of VLV.

Following the formal business of the AGM, Mrs Hay chaired a Members' Forum in which a wide range of issues was discussed. They included some of the problems members were having with reception, including the quality of DAB radio and the lack of reliable information about digital terrestrial television reception and the availability of Freeview, the recruitment of new members and fund raising.

### NEW MEMBERS ELECTED TO THE BOARD WERE:



#### Robert Clark

After a career managing state benefit provision in East London that ended with early retirement Robert has spent the last ten years doing voluntary work, mostly for community organisations. He has been a member of VLV since the early 1990s

and has a passion and concern for diverse, high quality Radio. Robert took an active part in the consumer consultation on BBC Charter renewal. He is the VLV representative on the groups monitoring the interests of consumers during digital switch over including the Ministerial Consumer Expert Advisory Group on switch-over. Robert also attends consultative meetings at Ofcom on behalf of VLV.

#### Ivor Gaber

Ivor, a broadcaster, researcher and consultant, is Emeritus Professor of Broadcast Journalism at London University's Goldsmiths College and Research Professor in Media and Politics at the University of Bedfordshire. He has served as a media and politics consultant to a variety of organisations, governments and international bodies. His journalistic career has included senior editorial positions at the BBC, ITN, Channel 4 and Sky News. He has just completed a consultancy project in Uganda where he helped set up the country's first national news agency. He has been a member of VLV since the mid 90's and has spoken at a number of VLV events and conferences. He is Deputy Chair of the Communications Section of the UK UNESCO National Commission and is on the organising committee for World Press Freedom Day.



#### Norman Green Fellow of The Royal Television Society

Norman started his career at EMI Research Laboratories working on military projects including television cameras for the Black Knight rocket. He then moved to the Central Research Laboratories of the Rank Organisation working on diverse projects.

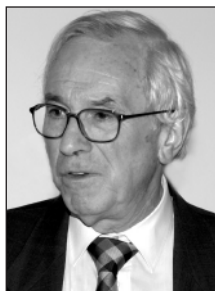
# t 4th AGM

In 1964 Norman joined the Engineering Department of ABC Television, working on investigations into various colour systems. In 1972 he was appointed the first Head of Engineering at the Independent Television Companies Association (ITCA), responsible for the Engineering Secretariat serving the 14 ITV Programme Companies and ITN. As Head of Technology for ITV Norman was a member of many national and international committees concerned with the technical standardisation of television and a member of the European Broadcasting Union's Bureau where he represented all the British Broadcasters including the BBC.

## Brian Groombridge

After developing an interest in lifelong learning and broadcasting during the war, Brian was invited to do the research that led to *Education and Retirement*, published in 1960 by the National Institute of Adult Education of which he became Deputy Secretary from 1964 until 1968.

He was then appointed Head of Educational Programme Services at the IBA. In 1976 Brian became Professor of Adult Education and Director of the Department of Extra-Mural Studies (now incorporated in Birkbeck College), University of London. He has just retired as President of the Educational Centres Association. Brian's main commitments at present are with the National Association of Widows and as a co-opted member of the Older People's Advisory Group (Better Government for Older People).



## Sonia Livingstone

Sonia is Professor of Social Psychology in the Department of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She researches and teaches in the field of media and communications, focusing

on media audiences. Her recent work concerns children, young people and the internet, as part of a broader interest in the domestic, familial and educational contexts of new media access. Further projects underway include the public understanding of risk and regulation, and directing a research network for the EC's Safer Internet Plus programme, EU Kids Online. Sonia has been visiting professor at six overseas universities. She has served as Non-Industry Vice Chair and is a Board Member of the Internet Watch Foundation. She has advised Ofcom, the Department for Education and Skills, the Home Office, Economic and Social Research Council, the BBC and the Higher Education Funding Council, among others. She has recently been elected President-elect of the International Communication Association.

# Children's Television: Where Now?

2nd November 2006

Voice of the Listener and Viewer's 12th annual conference on Children's Broadcasting at the Royal Society, London, proved a marked success, with standing room only at times.



**SPEAKERS:** Tony Robinson, broadcaster, presenter & actor; Richard Deverell, Controller, BBC Children's Programmes; Anne Gilchrist, Creative Director, CBBC; Michael Carrington, Creative Director, CBeebies; Nick Wilson: Controller, Children's & Youth Programmes, Channel Five; Tim Suter, Senior Partner, Content & Standards, Ofcom; John McVay, Chief Executive, PACT; Camilla Byk, VLV member and parent; Lucy Daniel Raby, author of children's books, film & television; Fiona Thomas, Communications Officer, Mothers' Union; Nigel Pickard, Director of Family Entertainment, RDF Television; Anne Wood, Founder & Creative Director, Ragdoll Ltd; Will Brenton, Co-founder, Wish Films; Lewis Rudd, former controller Children's Programmes Carlton Television; Anna Home, Chief Executive Children's Film & TV Foundation

In a lively introduction which immediately provided a point of reference for the rest of the day, Tony Robinson acknowledged the enormous debt he owed to children's television. In particular he had valued his time with 'Play Away', a programme which had given him the chance to experiment and breathe creatively, a period to which he was indebted for much in the later part of his career. He felt it impossible to over-state the positive effect on the imagination of good children's television. Children were like blotting paper in their consumption of television.

In the session, 'The View from the Viewer'. Lewis Rudd asked the question 'How important are children's programmes?' The many replies were summarised by Lucy Daniel Raby who said that children's television was 'the medium of our children's generation'. Fiona Thomas was concerned that parents needed actively to involve themselves in what their children were viewing, adding that for too long the fantastic quality of children's television made in this country had been taken for granted. Children needed intellectual stimulation, said Camilla Byk. After a keen discussion, the consensus was, if children's imagination was to be protected, better education of parents was essential, with the media made aware of the crisis which faced children's television in Britain.

The subject of the next session was 'The View from the BBC'. The excerpts from new BBC children's programmes which were included appeared to be precisely the type of indigenous programming all those present wanted to see. Richard Deverell felt that, for children's television, the present period was one of unprecedented challenge rather than crisis. Anne Gilchrist revealed that the BBC was raising the ambition of its programmes for children by doing 'fewer titles, better'. Michael Carrington said that CBeebies intended to reach out to a wider age range between 0 to 6 years old. Concerns that the BBC would relax its commitment to children's broadcasting if ITV cease its production were rebutted on the BBC's behalf, though speakers recognised the dangers if the BBC came to hold a monopoly over children's broadcasting.

In 'View from Commercial Broadcasters and Independents', Anne Wood, creator of Teletubbies, explained how she had learnt everything she knew

about children's television at ITV and she was concerned that this opportunity might not be open to producers in the future. Will Brenton poignantly asked when children's television had become solely a commercial decision.

Much time was taken up with the search for the funding of programmes. Answers ranged from top slicing the revenue from the television licence fee to a national cultural fund. But, as Adam Minns made clear, the case for children's television needs to be addressed to many more people through the national media before funding can be debated.

The final session 'Where Now' was the most heated. Tim Suter opened by referring to the three areas on which the future of children's television depended: first: the Public Service Broadcasters (BBC, Channel 3 - as ITV will become, Channels 4 and Five); secondly, the non Public Service Broadcasters, and thirdly economics. He explained that the 2003 Communications Act focused on self-regulation, placing the onus on the broadcasters to self-regulate against their own advanced annual statements of programme policy. The European Directive on Television had 'get-out' clauses which made it impossible to enforce quotas set for indigenous production. During the following discussion several speakers were concerned that, with Ofcom having the duty to 'further the interests of all citizens', it should also exercise a duty to advance the interests of children, not simply protect them.

## Stop Press...

### Television as a Power for Good

As a result of opinion expressed at the conference and continuing concerns about the threat to children's television on commercially funded channels, VLV is launching a campaign in the spring to raise awareness of how important it is for children to continue to have access to a wide range of high quality programmes, made in the UK, which engage their imagination and reflect their own needs, interests, culture and environment.

For more details visit our website [www.vlv.org.uk](http://www.vlv.org.uk) or contact the VLV office on 01474 352835.



## Editorial Comment – A New BBC



A new BBC came into being on 1st January. Shall we see much difference? Yes, I think we shall.

The old Board of Governors has gone, to be replaced by the new BBC Trust. The success of the new Trust and the system of

governance it will administer are crucial to the BBC's future and that of effective public service broadcasting in Britain, so the choice of the right person to succeed its recently departed Chairman is critical.

The BBC is far from perfect as an institution. Indeed, it is often maddening even to its most devoted supporters. Nevertheless, the BBC plays a unique and irreplaceable role, not only in the sense of continuity, community and cohesion it provides at the heart of British life, but also in the way it serves our democratic society, through its provision of news and information, and strengthens our culture through its patronage of music, drama and the visual arts.

We know the licence settlement was not as generous as the BBC wanted and that as a consequence the BBC will have to cut its coat according to its cloth. We also know that, in return for the licence fee at its new level, the public expects it to deliver a wide range of high quality programmes and services. We believe that it should be able to provide them.

However, the BBC is also committed to moving some of its departments to the North-west and so helping to further the Government's desire to create a new media city at Salford. The problem is that the Government is also insisting that the BBC (and therefore licence fee payers) should bear much of the cost of switching the UK from analogue to digital television, including providing help for 'vulnerable' viewers to acquire the necessary new receiving equipment. This is an unprecedented imposition which makes the BBC, in effect, an instrument of the Government's social policy.

No one knows the exact sums involved but the BBC has to ring-fence £800million for this purpose over the next six years. But will it even end there? Major national projects have a habit of going over

budget, and switching the UK to digital will be the biggest national project since the Second World War. That's why, when press reports suggested the licence fee might be set punitively low, VLV with others set up the meeting in the House of Commons on 9th January to raise awareness of all the issues involved. It took a lot of doing but was well worthwhile.

Lord Puttnam, a VLV patron and chairman of the Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament which looked at the future of the BBC in 2005, recently said 'I find it hard to overstate the Corporation's importance. I find it equally hard to imagine a future for public life in this country that isn't bound together by the 'national conversation' that, day in and day out, is orchestrated by the BBC.'

It is up to the new Trustees to ensure that the conversation not merely continues, but actively develops as we enter a new era. They, and their new Chairman, will need to be wise, far-sighted and fiercely independent, for on them will depend the future of an irreplaceable institution and pillar of British culture and democracy.

*Jocelyn Hay*

### How the BBC Trust Will Work

The new BBC Charter says that 'The word 'trust' is used in the name of the BBC Trust in a colloquial sense, to suggest a body which discharges a public trust as guardian of the public interest.' The Trustees are there to represent the interests of the licence fee payers and to safeguard and ensure wise use of the licence fee income. They will have new tools and rules to help them in their task and by which they will be judged, some of which they have just published and put out for public consultation.

In serving the public interest, the BBC's main objective is the promotion of six public purposes. The six purposes are:

- Sustaining citizenship and civil society
- Promoting education and learning
- Stimulating creativity and cultural excellence
- Representing the UK, its nations, regions, and communities
- Bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK
- In promoting its other services, help to deliver to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services and take a lead role in the switchover to digital

Each of the purposes will have a remit which explains what is expected of the BBC and how its performance will be judged. In response to each of the remits, BBC management will be expected to produce plans setting out how it will meet the objectives of each of the purposes. They will act as an accountability tool which the Trustees can use to reflect the expectations of licence fee payers

The Trust is also now responsible for issuing services licences for each area of BBC output, nearly 30 in all. Like the purpose remits, the new licences are intended to create a clearer, more transparent, method of regulation than was the case under the former Board of Governors. In January the Trustees held a seminar, attended by VLV, to launch two public consultations on the new arrangements. The public has until 10 April to respond.

## VLV Lobby on the Licence Fee



Shaun Woodward MP addressing the packed Commons committee room

Reports before Christmas that the BBC licence fee was to be set well below the rate of inflation caused John Grogan MP and VLV with others to take immediate steps to set up a meeting in the House of Commons on 9 January, the day Parliament returned. The aim was to raise awareness of the need for the BBC to be awarded a settlement that would enable it to deliver the programmes and services that licence fee payers want and, at the same time, fulfil the extra obligations laid on it by its new Charter and Agreement.

Over 150 people, MP's, individuals and representatives of a wide range of consumer and industry interests attended the meeting chaired by VLV chairman, Jocelyn Hay.

Shaun Woodward MP, Minister for the Creative Industries, who attended for part of the time explained that the settlement would be fair. He hoped that the move of some BBC departments to Salford would help to create 12,000 new jobs.

Speaking from the platform were: John Grogan MP (Lab), Chair of the All Party Parliamentary BBC

Group; Ed Vaizey MP (Cons) Shadow Minister for the Creative Industries; Don Foster MP (Lib Dem); Brendan Barber (TUC); Peter Moorey, (National Council for Voluntary Organisations), Public Voice & Media Trust);

Alastair Thomson (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education); Lady Solti (for the Arts); Professor Steven Barnett, (University of Westminster).

Many others spoke from the floor or sent messages of support, including: Gayle Barnard, Writers' Guild; Greg Childs, Save Kids' TV; John Fray, NUJ; Tony Lennon, BECTU; Lord (Colin) Low,

Royal National Institute of the Blind; Gerry Morrissey, BECTU; VLV members Hugh Peltor and Dr Patrick Xavier; the National Campaign for the Arts; Churches' Media Council; Stephen Poliakoff and Richard Curtis.

It was unanimously agreed that the following Resolution should be sent by Jocelyn Hay as Chairman of VLV, to the Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet:

"This meeting calls on the Government to settle the BBC licence fee at an adequate level, linked and at least equal to the RPI, to enable the BBC to deliver high quality content and at the same time meet all the obligations, and to provide the existing and new services, set out in the Corporation's new Charter and Agreement."

We believe the meeting helped to influence the final settlement and raise awareness of the demanding role the BBC is being expected to play in switch-over.

This must not be at the expense of the programmes and services that licence fee payers want and most say they are prepared to pay for.

# Meeting the challenge of digital switchover

## by Guest Contributor, Ford Ennals, Chief Executive, Digital UK



Television is soon to undergo its biggest transformation in a generation. In just eight months' time, the UK's first digital switchover will take place in Whitehaven, Cumbria. Then, over the next five years, the entire country will be switched to all-digital television.

VLV has been actively involved in the switchover project for some time, represented by Robert Clark

through the Consumer Expert Group. And whenever I've addressed VLV events in the past, I've always been encouraged by the level of knowledge demonstrated by members about switchover and their keenness to follow the issue with care.

The programme will make digital TV through an aerial (Freeview) available to all households, as we turn off the analogue signal and boost the digital one. Along with cable, subscription satellite and free-to-air satellite, this will provide a greater range of options over how people get digital.

It's worth remembering that three-quarters of homes in the country are already watching digital by one means or another, but some still rely on analogue. I know that certain aspects of switchover are of special interest to VLV members. I hope I can offer reassurance about some of those.

We are pleased the government has confirmed that £600 million will be made available over the next seven years to fund a switchover help scheme for those who need it most. The funding will come from the licence fee, as part of the BBC's task of building a digital Britain.

Those over 75, the severely disabled and the blind or partially sighted will receive equipment to convert one TV set, help with its installation (including any aerial work) and follow-up support. For the poorest eligible households, this will all be free; for others there will be a fee of around £40.

But the help doesn't stop at the formal scheme. Digital UK is working closely with local councils, charities, volunteer and community groups to "help the helpers" and provide additional information and assistance for those unsure about how to make the switch, including those who aren't eligible for financial help.

Consumer protection is another important consideration. We want to minimise the opportunity for unscrupulous people to provide substandard technical work, or make unsolicited visits to homes during the programme.

That's why we're working with bodies such as the Home Office, the Police, Trading Standards and Crimestoppers to tackle such activity. All our literature states that no-one will call about switchover without an appointment. We are also discussing ways to monitor offences committed under the guise of bogus switchover advice, such as doorstep burglary, so any such activity can be addressed on a regional basis.

Switchover will change the way we watch television forever. It's an exciting project to be involved in, but equally it presents many real challenges.

So I look forward to further dialogue with VLV about how we can make switchover work, and maximise the considerable benefits that we believe this historic programme will deliver.

## A Changing BBC: Accountability and Creativity

28 November, 2006 at Over-Seas House, London SW1

Over 120 people attended VLV's 23rd Autumn Conference which focused primarily on changes at the BBC, granted a new Royal Charter and Agreement in July 2006. At the time of the conference, decisions on BBC funding and the future level of the licence were expected shortly and are the subject of comments elsewhere in this bulletin.

The conference opened with an update on digital switch-over, now due to start in Whitehaven, Cumbria in October 2007. VLV member John Clark chaired the session. Roger Darlington, a member of the Ofcom Consumer Panel, standing in for its chairman, Colette Bowe, said awareness and use of the new technology was increasing satisfactorily. He explained some of the problems which the Panel had identified, especially in relation to people living in flats, saying that the Panel was working to find solutions. Michael Darlow was not so sanguine but gave details of a successful public meeting he had organised in his home town on the subject and offered a model for others to follow.

Professor Jean Seaton of Westminster University, the BBC's current historian, chaired the second session. Mark Wakefield and Chris Woolard explained the structure of the new BBC Trust, to replace the existing Board of Governors in January

### SPEAKERS:

Jana Bennett, Director BBC Vision  
Mark Wakefield, Head of Performance,  
BBC Governance Unit  
Chris Woolard, Head of Compliance and  
Value for Money, BBC Governance Unit  
Roger Darlington, Member,  
Ofcom Consumer Advisory Panel  
Michael Darlow, VLV member, writer and director

2007. With the use of slides they also explained the structure of the new BBC Executive Board to be chaired by the Director General and how the relationship between the two boards was expected to work. The independent Board of Trustees would be quite distinct from the Executive and would be accountable to licence fee payers for the wise expenditure of the licence fee income. A long and detailed question and answer followed their presentation. It contributed very helpfully to a greater understanding of the details of the new structures and guidelines.

After lunch, Professor Stewart Purvis, City University, London, took the chair for the third session in which Jana Bennett, newly-appointed Director of BBC Vision with responsibility for

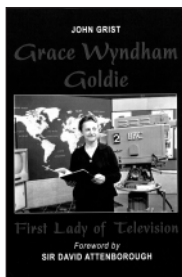
television and new media, was the speaker. She explained how the BBC was planning for the rapidly approaching all-digital environment and the huge changes it implied for all traditional broadcasters. She laid out an ambitious prospect of new creative thinking and new interactive services. Structural reforms include moving several BBC departments, among them Children's programmes, sport, research and development to Manchester. She warned that some plans would, however, depend on the level of the licence fee settlement.

The conference was followed by the 4th AGM at 4pm.



Jana Bennett and Stewart Purvis

## Book Review



### GRACE WYNNDHAM GOLDIE: FIRST LADY OF TELEVISION

John Grist, Foreword  
by Sir David Attenborough,  
Authors OnLine, 2006: ISBN 0  
7552 0248 1. 272pp. £20.00

Asa Briggs, in his *History of the BBC* refers to Grace Wyndham Goldie as 'a formidable woman'. She

needed to be: she was one of the first to recognise that television, not radio, would be the dominant medium of the future. The BBC's own hierarchy was sceptical, but she joined the staff in 1944, and went to television in 1946, where she pioneered programmes which showed the Corporation could do as well in television as in radio. She launched prestigious programmes in different genres, such as 'Panorama', a daily magazine ('Tonight') and the arts programme, 'Monitor'.

As David Attenborough observes, "She was a woman, as they said at the time, of iron whim". Yet she had the capacity, not only to create space for innovative programmes and formats, but also to find staff with the talent to develop her concepts in their own way. In the male dominated worlds of broadcasting and politics, she was a strong character who not only enjoyed talking with men, but arguing with them as well. At this time, it was only women of exceptional ability who could make a good career in the BBC.

Grist knew her well and provides a detailed portrait, tracing her progress from her days in radio to her time as television's Head of Current Affairs. Grace Wyndham Goldie was one of the outstanding figures in the history of British broadcasting who ensured that the BBC Charter rhetoric was implemented in practice.

Brian Groombridge

## Who's Who at the new BBC Trust

Acting Chairman: **Dr Chitra Bharucha**, has had a career as a consulting clinical haematologist. She has served on the BBC Broadcasting Council for Northern Ireland and as Northern Ireland Member of the ITC.

**Alison Hastings**, Trustee for England, is a former newspaper journalist and editor. She is now a media consultant whose clients include Camelot, Liverpool City and the Press Complaints Commission.

**Rotha Johnston**, Trustee for Northern Ireland, is an entrepreneur in commerce and property. She is a non-executive director of Anglo-Irish Bank and Vice Chairman of Invest Northern Ireland.

**Jeremy Peat**, Trustee for Scotland, is a former BBC Governor, Chairman of the BBC Pension Trustees and a member of the Competition Commission. He wrote for the Herald newspaper and was Group Chief Economist at the Royal Bank of Scotland.

**Diane Coyle**, is an economics consultant specialising in new technologies and globalisation and a member of the Competition Commission.

**Dermot Gleeson**, former member of the BBC Board of Governors, is Deputy Chairman of the

## Public Consultations and VLV Responses

The last three months has seen a surge in the number of public consultations launched by the BBC, Ofcom, OFT and the Parliamentary Select Committee for Culture, Media & Sport.

VLV has responded to those by:

Ofcom, on the Advertising of Food & Drink Products to Children; the Future of Radio, and the regulation of TV Quiz calls; OFT, on BSkyB's purchase of a 17.65% shareholding in ITV; and the Parliamentary Select Committee for Culture, Media & Sport on the future of Public Service Media Content. As a result, VLV has been invited to give oral evidence to the Committee on 20 February. VLV also sent briefing papers on revisions to the European TV Without Frontiers and European Audio Visual Media Services Directives to the Culture Secretary and others, and on the 2nd Reading of the Digital Switch-over Bill to a number of MPs.

Copies of all VLV responses and a list of current consultations open to the public are available on the VLV website: [www.vlv.org.uk](http://www.vlv.org.uk) or from the VLV office.

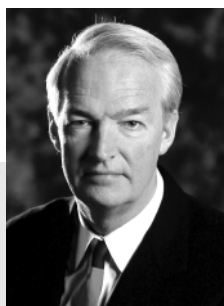
KEY CONSULTATIONS CURRENTLY OPEN INCLUDE:

- Ofcom's Annual Plan, deadline: 20 February
- Ofcom, Award of Available Spectrum, deadline: 9 March
- Ofcom, Digital Dividend Review, deadline: 13 March

MEETINGS & EVENTS ATTENDED BY VLV

Since the last Bulletin VLV has had meetings with the Minister for Creative Industries, Shaun Woodward MP, officials at the DCMS, the chairmen of the Ofcom Content Board and Ofcom Consumer Panel; senior executives at the BBC, ITV and Channel 4.

VLV has provided speakers or participants for a wide range of events including, Westminster Media Forum seminars on children's TV, News, and TV Advertising; the Oxford Media Convention; Greater London Fund for Older People; All-Party Parliamentary Group and Ofcom seminar on Media Literacy; Gillingham and Putney Rotary Clubs; Chatham Probud Club, Hartley WI and several; Active Retirement Clubs.



## VLV Student Essay Competition 2007 in association with Channel 4 Jon Snow will be one of the judges

Subject: 'Critically discuss the ways in which, in today's changing media environment, audiences are becoming content producers. Is this a significant trend and, if so, is it a good thing?'

Broadcasting is changing rapidly with a new Royal Charter for the BBC, an explosion of new digital services threatening ITV, Channel 4 and Five, and the start of analogue switch-off LESS THAN one year away. Meantime, more and more people are using converging technologies to generate their own content, podcasts, webcasts, vlogs and blogs. How is this affecting traditional broadcasters and public service content?

Voice of the Listener & Viewer (VLV) invites entries for its 2007 Student Essay Competition, held in association with Channel 4, from students studying for a UK registered undergraduate or postgraduate degree or similar professional/academic qualifications.

Winning entrants at undergraduate and postgraduate levels will each receive a cash prize of £500. The two winners and the two runners-up will also each have the opportunity for two weeks work experience with a leading television production company.

Entries can be submitted either as a written essay of a maximum of 2,000 words or as a short video or radio feature of no more than 10 minutes in length. The closing date for entries is Thursday, 31 May 2007.

Full details and an entry form, which must be completed, are available at [www.vlv.org.uk](http://www.vlv.org.uk) or in writing, enclosing an sae, from VLV, 101 King's Drive, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 5BQ. There is no entry fee.

BBC Pension Scheme Trustees. He was Chairman of M S Gleeson Group plc from 2003-5

**Dame Patricia Hodgson**, is Principal of Newnham College Cambridge, a Director of the Wellcome Trust and a member of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. She had a long career at the BBC before becoming Chief Executive of the ITC until it was subsumed into Ofcom in 2003.

**David Liddimen**, is a non-executive Director of the independent production company All3Media and the producer of the Old Vic Theatre Company. He was formerly Director of Programmes at ITV, following a long career at BBC, Granada and LWT.

**Mehmuda Mian Pritchard**, is a member of the Independent Police Complaints Commission for London and S. E. Region. She was a solicitor in Birmingham and is a non-executive director of the NHS Litigation Authority.

**Richard Tait**, is Professor of Journalism and Director of the Centre for Journalism Studies, Cardiff University. He was Editor-in-Chief ITN from 1995 - 2002.

### ADDITIONS TO THE BBC EXECUTIVE BOARD

The BBC Executive Board is chaired by Director General, Mark Thompson. Under the recent restructuring, five non-executive directors have been added to the Board. They are:

**Marcus Agius**, currently Chairman in London of the investment bank Lazard, and Chairman-designate of Barclays PLC;  
**Dr Mike Lynch**, co-founder and Chief Executive of Autonomy Corporation plc;  
**David Robbie**, Group Finance Director, Rexam plc;  
**Dr Samir Shah**, Chief Executive of Juniper Communications, an independent production company.



# Letters to the Editor

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

## BBC MUSIC POLICY

Congratulations to Ron Savage for his letter on BBC Music Policy (Autumn Bulletin). It strikes me that modern Pop music compares very badly with the much more tuneful fare on offer when I was growing up in the 30s and 40s.

David Pawlyn, Evesham, Worcs.

## LOCAL CHANNELS UNDER LOCAL CONTROL

The switchover from analogue to digital delivery of television will release analogue spectrum for other uses. The communications regulator Ofcom has commissioned a year long Digital Dividend Review, on which it is currently consulting. The widely flagged conclusion is that sale of released broadcast spectrum will be recommended, not least making an important contribution to Treasury income. However there are a clear set of public service obligations that should be honoured before these assets are put up for sale to the highest bidders across the UK. The idea that spectrum is a UK asset is far from clear-cut. Ofcom has suggested that it might be necessary to have a constitutional debate to resolve 'who owns spectrum'.

There are no national terrestrial transmitters with UK wide coverage so terrestrial spectrum is broadcast to local areas from regional and local transmitter sites. The broadcast frequencies are used in combination to provide coverage for UK-wide channels - having first been regulated under state intervention to serve a clear national public purpose - to provide universal public service broadcasting.

Now that the national public service requirements have been met - and broadcast spectrum sale and market regulation is contemplated post-switchover - the remaining spectrum should revert to local regulation for use on behalf of those in reach of a signal.

Dave Rushton, Director, Institute of Local Television, Edinburgh

My wife and I watch fewer and fewer of our once favourite programmes on BBC1 and 2 Television nowadays for one main reason: while News programmes appear obliged to give a warning when an item 'contains some flash photography', the drama department does not. Programmes we would have watched with pleasure - Spooks, Bleak House, Match of the Day, Lord Winston's series on children's development, for example (are)

chock-a-block with flashes, bangs, --- outrageously disorientating high speed zoom and pan effects and other --- intrusions. --- Do producers not understand how the human brain works - that it needs a moment for establishment shots to be comprehensible? The genius of the writer's dialogue requires to be intelligently enhanced by the production, not blitzed by it. Perhaps they believe that this invasion of our brains will revitalise the few, flagging brain cells we have left? We think it'll kill them off. (We) hope you can set some kind of redress in motion.

Stewart and Joan Lowdon, Wadebridge, Cornwall

## EDITOR'S NOTE:

Following this and other complaints about the increasing use of rapidly changing advertisement boards in football matches we have pointed out to the BBC the discomfort and danger caused to many viewers, especially those with epilepsy.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS MEETING

Unfortunately I cannot be with you on 9 January but I wish you all success in the meeting.

I support VLV's policy as you state it "not --- an over-generous settlement" but this Government seems, as it so often does, to have stated desirable policies without providing the means to implement them. I'm concerned, however, about the antipathy to repeats - we don't want low-quality recent programmes to be repeated merely as time-fillers, but the repeat of good archival programmes from the past, such as Cathy Come Home, is to be encouraged.

The BBC could make savings, in my view, by cutting back on local services, but the principal problem with the BBC (and ITV) at the moment is the low quality of programmes. I live alone and the programmes over the recent holiday were so poor that I made deep inroads into my video and DVD collections. But today's programming provides tomorrow's DVDs to a fair extent, so if we don't watch out tomorrow's DVD quality will atrophy.

Allan Palmer, Address supplied

Unfortunately, I cannot attend the meeting at the House of Commons but I do hope that the matter of the BBC (using our money) having contracted Jonathan Ross for 3 years at a total cost of £18m can be raised. I think that this is disgraceful.

Graham Preedy, Greenford, Middlesex

Thank you for your letter of 4 January about the meeting at the House of Commons. I will be in London that day and may get to the House in time, but it would not be to support VLV because I am fighting to see the BBC licence fee cut, if not abolished, as an unfair stealth tax.

I am also therefore unable to renew my subscription. On the contrary, I am writing to my MP with my views and arguments against this tax, and asking where is the 'evidence' that a majority of such taxpayers are actually willing to pay a higher sum, and how the survey was compiled!

H A Prowse, Camberley, Surrey

In an article in The Times in December, Helen Rumbelow suggested that Radio 4 may not only be in for a rude shock when Channel 4 is given a licence to develop radio stations (one or more of which would compete with R4), but that Radio 4 would deserve such competition, and be forced to change for the better, with many long-standing shows spiked despite their popularity. One is tempted to think that Rumbelow has somehow attuned herself to vibrations emanating from the top of News International with its record of opposing established public service broadcasters, its intrusion into ITV merely a move to see that the channel remains weak - as a competitor to Sky's television services.

In this context, Ofcom's support for more radio stations is welcomed. On the other hand, the current fortunes of Commercial Radio are at best, neutral, signs of a system struggling to hold its ground; but there is no compelling evidence of an unrequited market (other than for the kinds of 'services' which the still ubiquitous pirate operators seem to offer). Ofcom reminds visitors to its website (<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/psb3/>) that it is "charged with reporting on how the quality of public service broadcasting can be maintained and strengthened in future" (my italics). One would expect to see Ofcom developing ways of identifying and safeguarding such quality - rather than just encouraging an increase in quantity - by itself is no proxy for quality.

Mallory Wober PhD, London NW3

**Deadline for next issue:  
15 March, 2007**

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

## Opportunities for VLV Interns

In the past two years VLV has enjoyed the help of nine student interns. They each contributed in different ways and VLV benefited enormously from their enthusiasm and skills. Their work included researching the student essay competition, European and UK Parliamentary policy, children's issues, developing the website, writing for the Bulletin and helping at conferences. As one remarked, 'VLV is not just a pressure group, it's also a think-tank and the breadth of issues covered is astonishing.'

We are grateful to Daniel Dyball, who in December and January produced a paper on European policy, and to Laurence Pawley on UK radio and public service broadcasting policy. We hope Laurence will continue to assist us during the rest of his PhD studies at Goldsmith's College.

All of our interns have since gone on to find excellent jobs and we would be glad to hear from others seeking a placing. Please apply to [Sue.Washbrook@vlv.org.uk](mailto:Sue.Washbrook@vlv.org.uk)

## Honorary Treasurer, VLV Ltd

VLV is looking for an Honorary Treasurer to succeed Colin Thompson who has very kindly filled the post for the past four years. Colin has new commitments which now make it very difficult for him to continue.

The appointment is not a 'hands-on' job. All the records and accounts are kept on computer in the VLV office where VLV's new Executive Director is responsible for preparing the accounts and presenting monthly figures and forecasts.

Meetings of the Board of Directors are held two or three monthly in central London. After an initial visit it may not be necessary to travel to the VLV office in Gravesend very often. Meetings can be conducted in London over a laptop and much of the remaining work can be conducted by phone, fax or email.

In return, the Treasurer will have the opportunity to contribute to the formation of VLV policy, take part in a range of stimulating and entertaining events involving politicians, academics, producers and media personalities. If you would like further details, please contact Jocelyn Hay, VLV Chairman.

## Honorary Treasurer, The Voice of the Listener Trust

Following the death in 2006 of Professor Naomi Sargent, The Voice of the Listener Trust is seeking a new Honorary Treasurer. We should be very glad to hear from any member who might be interested in helping. The Trust supports the charitable activities of VLV Ltd which fall within its own objects and it sponsors the annual VLV Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting.

The demands of the post are not onerous. The sums involved are not large and all the accounts are kept on computer in Gravesend. The Trustees meet quarterly in central London, generally over a sandwich lunch. Other contacts are by telephone, fax or email.

For further details please contact the Chairman of the Trust, Elizabeth Smith, care of Sue Washbrook on 01474 352835.

## 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.

**For the 50th anniversary of the start of "Armchair Theatre" - Leonard White's book, "Armchair Theatre - The Lost Years" brings it alive.**



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## 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 Radio or TV User's Guide worth £5.95.

Just fill out the coupon below and state which publication and card type you would prefer.



**THE RADIO LISTENER'S GUIDE 2007 & THE TELEVISION VIEWER'S GUIDE 2007**

### ORDERING DETAILS

The guides cost £5.95 each - (includes p&tp). Please make your cheques payable to *Radio Listener's Guide*, and send them to:  
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PO Box 888, Plymouth PL8 1YJ

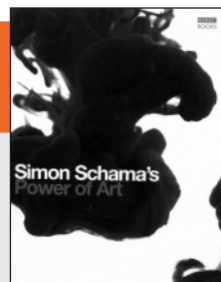
## Winter Competition

Win a copy of Simon Schama's 'Power of Art' book by answering the following question:

**Name two of the artists featured in his 'Power of Art' tv series.**

Replies on a postcard to: Winter Competition, VLV, 101 King's Drive, Gravesend, DA12 5BQ.

Or by email to: [info@vlv.org.uk](mailto:info@vlv.org.uk) by 15 March 2007. The Editor's decision is final.



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

\*please delete as appropriate

VLV subscription - individual £25.00, two at same address £40.00, student/concessionary £17.50, joint concessions £35.00.  
VLV overseas subscription - individual £35.00, student/concessionary £25.00. Newsletter only subscription (non members) UK £30.00, overseas £35.00. Please make cheques payable to VLV Ltd and send to 101 Kings Drive, Gravesend, DA12 5BQ.

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## Diary Dates

**Thursday, 19 April**

VLV Spring Conference: Fresh Visions from Familiar Faces  
London SW1  
10.45am - 5pm, coffee 10.30am

**Thursday, 19 April**

Presentation of VLV's 2006 Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting by Sue MacGregor  
London SW1  
1.45pm

## Celebrate the glory of Gershwin

**Sunday, 11th March  
3.30 - 5.45pm**

VLV is delighted to announce that the BBC Elstree Concert Band will kindly be giving its 14th annual concert in aid of the Voice of the Listener Trust.



Rodney Greenberg

The concert will take place at the BBC Maida Vale Studio between 3.30 pm and 5.45 pm, by kind permission of the BBC. It will be conducted by Andrew Morley.

The presentation of Gershwin's music will be by Rodney Greenberg, Emmy Award-winning producer and the director of many television music programmes including The Last Night of the Proms, and the author of a Gershwin biography published by Phaidon Press.

This is an opportunity to enjoy a fascinating audio-visual portrait of America's most charismatic composer; featuring rare photos and archive recordings, live piano solos and illustrations and live performances of much-loved Gershwin compositions by The BBC Elstree Concert Band.

The Maida Vale Studio is situated in Delaware Rd, London W9 2LG, close to Maida Vale tube station.

Refreshments will be served before and during the concert.

Tickets @ £7.50 (concessions £5, including children under 18). Please apply to [Linda.forbes@vlv.org.uk](mailto:Linda.forbes@vlv.org.uk) or phone 01474352835.