



Voice of the Listener & Viewer

Championing Excellence and Diversity in Broadcasting

Autumn 2023

Bulletin 136

LORD TONY HALL BECOMES VLV PRESIDENT



VLV is delighted to announce that Lord Tony Hall CBE, former Director-General of the BBC, is to become the President of VLV. Tony said, 'I'm both honoured and delighted to be President of the VLV. It's an organisation that I've long admired. Its focus on high quality broadcasting and media has been both admirable and necessary. I know too from my own experience that people take what VLV says seriously. The next few years are going to be critical for all of us who believe in decent, quality media. I look forward to working with you all to make sure our voice is heard loud and clear'.

Tony believes that the BBC, and Public Service Broadcasting more broadly, are crucial elements of the nation's infrastructure. At the VLV Spring conference he said, 'Like many infrastructure issues, problems are often ignored until it's too late and cracks have begun to show'. He believes that the BBC is suffering 'a diminution by stealth' – a slow, almost imperceptible, decline.

At the conference he made a number of recommendations: that BBC funding negotiations should be reformed, that the government should decide what we want from the BBC before setting its funding model and that the process of appointing the BBC Chair should be more transparent.

He said, 'Amid the noise and mayhem of an increasingly polarised and fragmented world, every person, whoever they are, wherever they live, rich or poor, has a fundamental right to information on which they can base their lives; information and news that they can trust'.

Previously Tony was Chief Executive of the Royal Opera House, Deputy Chairman of Channel 4 and Chairman of Trustees of the National Gallery. He is currently Chairman of the children's social work charity Frontline, Vice-Chairman of the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Chairman of the film company Harder Than You Think. He was made a life peer in 2010, sitting on the crossbenches in the House of Lords.

VLV AUTUMN CONFERENCE Wednesday 29th November 2023



VLV's 40th annual Autumn Conference will be held at The Geological Society, Piccadilly, London, from 10.30am - 4pm, on Wednesday 29th November.

We have two of the most important figures in British broadcasting as our keynote speakers: Lord Michael Grade, Chair of Ofcom, and Dame Elan Closs Stephens, interim Chair of the BBC.

With an election likely in the coming year, at a time of great concern about the growth of AI and fake news, British broadcasting is under the spotlight. There is also a draft Media Bill in the pipeline, which could change the way media is regulated in the UK.

There is clear anxiety among policymakers about the erosion of traditional news values, impartiality and accuracy on TV news channels. VLV is also concerned about declining access to a range of trustworthy information which informs us about the world - as specified in law in the existing PSB remit.

All this is happening at a time when the Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) are facing financial challenges: inflation and rising production costs during a depression in the ad market and reduced BBC public funding. Is PSB marching steadily towards a market failure model in which the BBC will be the only provider of less commercially viable content?

At the conference we will also hold sessions on how to tackle fake news in an AI world and ask what should the next government do to preserve PSB.

At lunchtime we will host the ever-popular VLV Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting at which we will celebrate the best PSB content and contributors during 2022, voted on by VLV members.

The VLV conference and awards will be supported by the Broadcast 2040+ coalition.

To find out more and **book for the event, please go to <https://www.vlv.org.uk/upcoming-events/>**, complete the enclosed booking form, or contact us.



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VLV represents citizen and consumer interests in broadcasting and champions excellence and diversity. 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 broadcasting.

Views expressed in the bulletin are those of contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the VLV.

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN, COLIN BROWNE



Welcome to our Autumn 2023 Bulletin.

When I wrote this letter in the Spring, we were still awaiting the publication of a much-delayed Media Bill. We have now seen the draft Bill and there was much to welcome, particularly the provisions designed to ensure sufficient prominence for the public service broadcasters on the new distribution platforms.

However, there were also issues of concern. In particular, it seemed to us that the PSBs' remits were being too watered down, and that so called 'at risk' genres covering societally valuable content – such as science, religion and other beliefs, arts and matters of international significance – were not sufficiently protected. The PSBs rightly enjoy regulatory privileges, but in return they need to provide services that the market alone would not, and Ofcom need to be able to enforce this.

As you will read elsewhere in this Bulletin, we provided written and oral evidence on these issues to the Commons Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport, which was given the task of providing pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Bill. It was pleasing that the Committee accepted these points, referring to our evidence in their report.

There are now two big questions. Will the draft Bill make it into the legislative programme to be announced in the King's Speech on 7 November? And will the Government accept the proposed amendments? We will be working hard to make sure that they do.

While publication of the draft Media Bill represents some progress, there is nothing to report on the long-term future of BBC funding. The Government has said that it is reviewing the options but has not elaborated on the process. We know the BBC is itself studying possible options. However, there is no indication as yet that there is any intention of having a proper public debate and consultation, which the VLV believes is essential. It is also the case that an upcoming General Election may in practice mean that decisions on this issue are deferred. We will be keeping a very close eye on this.

We also await news on the appointment of a substantive Chair for the BBC. Once again, it is really important that that this process is a much more open one than has been the case in the past.

In the meantime, we are delighted that Dame Elan Closs Stephens, the interim chair of the BBC, has agreed to be a speaker at our Autumn Conference. With Lord Michael Grade, the Chair of Ofcom, also confirmed as a speaker and two highly relevant panel sessions I think we can look forward to a really successful Conference. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Finally, I am absolutely delighted that Lord Tony Hall, former BBC Director-General and hugely experienced across the whole media and arts sector, has agreed to be our new President. VLV was established in 1983 by Jocelyn Hay to ensure that citizens in Britain have access to high quality public service broadcasting. We celebrate our 40th anniversary this year and I know Jocelyn would be delighted that Tony has agreed to join us to promote the interests of the public in an increasingly commercial and fragmented broadcasting environment.

Colin Browne
Chairman, VLV

PUBLIC FUNDING FOR THE BBC DROPS 31% SINCE 2010

VLV long-running analysis shows that BBC public funding declined further in the year 2022-3 as the flat licence fee settlement, announced by the then Secretary of State, Nadine Dorries, came into play.

The 2022-23 BBC Annual Report shows that real terms public funding available for BBC UK services dropped to only 69% of that received in 2010. In 2022, before the TV Licence freeze, BBC public funding income was equivalent to 77% of 2010 funding. Total Licence fee income in 2022-3 was £3.74bn and commercial income was £1.85bn while the Foreign Office provided £108m to support the World Service.

SHADOW CABINET RESHUFFLE



On 4 September Thangam Debbonaire, MP for Bristol West and a professional cellist, became Shadow Secretary of State for DCMS. Stephanie Peacock MP and Chris Bryant MP share the brief as Shadow Ministers of State. Ms Debbonaire's speech

at the Labour Party Conference focused on the importance of ensuring a healthy future for the Creative Industries which should include a greater diversity of employees and better training opportunities. As a result of the reshuffle the Labour BBC Advisory Panel's work is being reviewed.

FREEVIEW TO BOOST ONLINE TV

In September the Public Service Broadcasters announced they are collaborating to boost free to air streaming services with a new platform called Freely. The service will aim to allow audiences to view live TV channels free over broadband rather than through a rooftop aerial. This is all part of the trend to move towards IPTV (internet protocol TV) but live TV still accounts for half of all viewing in the UK and according to the Office of National Statistics, 6% of households do not have access to the internet. At the Cambridge Media Convention the Secretary of State, Lucy Frazer MP, said it is crucial linear TV audiences should not be "left behind" as the industry moves increasingly towards a digital-first environment.

BBC DIRECTOR OF SPORT



Barbara Slater has announced she will step down next year after 40 years at the BBC. Barbara has transformed BBC Sport during her time as Director. She was responsible for bringing the FA Cup and cricket back to BBC television and oversaw the 2012 Olympic Games.

She has secured rights deals which means that she leaves the BBC in a strong position with Wimbledon rights up to 2027, Uefa Men's Euros until 2028 and the Olympics until 2032.

AUDIENCES MOVE ONLINE



In its annual Media Nations Report, which was released in August, Ofcom warned that our media diet has become more fragmented and there is more 'competition for our attention than ever'.

Traditional live TV viewing has continued to decline as more people watch content on-demand - there was a further 4% drop in live viewing between 2021 and 2022 to 79%. BBC One had the highest weekly reach of all TV channels (58%). The most watched programme in 2022 was the Fifa World Cup quarter final between England and France with 16.1m viewers on ITV1. This was followed by the state funeral of HM Queen Elizabeth II and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee both on BBC One with 13.2m each.

For the first time Ofcom says older viewers are moving online as well as younger generations. The report states that those over 65 years old are now more likely to take up a streaming service. Children continue to desert live TV as do teens and young adults who spent an hour a day on TikTok in 2022, watching short-form content. The research shows that live radio remains the most popular form of audio but people under 35 are more likely to stream music than listen to broadcast radio.

Despite a rebound from Covid-19, the commercial PSBs collectively generated £97m less than in 2021, however the PSB streaming platforms did well. Investment in first-run UK children's programmes dropped to its lowest level in a decade.

According to Ofcom 'the PSBs are still unrivalled in bringing the nation together at important cultural and sporting moments', but they face huge challenges. The streamers have deeper pockets and the popularity of traditional live TV is waning, meaning that measures in the Media Bill to ensure PSB content is easily available on streaming platforms are more necessary than ever.

CALL FOR MORE RISKY PROGRAMMING

Louis Theroux's MacTaggart lecture at the Edinburgh TV Festival in August warned that British broadcasting risks becoming anodyne since TV channels increasingly avoid offending audiences as they compete for share with the global streaming services.

He said he feels it is harder to make his brand of programmes because broadcasters are increasingly 'playing it safe'. He urged producers and broadcasters to take more risks, and tackle difficult moral questions. He said, 'We need television that is confrontational, surprising, and upsetting'. The difficulty is that broadcasters are competing with attention-grabbing content online, such as deepfakes and controversial, outspoken figures like Andrew Tate, which is divisive and polarising. He urged everyone to ignore the 'madness' and to 'resist orthodoxy wherever possible'.

You can watch the full lecture online at : <https://watch.thetvfestival.com/mactaggart-collection/videos/>

MEDIA BILL SCRUTINY IN ADVANCE OF KING'S SPEECH



Core to VLV's current work is scrutiny of the draft Media Bill which we hope will be included in the King's Speech on November 7th.

The Bill aims to update the 2003 Communications Act, written when the internet was in its infancy which means it is now out of date as audiences increasingly watch online streamed content. The provisions most relevant to audiences are that content on streaming platforms will be regulated in a similar way to that on TV, meaning we should be protected from harm and offence regardless of which platform we use; to ensure that public service content is easy to find on smart TVs and other devices designed to stream video; to update the Listed Events regime so that important sporting events are available on the PSB channels; and to update the existing PSB remit.

While VLV welcomes many of the provisions in the Bill, including prominence for PSB content, we do have some concerns. The Bill removes the responsibility for the PSBs to jointly provide societally valuable content, such as religion, arts, science and programmes about international issues. If this responsibility is removed, VLV predicts that the BBC will become the main provider of such content and that this will lead to its demise, much like that seen at PBS in America. VLV also thinks the Bill provides an ideal opportunity to update impartiality regulation which is vague and allows Ofcom to decide which content it should apply to. Another VLV concern is that online streamed audio, such as podcasts, is completely unregulated; VLV believes it should be regulated in the same way as streamed video to protect audiences from disinformation and harm.

VLV submitted written evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee for its scrutiny of the Bill and Colin Browne, VLV Chairman, also provided oral evidence. In September the Committee published recommendations to Government which VLV welcomed. They recommend that obligations in the current PSB remit should be retained and that the PSBs should be given 'significant' rather than 'appropriate' prominence in listings and searches for content on connected devices, so that public service content is always carried and easy to find.

Assuming that the Bill makes it into the King's Speech, VLV will be working hard during the coming year to engage with Parliamentarians and the DCMS to ensure that the interests of citizens are taken fully into account as the Bill progresses. It is crucial for the future of PSB in the UK that legislation is updated so that regulation properly addresses the current imbalance whereby streamers are unregulated and licensed broadcasters are effectively penalised.

You can read VLV's submissions and find out more at <https://www.vlv.org.uk/news/the-media-bill-and-other-issues/>

OFCOM REGULATION OF NEWS UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

At the VLV Spring Conference there was concern about TV channels apparently testing impartiality regulation to see how far they can push it, using freedom of speech as a cover to present more extreme views to attract larger audiences. This has led us to ask whether standards in news are slipping with the growth of opinion-led journalism and the number of sitting MPs presenting on news channels.

Since April Ofcom has begun research to gauge audience attitudes towards programmes which feature politicians as presenters. But during the past month the quality of news output and regulation of impartiality have hardly been out of the headlines and Ofcom's workload is increasing.

On 18 September, after a six month investigation, Ofcom announced a ruling that an episode of GB News' *Saturday Morning with Esther and Phil* had breached due impartiality rules. The programme featured a pre-recorded interview between Esther McVey and Philip Davies, both sitting Tory MPs, and the Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt. Ofcom found that the programme was 'overwhelmingly reflective of the viewpoints of different strands of opinion within the Conservative Party'. At the time Ofcom was already running six further investigations into GB News.

Jump forward a week and on 26 September Laurence Fox's misogynist rant about a female journalist led to a further 9,000 complaints about the channel. As a result GB News sacked Mr Fox and his colleague, Calvin Robinson. An internal investigation into Dan Wootton is still ongoing.

Ofcom's performance is now under a brighter spotlight, with many calling for GB News to be taken off air and others deriding the regulator's inability to persuade it to toe the line. The number of investigations into GB News has now risen from six to twelve: more work for Ofcom.

VLV believes that the root of this problem is the lack of a statutory definition in legislation of which content should be duly impartial. VLV considers that existing legislation is vague and should be amended in the Media Bill. Under the existing system Ofcom chooses which output should be duly impartial. It applies different rules to different output, meaning that news and news magazine programmes have to be duly impartial but current affairs programmes, weekly discussion programmes and other output doesn't, even if it is on a 'news' channel. This is very confusing for audiences. It's been suggested to VLV that Parliament should decide which content should be duly impartial, rather than Ofcom.

In addition to the furore over GB News, the BBC has published new social media rules for its most prominent presenters, following the Gary Lineker debacle and a review by former TV executive John Hardie. Whether the new rules will prevent presenters from causing further trouble for the BBC remains to be seen.

Counterintuitively, all this controversy may be beneficial for opinion-led news channels. It's likely to simply boost their viewing figures as more outrageous clips of their output go viral on social media platforms. Will this just lead to more work and greater headaches for Ofcom?

THE CANARY IN THE MINE? CHILDREN'S TV IN CRISIS.

By Greg Childs



Director of the Children's Media Foundation, Greg Childs OBE, writes about the most recent developments in the ongoing crisis in children's television in the UK.

The current situation in the children's media industry is tough. July's Children's Media Conference (CMC) in Sheffield revealed that commissioning has decreased to an all-time low and while this could be said to be partly the result of policies at Public Service Broadcasters, it is also evidence of a significant structural change in audience behaviour that threatens not only the economic viability of children's television, but potentially the future of public service media in this country.

Without the Young Audiences Content Fund boosting commissions from the commercial public service broadcasters, with long term cuts at the BBC, and with the cavalry much less likely to come to the rescue – i.e. streaming services cutting their commissioning ambitions too – the situation is at its most difficult in living memory.

At the same time there were concerns expressed at CMC about the future for broadcasting and society, as the audience from the age of 7 deserts linear channels for unregulated streaming services like Netflix, Disney+ and Amazon, and video sharing services such as YouTube and TikTok.

The numbers are stark. In a recent disclosure justifying the closure of their CITV channel and its replacement by content on the ITVX on-demand service, ITV revealed that average viewing figures on the channel had sunk as low as 4,000 per programme. Last week the highest rated programme on the CBBC channel received 72,000 viewers, with even lower numbers for the top downloads of CBBC shows on iPlayer. This is out of a possible audience of five and a half million! CITV and CBBC focus on the 7+ audience.

Once children start watching without parental influence but with peer influence, they desert linear channels for on-demand viewing. But children are broadly not users of broadcaster on-demand services (though Channel 4 has some traction with teenagers).

The 'lost audience' is a threat not just to business models, with loss of advertising revenue leading to lower spending. It's of immense importance for society and individuals that kids and teens continue to watch a wide range of relevant, appropriate,

stimulating content, designed for them as young people, and reflecting the diverse society and culture in which they live. And further, the audience loss potentially impacts on the entire future of public service media in the UK, which has implications for social cohesion, engaged citizenship, life-long learning, personal well-being, appreciation of impartiality and much more, as this audience reaches maturity. If a generation grows up with no understanding of public service values, then it is highly likely they will have no loyalty to the funding models that underpin public service content when asked to pay.

The Children's Media Foundation curated a debate on these issues at the CMC and as a result of the concerns expressed called on the industry to develop a proposal to put to government.

With unprecedented solidarity, all the major broadcasters, industry associations and audience advocacy bodies – including VLV – offered support. A steering group is meeting through the Autumn to produce a position which can be put to an all-industry Summit as the start of a campaign. While the details are still being thrashed out, it's clear that all parties see audience flight and the Ofcom-identified "market failure" as interlinked, and of danger not just to business but to young people's well-being, and beyond that to UK culture and society.

For the Foundation it's about "funding and finding".

Market failure means without additional **funding**, public service content beyond the BBC simply won't be made. Future funding could be financed by levies, the Lottery, or other sources. But it should certainly not cannibalise the licence fee – that would be pointless.

Once made, the content needs to be offered to the young audience where they are - not where broadcasters think they should be. Public service content needs to be easily available on Netflix, YouTube and TikTok.

Finally, once there, it needs to be **found**. And this is where regulation will be needed to ensure that algorithmic search and recommendation systems push public service, to the top of young people's feeds.

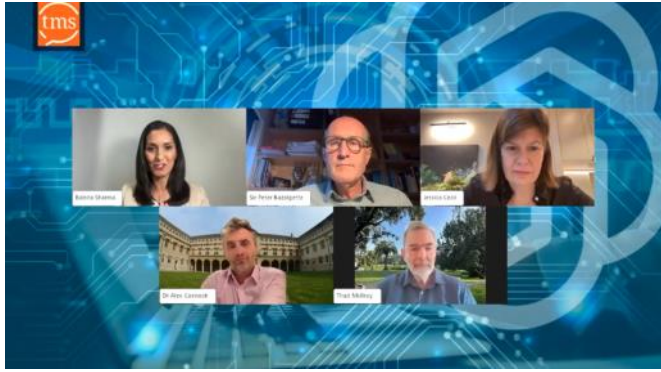
It's complex. But not impossible. Already, a number of countries are tackling the 'lost audience' with levies, quotas and regulation. There is reference in the draft Media Bill to "prominence" for public service content on streaming platforms. But this doesn't include Netflix. However, there is nothing in the Bill far-sighted enough to solve these issues.

Politicians need to recognise that the media landscape has changed. Kids and young people are at the forefront of that change, and that threatens not just the stability of media businesses but much more besides.

Greg Childs OBE is Director of the Children's Media Foundation and Editorial Director of the Children's Media Conference. Greg worked for over 25 years at the BBC on children's programmes.

AI AND THE MEDIA

By Chat GPT and Peter Bazalgette



Earlier this month The Media Society hosted a panel about AI & The Media. Peter Bazalgette took part and has followed up for VLV by asking Chat GPT itself what the challenges are. It responded in 5 seconds. He also gives his own answer. See if you can tell which is which.

ANSWER 1

Generative AI presents both exciting opportunities and significant concerns for the media industry. On the positive side, it can automate content creation, streamline production processes, and personalize content for audiences. However, these advantages come with noteworthy challenges.

Firstly, generative AI can facilitate the spread of misinformation and deepfake content. Malicious actors can manipulate text, images, and videos to create convincing but false narratives, eroding trust in journalism and media. Detecting and combating such disinformation becomes increasingly difficult.

Secondly, there are ethical concerns surrounding AI-generated content. Ownership and copyright issues may arise when AI generates news articles, art, or music. Determining authorship and protecting intellectual property becomes a complex legal dilemma.

Furthermore, generative AI can reinforce bias and discrimination present in training data, leading to biased content generation. Media organizations must ensure AI algorithms are fair, transparent, and inclusive.

Lastly, the automation of content creation may reduce job opportunities for human journalists and creators, impacting the quality and diversity of media output.

In conclusion, while generative AI offers media new tools for innovation, its potential for misinformation, ethical dilemmas, bias, and job displacement necessitates careful consideration and responsible implementation within the industry.

ANSWER 2

A few days ago Tom Hanks discovered himself presenting a US TV advert for a dental insurance scheme. He knew nothing about it. AI had illicitly generated his convincing performance.

Generative AI, such as Chat GPT, drawing on machine learning, presents novel challenges to copyright and image rights. This month the BBC banned Chat GPT from using its audio and video archive, saying, 'We do not believe the current 'scraping' of BBC data without our permission . . . to train 'gen AI' models is in the public interest and we want to agree a more structured and sustainable approach with technology companies'.

Existing copyright law is useful, in that it protects 'original' works. And the new agreement, settling the Writers' Strike in Hollywood, specifies AI-generated material must be labelled as such and only deployed with a writer's agreement. So we're slowly addressing part of the challenge.

But even more profound are the challenges to truth & trust in media. As we approach general elections in the two liberal democracies of the US & the UK, the question of how we control these new technologies seems existential.

Bad actors can never be completely stopped, but now international regulatory agreements are also needed between like-minded countries.

Most of all, do we not want our trusted news & our cherished drama demonstrably to be the product of empathetic human beings? With authenticity and sincerity?

We failed to regulate the internet. Let's not fail again.

Peter Bazalgette is former Chair of ITV, the Arts Council and Endemol. He is co-chair of the Creative Industries Council, a non-executive board member of the Department for Education, pro-chancellor of the Royal College of Art, and chair of the Business Advisory Council for the Care Leavers' Covenant.

ONLINE SAFETY BILL PASSED BY LORDS

After more than five years, the Online Safety Bill passed its final hurdle in the House of Lords on September 19th, following delays, partly due to controversy over its potential privacy implications.

The government says the Bill will make this country 'the safest place in the world to be online'. The new rules aim to protect the most vulnerable, including children, from harmful content on social media platforms and the internet. The bill will also hold platforms responsible for illegal content, such as child sexual abuse images, force adult websites to properly enforce age limits, and stop underage children being able to create social media accounts.

Under the new law, online and social media companies will become legally responsible for removing illegal content, will have a responsibility to protect children and remove any material that is in breach of their own terms of service. They will also have to provide tools for users to hide content they do not wish to see, including content that does not meet the criminal threshold but could be harmful, such as the glorification of eating disorders, misogyny and some other forms of abuse. Another controversial element of legislation is that platforms like WhatsApp and Signal will have to allow scanning of messages so private chats can be checked for illegal content.

If companies don't comply Ofcom will be able to issue fines of up to £18 million or 10% of their annual global turnover. Firms and senior managers could also be held criminally liable if found not to be doing enough to protect children. In extreme cases, platforms may even be completely blocked from operating in the UK.

Some charities campaigning for better online regulation say the Bill falls short of making the UK the safest place in the world, but many have welcomed the additional responsibility it places on platforms for children's safety.

BBC FINDS A BUYER FOR ITS MAIDA VALE MUSIC CENTRE

By Anthony Wills



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The recently announced sale of the BBC's historic Maida Vale recording studios has awakened happy memories of the hundreds of occasions on which I worked there in the 1980s and 90s.

Until the Corporation purchased the former roller-skating rink in 1933 the bulk of its popular music output had come live from hotel ballrooms, notably the Savoy, and later the Aeolian Hall on London's Bond Street.

The use of recorded music began in earnest after the War but was heavily restricted by the Musicians Union. This was circumvented by the likes of Radio Luxembourg and the so-called pirate stations which broadcast from offshore. But even after the creation of Radios One, Two, Three and Four in 1967 the Musicians Union exercised a so-called needle-time quota of about five hours a day, the bulk of which went to Radio One.

I joined the Corporation as a fledgling producer in 1979 when Radio Two began round-the-clock broadcasting. Incredibly the new night-time show could play just one commercial record per hour, which meant countless recording sessions at Maida Vale were required to fill the airtime, with the BBC Radio Orchestra and Big Band as well as small jazz and pop groups. Maida Vale also housed the Film Unit and the legendary Radiophonic Workshop, best known for its *Doctor Who* theme music.

A stroll down the seemingly endless corridor of this sprawling single storey building was a unique sound experience, but it has clearly become unfit for purpose and in 2025 the Corporation will move to a brand new studio complex in Stratford called the East Bank.

However, rather than facing the demolition squad the Maida Vale building is being sold to a partnership that includes the Oscar-winning composer Hans Zimmer and the film producers Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner of Working Title Pictures. They have undertaken to retain its Grade II listed façade and include a not-for-profit educational facility as part of their multi-million pound refurbishment. It seems that Delaware Road W9 will still be alive to the sound of music!

Anthony Wills is a VLV Trustee and former BBC radio producer.

LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY RADIO 2 RESEARCH

By Dr Neil Washbourne



Since the beginning the BBC has distinguished the serious from the light and, though providing ample airtime for the latter, treated it as subordinate to the former; simply and significantly less important. During the reorganisation of radio in 1967 this located the less serious in Radios One and Two - the latter largely a continuation of the Light Programme - the lowest rung of the BBC's 'cultural pyramid.'

I am conducting research into current BBC Radio Two listening and listeners - surveying then interviewing them. This requires treating the boundary between the serious and the light as permeable, their distinction as unclear and the question of value as yet undecided. The research asks Radio Two listeners how and to what they listen, what they get from that listening, what they think about it and in what ways and to what extent they think of it as Public Service Broadcasting.

The VLV is a partner in the research, since it has an interest in how Radio Two listeners perceive its programmes and presenters as PSB. I will produce a report for VLV outlining those implications and how one might to address them. In this qualitative research - seeking a deep dive into how listeners use and value both daytime and evening music and talk provided by the station - I have surveyed dozens of listeners (quality here is more important than mere quantity), differentiated by age, gender, income and listening experience. I and my research officer have interviewed twelve listeners and will interview at least a dozen more. Though interviewees include retired people, older listeners to Radio Two are at present underrepresented. I am hoping that VLV Radio Two listeners may help with this.

The research will also lead to a journal article and a public lecture and will culminate in June 2024 in a symposium on the research and other popular public service broadcasting and media. The plan is that VLV will be represented at the symposium and research funding has been granted to defray the cost of travel to Leeds for three members.

Dr. Neil Washbourne is a VLV member. He teaches at Leeds Beckett University. He is the recipient of the British Academy/ Leverhulme Trust Small Research Grant award for 'Listening to BBC Radio 2 (during Covid-19): understanding and valuing popular public service broadcasting (SRG2223\ 231617)'. Dr. Lee Broughton (Leeds University) is Research Officer on the project.

TRUSTEES

Professor Maria Michalis, who has completed two three-year stints as a trustee, is obliged to stand down for a year before she can be re-elected. We would like to thank her for all the work, support and time she has devoted to the VLV.

Professor Bob Usherwood, who stood down for a year at last year's AGM, will be standing for election this year. Professor Sylvia Harvey will be standing for a second three-year term.

All our trustees are volunteers and without them the VLV would not be able to carry out its important work. If you are interested in working with the VLV as a volunteer or becoming a VLV trustee, please get in touch with the chairman, Colin Browne.

VLV AGM 2023

The 21st Annual General Meeting of Voice of the Listener and Viewer Ltd will be held on Wednesday, 29 November 2023 at 1600, at The Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BG.

Nominations and resolutions should be sent to the Chairman at VLV, The Old Rectory Business Centre, Springhead Road, Northfleet, Kent, DA11 8HN, not less than 3 days and not more than 21 days before the AGM. Papers for the AGM will be emailed in advance and copies by post will be available on request by contacting the VLV office.

NOMINATIONS FOR THE VLV AWARDS 2023

Nomination forms for the VLV Awards for VLV members to complete are included with this bulletin. The Awards will celebrate the contribution made by high-quality public service programmes and presenters across the whole of 2023. As always, there is a wide range of programming to choose from across the broadcasting spectrum. Please do take the time to nominate your favourite programmes to help VLV celebrate the achievement of those who did such a good job informing, educating and entertaining us during 2023. We are keen to include a wide range of broadcasters and we encourage members to nominate programmes from several broadcasters where possible. Winners particularly value these awards because they are chosen by the people who really matter: their listeners and viewers.

Nominations should be returned to the VLV office by post or email to awards@vlv.org.uk by Monday 10 January 2024

Diary Dates

**VLV Autumn Conference
Wednesday 29 November
2023**

**10.30am - 4pm
The Geological Society,
Piccadilly, London**

**VLV AGM
Wednesday 29 November
2023**

**4pm - 5pm
The Geological Society,
Piccadilly, London**

**VLV will announce other events
over the coming months. Please
check email alerts, and the
website for details.**

Please send us your email address

VLV sends out regular email updates.

If you haven't registered your email address with us, or your email address has changed, please let us know at info@vlv.org.uk



NEW SUBSCRIPTION / DONATION / CHANGE OF ADDRESS* (delete as appropriate)

VLV Subscription - Individual £30 Joint (two at same address) £45 Student e-membership £10

Please make cheques payable to VLV and send to The Old Rectory Business Centre, Springhead Road, Northfleet, Kent DA11 8HN or pay online at www.vlv.org.uk

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