

For immediate release, Wednesday 4th March 2020

## PRESS RELEASE

### **VLV PUBLISHES RESEARCH SHOWING 30% DROP IN PUBLIC FUNDING FOR BBC SINCE 2010**

The Voice of the Listener and Viewer, (VLV) the UK's leading charity representing the interests of audiences in UK, for the first time has conducted research which shows that the BBC's real (inflation-adjusted) public funding for services aired for UK audiences has been slashed by 30% in the past decade. Government raids on BBC licence fee income since 2010 mean that licence fee payers are getting significantly less value for money from the TV licence since 2010.

This research comes at a time when the BBC is under mounting political pressure from the government over the licence fee. The government is currently consulting again whether to decriminalise non-payment of the TV licence, having decided against it in 2015. Government sources have suggested the BBC could become a subscription service.

#### **Public Funding 2010/11 – 2019/10**

This analysis is of *net* public funding for content (Licence Fee income plus government grants minus the costs of additional burdens put on the BBC since 2010); it excludes the BBC's commercial income. The focus is on funding available for UK services because this is the content which most benefits the licence fee payers who fund the BBC.

Public funding for the BBC in 2010/11 was £3.95bn, with £3.54bn of that spent on services for UK audiences. In 2019/20 the BBC's public funding will be £3.65bn, with £3.2bn for UK services. The BBC Annual Report will confirm the 2019/20 figures, but the BBC has said that VLV's figures are in line with expectations. Once inflation is taken into account, 2019/20 net public funding is equivalent to £2.48bn in 2010 money – just 70% of the 2010/11 budget during a time when production and distribution costs have risen considerably.

The fall in funding for UK services is due to a combination of factors:

- the cost of the TV licence was frozen between 2010 and 2017;
- in 2013/14, a number of new obligations were imposed on the licence fee: Broadband rollout, S4C, Local TV and BBC Monitoring (£250million per annum);
- from 2014 the BBC began paying the majority of the costs of running the World Service, previously funded by the Foreign Office;
- since 2018 the DWP has gradually removed funding for free TV licences for the over 75's.
- Once income figures are inflation-adjusted the value of public funding significantly drops.

The full data report can be found [here](#) as well as a [briefing note](#) which outlines VLV's concerns.

VLV's objective is to ensure that UK audiences continue to have low-cost access to content which informs them about the world, broadens their horizons, engages them with a wide range of subjects, entertains them and enriches their lives. We are concerned that if there are more cuts, in addition to the £800m a year cuts the BBC has had to make since 2016, leading to the recent 450 job cuts in news, this will undermine the BBC's ability to deliver the range and quality of programmes audiences currently enjoy.

The BBC has mitigated declines in funding until now through its commercial success and efficiency measures, but if commercial success becomes a primary motivation this could undermine the BBC's public service remit and VLV considers that any further cuts are likely to undermine the quality of its services.

Cuts so far have led to more repeats, especially in daytime, a narrowing news agenda and fewer current affairs and news investigations. Reductions are most likely in genres which are less popular because they cause less public outrage, but this means public service programming suffers disproportionately. BBC chairman Sir David Clementi made it clear in February that if further cuts are made, crucial public services such as the BBC's children's channels will have to be scrapped.

Colin Browne, VLV Chairman, said:

'The BBC is not perfect. There are always efficiencies to be made and waste to be eliminated. However, no organisation can withstand a constant erosion of its finances on the scale shown by our research without incurring major damage and it is viewers and listeners who will suffer.

The BBC is the cornerstone of public service broadcasting in the UK. It plays a vital role in our civil society. It is small by comparison with the large global media companies, yet has an unrivalled international reputation. Diminish it further and we risk losing something unique for ever.'

These issues will be discussed in detail at the VLV Spring Conference which will take place from 10.30 to 16.00 on Thursday April 30 2020 at the Geological Society, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BG.

The latest VLV bulletin can be found on the [VLV website](#).

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For press tickets to the conference please contact:

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### Notes to editors

1. Journalists are welcome to attend the VLV conference. For a media pass, please contact Sarah Stapylton-Smith on [sarah.stapyltonsmith@vlv.org.uk](mailto:sarah.stapyltonsmith@vlv.org.uk) or call 01474 338716.
2. Conference bookings – to book online for the conference please go to the [VLV website](#), or email Sarah Stapylton-Smith on [sarah.stapyltonsmith@vlv.org.uk](mailto:sarah.stapyltonsmith@vlv.org.uk) or call 01474 338716.
3. The Voice of the Listener & Viewer welcomes new members. Details on how to join can be found on the [VLV website](#).
4. The Voice of the Listener & Viewer (VLV) is an independent, non-profit-making membership association, free from political, commercial and sectarian affiliations, working for quality and diversity in British broadcasting content. The VLV represents the interests of listeners and viewers as citizens and consumers across the full range of broadcasting issues. The VLV is concerned with the structures, regulation, funding and institutions that underpin the British broadcasting system. The VLV is a charitable company limited by guarantee.
5. For over 30 years the VLV has played a unique role in keeping a citizen's eye on major legislative proposals and action taken by regulators and broadcasters, enabling the voice of consumers to be heard, independently from the interests of political parties, industry players and other pressure groups.
6. The VLV is run by a board of trustees, chaired by Colin Browne.