



Voice of the Listener & Viewer

Working for Quality and Diversity in Broadcasting Spring 2010 Bulletin Issue 100

‘Strictly Public Service Broadcasting – Creative Freedom and Ambition?’

VLV’s 27th annual spring conference, **Wednesday, 28 April 2010** 10.45am – 4pm

at the *Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1*

The focus for VLV’s 27th spring conference on Wednesday 28th April at the Geological Society in London will be the BBC’s Strategic Review and its implications for the future of creative freedom and ambition in both BBC and commercially funded programmes and services.

The speakers in the morning session will be:

William Greswell, Controller of Strategy for BBC Vision will set the context for the BBC’s Strategic Review and outline its proposals, at 10.45am.

Alan Yentob, the BBC’s Creative Director with responsibility for developing talent across all the BBC’s services, will speak at 11.30am.

John Lloyd, Contributing Editor, the Financial Times, and Director of Journalism at the Reuters Foundation for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford, will be in the chair for the morning sessions.

Melvyn Bragg, Radio and Television Presenter, and creator and presenter of ITV’s *South Bank Show* until its demise in June, will speak in the afternoon session at 3.00pm.

Mark Lawson, presenter of Radio 4’s *Front Row* will be in the chair for the afternoon session.



Alan Yentob



Lord Melvyn Bragg

The conference will provide a unique opportunity for listeners, viewers and licence fee payers to hear and question these key players on the full implications for its many programmes and services of the BBC’s Strategic Review and about the future of the arts on terrestrial television. Just how many constraints will there be on the creativity, ambition and freedom of programme makers in the more competitive world that will follow digital switchover? How will broadcasting and the arts fare under a new Government?

VLV’s President, Jocelyn Hay commented: “At this time of change we welcome the public consultation on the BBC Review launched by the BBC Trust. We urge all who care about the quality, independence and diversity of BBC programmes to respond.” The deadline for receipt 25th May. (See page 3 for details.)

The presentation of **VLV’s 2009 Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting** will take place at **1.45pm** immediately after lunch during the spring conference.

The conference will be followed by a VLV members’ Forum from 4 – 5pm

STOP PRESS - SIR MICHAEL LYONS, Chairman of the BBC Trust,

Sir Michael Lyons, Chairman of the BBC Trust, has accepted an invitation to speak at a VLV Evening Seminar on Wednesday, 30 June in London. The Trust is currently conducting a public consultation on the BBC’s Strategic Review (see above and page 3).

Sir Michael will consider the challenges facing the BBC, provide an update on progress with the Strategy Review and take questions.

Following initial consideration of the public consultation responses, the Trust aims to provide some provisional conclusions in the summer. This will be followed by a final strategy in the autumn.

For further details please visit VLV’s website www.vlv.org.uk or contact the VLV office on 01474 352835.



Sir Michael Lyons



Voice of the Listener & Viewer

Working for Quality and Diversity in British Broadcasting

VLV President

Mrs Jocelyn Hay CBE

VLV Patrons

Lord Barnet PC JP
Archbishop Lord Eames of Armagh
Sir Francis Graham-Smith FRS
Lord Inglewood MEP
Sir Charles Mackerras CBE
Lord Phillips of Sudbury OBE
Lord Puttnam of Queensgate CBE
Lady Solti
Sir John Tusa

VLV Directors

Mr Hugh Peltor, CBE (Hon. Treasurer)
Mr Robert Clark (Hon. Secretary)
Prof Máire Messenger Davies
Ms Carol Cattley
Mr Norman W Green
Mr Lewis M C Rudd, MBE
Dr Matthew Hibberd
Ms. Shyama Perera
Prof. Jeannette Steemers
Prof. Bob Usherwood
Mr David Eggington
Ms Sophie Chalk

Company Secretary

Waterlow Registrars Ltd.

The Voice of the Listener Trust

(registered, charity 296207)
which supports some of VLV's educational work.

Chairman: Mrs Jocelyn Hay CBE

Trustees:

Mr Michael Barton
Mr John Clark
Professor Sylvia Harvey
Lady Solti
Dr Andrew Taussig

VLV Office:

PO Box 401, Gravesend DA12 9FY
Tel: 01474 352835 Fax: 01474 351112

e-mail info@vlv.org.uk

Office Hours: 9.30-5pm Monday-Thursday

Linda Forbes: Conference & Events Secretary.

Sue Washbrook: Membership/ Board & Trust Administrator.

Website: www.vlv.org

Voice of the Listener & Viewer (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 broadcasting. VLV does not handle complaints

Registered address: Aercon House,
Alfred Road, Gravesend DA11 7QF
Bulletin published by the Voice of the Listener & Viewer
Ltd, a not-for-profit private company limited by guarantee
(registered in England no. 4407712).

Comment

The last three months have been exceptionally busy for VLV. The BBC has launched two major consultations, and Digital Radio Switch-over and the Digital Economy Bill have been the subjects of inquiry and debate in the House of Lords. The Bill, with controversial sections on the build out of broadband, switching radio from analogue to digital transmission and the future of Channel 4, was rushed into law just before Parliament rose for the election. VLV supported the extension of Channel 4's remit to include international as well as national news coverage but we were appalled at the lack of debate in the Commons on the rest of the Bill and that the concerns of the Lords about the intention to switch to digital radio in 2015 were ignored in the final 'wash-up' by the two main parties.

Our fear that the future of the BBC and of public service broadcasting on the terrestrial channels might become political footballs in one of the most closely-fought elections for years, is fast becoming a reality. Both of the main parties appear to look on the licence fee as a milch cow to pay for projects which should be funded from general taxation. Not only is this a dangerous infringement of the BBC's independence but it also puts at risk the principal source of funding for original British programming. The implications for the quality of our cultural and democratic life are immense and far too important to be left to the mercies of politicians or broadcasters. This will be a focus for VLV's work in coming months as the new Government settles in. So do question the prospective candidates in your constituency about their views on these issues. The health of our democracy and the richness of our cultural life depend on them.

We are celebrating the 100th edition of the VLV Bulletin, first published in spring 1984 and we are marking it with a new and evolving format which will enable us to send it either by email or by post. Like every other voluntary organisation we want to work as efficiently as we can. Using new technology more effectively is one of the best ways of making significant savings which can then go straight in to our campaigning work. If you are willing to receive the Bulletin online, therefore, please let us know.

You may be surprised to see my signature below, as I am standing in for John Clark, Deputy Chairman, who took over from Richard Lindley in January. John unfortunately had some unexpected health complications which have forced him to withdraw. Thankfully, he is making good progress. I have stepped back briefly at this important time and I know you will join me in wishing John a very swift recovery.

In Memoriam: Professor Henry Rishbeth

It is with great sadness that I report the death on 23rd March of Professor Henry Rishbeth.

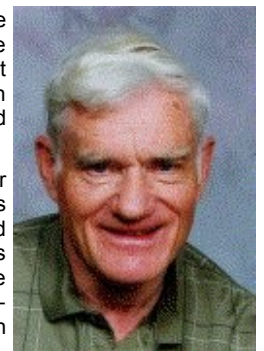
Henry joined Voice of the Listener & Viewer – Voice of the Listener as it then was – in 1985 and quickly became a member of the committee on which he served for many years. In 1987 he also helped to found The Voice of the Listener Trust and became its first honorary secretary, a post from which he resigned in 2005 only when he was no longer able to travel to London meetings due to the long term effects of polio contracted whilst on National Service in the RAF during the 50's.

Henry valued radio way above television, and used both his love of the medium and his technical knowledge to VLV's advantage, he and the late Alan Laws, VLV's former honorary treasurer, wrote one of VLV's earliest submissions in response to the Government's 1987 Green Paper on Radio. It included a masterly technical annex on the properties and advantages of different wavelengths and frequencies.

Henry's boyish enthusiasm, natural curiosity and sense of humour endeared him to all, especially those of us involved in the sometimes tedious business of administering a voluntary society constantly strapped for cash. He had other passions, including steam trains, but it was for his work on the ionosphere, upper atmosphere physics and long term change that Henry is best known and respected by scientific and space communities around the world. In pursuit of his career he travelled widely, often accompanied, especially in later years, supported by his wife Pril.

Henry studied at Christ College, Cambridge and his PhD studies involved research in Sydney, Australia. After a time in the USA he settled in the Radio and Space Laboratory (renamed Rutherford Appleton) in Slough. From 1981 he divided his time between the lab and Southampton University. On retirement he continued at the University until his death.

Henry is survived by his wife Pril and daughters Clare and Tessa, to whom we send our deepest sympathy and condolences.



Jocelyn Hay

VLV Activity in recent months

In the first three months of the year VLV has been very active in working for quality and diversity in all broadcasting, a lot of it as usual quietly behind-the-scenes.

Three VLV Policy Seminars

We have organised three policy seminars on topical issues under Chatham House Rules which enabled key people to have open and frank discussions in a constructive and supportive atmosphere.

The first seminar was about Product Placement on Television and Video-on-Demand Services – ie payment to a broadcaster or television producer to feature a product or service in a programme. It included representatives from Ofcom, the DCMS, the TV companies, independent producers, consumer and other interest groups. VLV's opposition to product placement was summarised in the last Bulletin. Since the seminar the Government has published new rules recognising some of our concerns.

The second seminar covered the List of Sports that should be available to watch on free-to-air television either live or as a recorded programme. This seminar included the administrators of sports which benefit from payments received for broadcasts of their events, those who want sports broadcasts to be available to as many people as possible, and the broadcasters who make and distribute the programmes. As this seminar took place during the consultation period on a new List of Events it enabled VLV to make a more informed submission to the DCMS consultation. VLV supports the principle of listing sporting events which should be available to watch on free-to-air television, either live or by a delayed relay; and also that the List should include other events of major national or cultural significance.

The third seminar considered the organisation and impact of Switching Radio from Analogue to Digital Transmission. Those present included representatives of the DCMS, Ofcom, the BBC and commercial radio, the manufacturers and consumer groups. The seminar coincided with the passage of the Digital Economy Bill through Parliament and the House of Lords Select Committee on Communication's Inquiry into Digital Switchover.

VLV Parliamentary Activity

VLV submitted written evidence to the **House of Lords' Inquiry into Digital Radio Switchover**. We also monitored the hearings and supported other consumer groups giving oral evidence to the Inquiry. The Committee's report was published before Easter and is available free on the Parliamentary Website or for £24.50 from HMSO. While supporting the change in the long term, the Committee reflected the concerns of consumer and citizen groups, including VLV, about the short-term impact of the change.

The legislation that will enable the Secretary of State to start radio switchover is included in the broadcasting clauses of the **Digital Economy Bill**, now about to be passed by Parliament. We monitored closely the progress of the broadcasting elements of the Bill and sent briefings where appropriate.

Robert Clark

The BBC Strategic Review & Public Consultation

Under the BBC Charter, the BBC Trust is charged with setting overall strategy for the BBC. In the summer of 2009 the Trust decided to fulfil this duty by conducting a major review of the BBC's strategy and its first step was to ask the Director General and his staff to consider it and submit proposals to the Trust.

At the beginning of March 2010, the BBC Trust published the BBC's proposals with some initial reactions. These proposals are now subject to a public consultation ending on May 25th. You may have first noticed that it was taking place when the media reported the proposed closure of two of the BBC's digital radio stations: BBC 6 Music and The Asian Network. These are only small elements, however, in a five point strategy.

In outline the strategy is:

Putting quality first, including the best journalism in the world; inspiring knowledge, music and culture; ambitious UK drama and comedy; outstanding children's content; events that bring communities and the nation together; and increasing the BBC's investment in content.

Doing fewer things better, including cuts in the BBC web presence and the cuts in digital radio noted above.

Guaranteeing access, by ensuring broadcasts are available on all free-to-air platforms and that the archive is more widely and easily available.

Increasing the efficiency of the BBC, including cuts in the number and pay of senior management. Included in this aspect also is increasing the BBC's positive impact on the economy.

Setting new boundaries in some areas, including caps in expenditure on sports and imported programmes. Boundaries will also be set in how the Corporation impacts on the commercial sector.

If you want to hear more about the BBC Strategic Review, come to the VLV spring conference on 28 April as we are devoting the opening session to it.

Robert Clark

How to respond to the BBC Strategic Review. If you wish to respond to this important consultation on the future direction of the BBC, you can obtain a response questionnaire from 0800 068 0116 or from the BBC Trust website www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust. This questionnaire has been criticised as lengthy but you can choose to respond to the whole or just part of it through the website or by writing to the BBC Trust, 180 Great Portland Street, London W1W 5QZ.

VLV Responses to Consultations

In addition to the **House of Lords Select Committee's Inquiry**, we have responded to the following consultations: **The BBC Trust Review of Editorial Guidelines** and the **DCMS consultation on Free to Air Listed Events** (see above). *Copies may be obtained from the VLV Office by email or please enclose a large SAE.*

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 ads is 30p per word, 20p for members. Please send typed copy with a cheque payable to VLV Ltd. For display space please contact Linda Forbes on 01474 352835.

VLV GIFT MEMBERSHIP

Give a 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. Fill out the subscription form below and state which publication and card type you would prefer.

WINTER COMPETITION

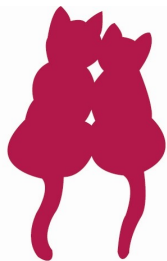
The winner of the Winter Competition for Kevin McCloud's 'Grand Tour of Europe' was **Ken Hawkins from Dereham**

THE RADIO LISTENER'S GUIDE 2010 & THE TELEVISION VIEWER'S GUIDE 2010



ORDERING DETAILS
The guides cost £5.95 each (inc. p&p). Please make your cheque payable to Radio Listener's Guide and send it to Radio Listener's Guide, PO Box 888, Plymouth, PL8 1YJ

Crimson Cats Audio Books Spring Offer For VLV members



simply
a good listen

Buy any 2 of our single CDs for just £15.98 + p&p, a total of **£17.73** - a saving of £4.00
Send cheque to Crimson Cats Audio Books, The Red Cottage, The Street, Starston, Norfolk IP20 9NN with the 2 titles you would like or visit:

www.crimsoncats.co.uk/vlvooffer

Full list of titles on our web site or phone **01379 854888** for a brochure
Offer closes **31st May 2010**.
Orders within UK only
CC014 - Private Rawson's War is excluded from this offer.

VLV's 2010 Student Essay Competition

The two winners will receive **£400** each kindly donated by Channel 4. They and the runners-up will be offered **two weeks' work experience with a leading radio or television production company.**

This year's essay invites entries from students studying for a UK registered undergraduate or postgraduate degree, or similar professional qualification, to consider the following subject: "In the world of internet blogging, anyone can produce a news story? Assess this view in relationship to the standards demanded from professional journalists and explore the prospects for traditional news providers."

Entries should be submitted as a written essay of a maximum 2000 words by 1 June 2010. Details and an entry form, which must be completed, are available from www.vlv.org.uk or in writing with an SAE to the VLV office.

Diary Dates

Wednesday, 30 April 10.45am—4pm
'Strictly Public Service Broadcasting – Creative freedom and ambition?'
VLV's 27th Annual Spring Conference
The Geological Society, Piccadilly, London W1

Wednesday, 30 April 1.45pm
The presentation of VLV's 2009 Awards for Excellence
The Geological Society, Piccadilly, London W1

Wednesday, 2 June 2 – 4pm
Visit to the **Advertising Standards Authority**, London WC1

The ASA is an independent watchdog with the brief of ensuring that adverts, wherever they appear, are legal, decent, honest and truthful. Since 2004 its responsibility has included broadcast as well as other advertising.

Friday, 11 June daytime
Visit to **Waybuloo**, Glasgow
Waybuloo is a major CBeebies pre-school programme, produced in an enormous specially designed studio in Glasgow.

Friday, 18 June 11am – 1pm
Visit to **Channel 4 News**
London WC1
The preparation of the evening programme.

Wednesday, 30 June
VLV Evening Seminar with Sir Michael Lyons
Central London W1

Friday, 2 July 11am
Visit to **Arqiva**
Winchester, Hampshire
The company is responsible for channel play-out and satellite uplinking of hundreds of satellite channels, and also supplies satellite news gathering (SNG) facilities.



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

VLV subscription - individual £25.00, two at same address £40.00, students £15.00, concessionary £19.50, joint concessions £30.00. VLV overseas subscription - individual £37.50, students £18.00, concessionary £30.00. Newsletter only subscription (non members) UK £35.00, overseas £37.50. Please make cheques payable to VLV Ltd and send to PO box 401, Gravesend, DA12 9FY

PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Tel: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

OR to pay by Credit Card please complete the form below or call 01474 352835

Name of Cardholder: _____

Card type: Mastercard Visa Expiry date / / Issue No. CVS (last 3 digits of security code on reverse of card)

Card No. / / Amount £ _____

Signature of Cardholder _____

I would like to pay by: Bankers' Order Gift Aid please send me a form. FREE TV Viewer's Guide Radio Listener's Guide Card type: _____