



BBC Charter Review Consultation – SSA Consultation Summary, September 2015

The constitutional basis of the BBC is the Royal Charter. This is due to expire at the end of 2016. This consultation seeks to engage in a dialogue about the future of the BBC.

- The SSA seeks input from members on this consultation and feedback on whether they would like the SSA to submit a collective response on behalf of members
- We have organised a meeting with the Scottish Government, the BBC and members, to facilitate further discussion on this topic. You will receive more detailed information on this in due course, but it has been confirmed that it will take place **Tuesday 15th September** – please mark this in your diaries.
- We will be attending a stakeholder event at the end of the month on your behalf to ensure members' interests are appropriately represented in consultation discussions
- Regardless of whether the SSA submits a collective response or not, this consultation opens up an opportunity for positive dialogue with the BBC and government on the topic of media coverage of Scottish sport more widely.

The Charter Review will explore four areas of possible change:

- 1) *Mission, Purpose and Values* – what the BBC is for, examining the overall rationale for the BBC and the case for reform of its public purposes. The rationale for a publicly-funded body that 'informs, educates and entertains' is described as its core ongoing mission
- 2) *Scale and scope* – what the BBC therefore should do, examining the services it should deliver and the audiences it should be seeking to serve
- 3) *Funding* – how the BBC should be paid for, examining not just future potential funding models but related issues such as how best to enforce payment
- 4) *Governance* – how the BBC should be overseen, examining options for reform of the current Trust model alongside other governance issues.

Mission, Purpose and Values

Mission: The document describes 'the rationale for a publicly-funded BBC that 'informs, educates and entertains' as the longstanding core mission of the organisation.

Purposes: The BBC currently has six very broad public purposes. All of the BBC's activity should be working towards one or more of these:

- 1) Sustaining citizenship and civil society
- 2) Promoting education and learning
- 3) Stimulating creativity and cultural excellence
- 4) Representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities
- 5) Bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK

6) Delivering to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services

Purposes - points to consider:

- There is no mention of health, wellbeing or any related term within these purposes. As a public service broadcaster should there be a commitment in its purposes to promote healthy lifestyles (of which promoting the benefits of being active is a vital part)?
- In regard to purpose number 4, from a sports perspective, is Scottish sport adequately represented?
- In regard to purpose number 6, could the BBC be better delivering public benefit, for example, through increased provision of livestreaming of a variety of sports at various levels?

What the BBC does - Scale and Scope

The Charter does not currently specify how much information, education and entertainment output to provide, the numbers and types of channels and services in which to provide this, the balance of provision between information, education and entertainment provision, or the level of provision for different audiences – the scale and scope of the BBC.

The consultation queries whether the present scale and scope is right for the current and future media environment. This is particularly the case in the context of digital services, where there have been vast developments in the past decade.

Scale and Scope – points to consider:

- Is the BBC successfully covering a range of sports via a range of platforms? If not what improvements would you propose? Does broader coverage of a variety of sports lie in continued expansion of online coverage?
- A number of sports are in the early stages of producing live-streaming online coverage and highlights. This tends to be delivered by private companies and for many smaller sports, the expense rules it out as a coverage option. Could the BBC deliver live-streaming in order to make it more accessible to all sports?
- Is sports content reaching those most likely to be inactive and therefore most needful of the education on what's available and the inspiration to participate? A key Scottish Government goal is to get the inactive, active. How could the BBC assist in achieving this?
- There is no mention of 'free-to-air' events in the consultation document – how can the Government ensure that the BBC (and other free channels) continue to secure broadcast rights for sporting events that 'matter most to society' – already a number of previously categorised free-to-air events have been lost to commercial channels such as Sky, therefore excluding many viewers who may only have the freeview channels.

BBC Funding

The licence fee is described as having been a 'remarkably resilient source of revenue' for the BBC. However, there are a number of challenges with it:

- It's a compulsory flat rate which means those on low incomes pay as much as those on high incomes

- A licence isn't required for those watching only catch-up TV online

The consultation suggests various funding options which could be put in place in the future:

- 1) A reformed licence fee (which would add catch-up TV to licenced viewing)
- 2) A media levy
- 3) A hybrid licence fee and subscription model

Protected Funding

Currently there are a range of projects and areas of work where it has been agreed with Government that a level of funding should be protected, rather than being left to the discretion of the BBC. Current protected areas include broadband roll-out, digital switchover and local TV. The consultation asks whether funding should also be protected in areas such as regional news and content. This section also queries whether other broadcasters should be able to access some licence fee funding to enable them to produce more public service content than they would otherwise be able to afford.

Funding – points to consider:

- Could a reformed licence (which would ultimately cost more) deter people from viewing sport on catch-up TV online?
- Were greater online streaming of a range of sports an option, could a range of subscription options potentially open up new opportunities for multi-sport exposure to BBC audiences? Or should this be free and covered by licence fee-only as part of the BBC's public service?
- With significant broadcast rights for larger sports now with the BBC's commercial competitors (SkySports, BT Sport etc), should sports coverage be protected to ensure that a minimum level of rights remain with the public service broadcaster? Increased commercial coverage in the future may reduce the potential audience size, ultimately disadvantaging the poorest in society and reducing the ability for sports coverage to educate and inspire participation.

Consultation Questions:

Why the BBC? Mission, purpose and values

- 1) How can the BBC's public purposes be improved so there is more clarity about what the BBC should achieve?
- 2) Which elements of universality are most important for the BBC?
- 3) Should Charter Review formally establish a set of values for the BBC?

What the BBC does: scale and scope

- 4) Is the expansion of the BBC's services justified in the context of increased choice for audiences? Is the BBC crowding out commercial competition and, if so, is this justified?
- 5) Where does the evidence suggest the BBC has a positive or negative wider impact on the market?

- 6) What role should the BBC have in influencing future technological landscape including in future radio switchover?
- 7) How well is the BBC serving its national and international audiences?
- 8) Does the BBC have the right genre mix across its services?
- 9) Is the BBC's content sufficiently high quality and distinctive from that of other broadcasters? What reforms could improve it?
- 10) How should the system of content production be improved through reform of quotas or more radical options?

BBC Funding

- 11) How should we pay for the BBC and how should the licence fee be modernised?
- 12) Should the level of funding for certain services or programmes be protected? Should some funding be made available to other providers to deliver public service content?
- 13) Has the BBC been doing enough to deliver value for money? How could it go further?
- 14) How should the BBC's commercial operations, including BBC Worldwide, be reformed?

BBC Governance and Regulation

- 15) How should the current model of governance and regulation for the BBC be reformed?
- 16) How should Public Value Tests and Service Licences be reformed and who should have the responsibility for making these decisions?
- 17) How could the BBC improve engagement with licence fee payers and the industry, including through research, transparency and complaints handling?
- 18) How should the relationship between Parliament, Government, Ofcom, the National Audit Office and the BBC work? What accountability structures and expectations, including financial transparency and spending controls, should apply?
- 19) Should the existing approach of a 10-year Royal Charter and Framework Agreement continue?

Please send any initial thoughts on this consultation to catherine@thessa.org.uk. Otherwise we look forward to getting your input at the meeting on 15th September.