

From: Oliver Anderson
Sent: 17 December 2003 13:28
To: BBC Charter Review
Subject: BBC Charter Consultation

From: Oliver Anderson, W.Yorkshire

What do you value most about the BBC?

I value the fact that it is for the public - not the shareholders. Lack of adverts is great as is the sure knowledge that my kids will be secure on the web site and get some sort of reasonable diet of program content from BBC TV.

I also admire its international role in BBC World Services and BBC Monitoring.

How should the BBC adapt to cope with changes in technology and culture? For example, how should it take account of the rise in use of the Internet or digital television?

Moving onto digital TV was and is a must and I admire the BBCs thinking and stand on free to air satellite TV, Solus cards, Sky etc. The BBC should become less coy and push free to air digital satellite TV - it is a disgrace that vast numbers of the population is unaware of this option and this is one thing that both DCMS and the BBC should be ashamed of. You have allowed the proponents of 'Freeview' to blind you on this excellent option and you can't expect 'the market' to do it for you - there is no Retailer margin for anyone to push it (now there's a Consumer benefits statement to start with.....). I think you've largely ignored this in promotion terms because it might make it easier for people to 'upgrade to Sky' aka Murdoch - well wake up and smell the coffee 7M households have already and you can get it installed for free anyway. Your job is letting as many people in the UK see the BBC output they pay for, preferably on digital.

The BBC does not need to do more on the internet than it already does. Great homepage, great programme related games/info etc. Simply get ready for streamed content and interactivity as this arises - but no need to lead the way or invest. There is some validity in commercial interests pushing back against the BBC here.

What do you think of the television, radio and online services the BBC provides? What changes, if any, would you like to see?

Fine, Carry on as you are. Content services are more or less 'mature' keep pushing the penetration and options on digital adoption.

Should the BBC run commercial services? The BBC produces magazines like The Radio Times and DVDs of popular programmes like The Office. Its main commercial arm, BBC Worldwide, put £123m back into public services in 2002/03. Do you think the BBC should continue running commercial operations?

Yes, but under close ruled Governance and strictly relating to the exploitation of the BBCs own assets. BBC staff who want to be world beaters in the competitive markets should join a competitive company not look to 'innovate' within the BBC structure.

How should we pay for the BBC? Is the licence fee the best method or can you suggest any alternative?

The licence fee is best but it must be maintained under RPI minus type pressure where deemed appropriate by its regulator.

I do object to the licence fee living up to its 'tax' label and always going up - in recent times by higher percentages than my earnings in the commercial world, i.e. it gets more expensive in real terms.

Is the BBC organised in the most effective and efficient way? Is it managed and run to provide the very best services for the public?

Not badly organised, but still has a tendency to play into areas it shouldn't. How the hell did the Governors and management allow it to grow a loss making IT company big enough to have 1440 excess staff?? (Ref Daily Telegraph article and sale of BBC Technology Ltd).

The BBC should have clear declaration of what it does and doesn't do - and it needs to make that "doesn't do" stick.

Mandations of the type 'you must take 20% of content from independent providers' are generally helpful and should be maintained and carefully furthered.

The BBC needs to come to terms with its staff pay/rations/terms etc. to seek ongoing improvements like commercial companies do and keep the licence fee under control. The Government should not intervene in this process and should make clear its position as part of the Charter Review.

How should the BBC be governed and regulated? The BBC's Governors currently have a dual role. First, overseeing how the BBC is run internally. Secondly, regulating it on behalf of the public interest - for example, making sure it meets standards on accuracy, impartiality and fair trading. Is this the best approach?

This approach seems to work for me. OK, pretty embarrassing when they got it wrong(ish) over the WMDs issue on Iraq and which of their staff said what - but no Governance structure is perfect.

There should perhaps be an separately elected element to the Governors board (really!) to supplement the current constituency and some 'longevity' rules to ensure a churn of board members. Me, I'd tend to vote for an independent candidate with good views on the subject.....afterall I hope the BBC will be discerning about its views on both Government and opposition and it gives a free-thinking empowered local presence to contact about BBC issues (should I wish to) and probably a stronger voice to the BBC Regions making the BBC less London centric.

How do we ensure that the BBC is properly accountable to the public and Parliament? Should the public have a greater say and influence on the BBC? If so, how?

It needs to be most accountable to the public not Parliament and this should be achieved by properly receiving, publishing and reacting to feedback and through changing the nature of the board of Governors make-up.

The BBC does need regulation for its finances and deliverables and, indeed transgressions. This should come from a civil service regulator such as OfCom.