



Tessa Jowell MP
Culture Secretary
House of Commons
London SW1

1st February 2004

Dear Ms Jowell

You will be pleased to know that this letter is nothing to do with the Hutton debacle! I am writing to you with regard to the BBC Charter which is up for review.

I am a UK citizen and lived all my life in the UK before taking early retirement and moving to Spain with my wife nearly two years ago. I am making every effort to integrate into Spanish life, learning the language, paying the taxes etc., and retain both direct contact with, and naturally a great interest in, the UK. Indeed my wife and I both have families and property there.

Many ex-pats here, including me, wish to see UK television programmes as well as Spanish ones. This is possible with satellite broadcasting, in fact the technology is getting better all the time. However, for financial reasons only (since the technology is not an obstacle) every effort is made by the BBC in particular, but other broadcasters as well, to restrict viewing outside the UK.

I wrote to Gavyn Davies on this matter. Part of the reply which I received from the BBC stated that their charter was to provide for the UK only. Other reasons included the rights agreements (presumably for sport and film broadcasts) which have only been agreed for the UK. All this I understand. However I cannot accept these as valid reasons for denying UK citizens, who choose to live, work or retire in a European Union state, the opportunity to receive normal UK transmissions of TV and radio.

The current BBC charter requiring a service only to the UK precludes the BBC from providing the service to people in my position, even though I am perfectly willing to pay the licence fee or an equivalent. Many people outside the UK do watch BBC programmes, but because of the present charter they cannot own up to doing so and cannot pay for the service.

I am a firm believer in the European Union, and accept that it has advantages and disadvantages for most people. What I find difficult to accept is that many of the disadvantages are totally unnecessary. Deliberately preventing UK citizens from paying for and using BBC services within the EU is such a case.

I ask therefore that the new BBC charter should include a provision for UK BBC television and radio channels (not BBC World and BBC Prime) to be provided for EU citizens who are willing to pay the licence fee.

If you would like a copy of my correspondence with the BBC, I would be happy to email or post it to you.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information regarding my request.

I look forward to your reply.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roland Gillett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Roland Gillett