

From: Malcolm Hanson
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To: BBC Charter Review
Subject: the charter review

a.. What do you value most about the BBC?

The sheer breadth of provision. I use all features of the BBC's public services. I wake to the Today Programme, travel to the accompaniment of music on Radio3, access information through the BBC website and its search engine through my working day whilst listening to streamed music on my PC, watch TV and use BBCi in the evening and fall to sleep to a late night comedy show on BBC7. Again whilst abroad I keep in touch with events at home through the website and the World Service. The BBC has been a valued member of my extended family from birth and life within it would be unthinkable.

a.. How should the BBC adapt to cope with changes in technology and culture?

In the manner it already does. I see the BBC refining its generalist provision through its major TV and radio channels and catering for minority interests through its digital TV and radio channels and through the outer reaches of the website. I would like to see this extended further as a significant number of people have minority interests that get little attention. We may be a nation of gardeners, amateur historians and DIY enthusiasts, who get excellent provision day and evening, but we are also a nations of walkers, cyclists, collectors and other hobbyists who get scant provision. I see great potential through new technology for creating a more equitable balance here. I do, though, see dangers in some elements of the manner in which the BBC embraces certain technologies. In particular the obsession with people emailing or texting opinions to programmes often results in a sound-bite culture where the reasoning that accompanies their views is limited to about 5 seconds and depth of analysis is abandoned entirely.

a.. What do you think of the television, radio and online services the BBC provides?

On the whole I very pleased with them. Recent innovations I have particularly appreciated have been:

- a.. the growth in coverage of world music on Radio3 and BBC4
- b.. opportunities to see high quality archive TV programmes on BBC4 that would not have been touched by the likes of UKGold
- c.. the introduction of minority music channels on digital radio
- d.. the introduction of BBC7. Having the opportunity to listen again to the comedy and drama programmes I appreciated in my youth is much valued.

Features I do not appreciate so much are:

- a.. the lowering of intellectual challenge in some programming. For instance Horizon. I am afraid the 'shear drama' has taken precedence over the 'pure science'. This became painfully obvious when some editions from the 60s and 70s were repeated recently on BBC4
- b.. the proliferation of 'reality' (who's?) and 'make-over' TV programmes. These are cheap and mindless.

a.. Should the BBC run commercial services?

To the extent that they provide an extra service to the viewing and listening public then yes. Books to accompany and inform series, videos, audio tapes, DVDs, etc of TV and radio programmes are all fine. I would get concerned where the merchandising to drive content rather than the other way around.

a.. How should we pay for the BBC?

Through the licence, very emphatically! What a god-send to be able to listen, view and web-access without someone trying to sell me something and interrupt my focus at inappropriate moments. Again to have planners think through the content of provision without looking over their shoulders at what the sponsors or the government or other commercial interests may think is very re-assuring.

I cannot envisage the breadth of provision I so lauded above being made available to me by any other means. Please resist any temptation to consider the BBC being funded in any other way.

a.. Is the BBC organised in the most effective and efficient way?

I do not feel competent to judge on this issue and would be wary of thinking that many people could. Beware the vox pop here, and listen to those with appropriate expertise. All I will say is that I am very happy to pay the licence fee for the 8 hours or so per day of information and entertainment that the BBC provides.

a.. How should the BBC be governed and regulated?

I see the balance between independence and public accountability that current arrangements ensure to be very appropriate.

a.. How do we ensure that the BBC is properly accountable to the public and Parliament?

Through the mechanisms that already exist.