

Sent: 13 December 2003 13:07
To: BBC Charter Review
Subject: Charter review

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the work of the BBC & its charter.

I value the BBC hugely, and feel happy to support it as I do at present, i.e. through my licence fee. Although some may regard this as an anachronism, I see nothing wrong in using a fee to provide the nation with a benchmark standard. To move to a commercial approach would be catastrophic for the ethos of the BBC and public sector broadcasting as a whole.

I feel the BBC currently steers a fine line at present between commercialism and the public sector. I do fear it is already edging towards commercialism, and I would urge you to prevent further slides down this slippery slope. The balance is close to being right, but I would personally like to see an active step away from commercialism to make the point that we have gone far enough, and now turned away from 'the dark side'.

What do I most value? The unusually informative. So I listen to R4, particularly valuing the little 15 min slots at 9:30 when odd programmes pop up. (The blood series, the unusual institutions etc.) The investigative journalism is good (Face the facts, In Business), and actually I like practically all the output to varying degrees (with the exception of Round Britain Quiz!)

I use the listen again service regularly, and would welcome more archived sections. i.e. 'here are the 4 programmes in this series', not just last week's.

I use the local TV news, and some of the contemporary drama, and factual history. I think you have stiff competition now for drama with ITV & C4, but that is probably a sign that they have to meet the standards you set. This is a sign of where it all works.

Stuart McConey on R2 is great for the drive home as it is refreshing and clever.

I have blundered into R1 recently, and whilst I didn't like all the music, I felt the standards of DJ had slipped excessively. Estuary English and generally slobbish behaviour is unbecoming. I really would like to see that side of things cleaned up a bit. It felt as though there had been editorial decisions to exploit the market below the commercial sector, not above it..... be careful.

How should it cope with changes? Clearly you have now lost your international news monopoly through the likes of CNN. This needs to be accepted, but stick to the quality, and don't race down hill. The BBC is valued across the world, if you pull out then the country will lose that value and its historical status, so please keep in that game.

Digital services are important, but I have yet to find a way to embed the in my life. I believe you need to keep leading on this, and wait for the technology to catch up. The use of digital radio, and streamed audio is good. I may well end up with streamed audio in the house rather than a digital radio... depends largely on cost.

The web based side of the BBC is excellent, and the ability to drill down into the background is exciting, and being developed. Keep on with this please, as I think the joining up of the media is going to be powerful and informative. Should the public have a greater say? No. I think we have enough access now, because of your institutional links, and our ability to vote with our remote control and watch the others. You are quite accountable enough already. I want

to be entertained by you, and I want to be able to trust you to do it. I do not want to be asked all the time about what I think. If I don't like it then I know I can change it if I had to..... but I don't feel the need. You are doing the right thing, so don't fritter away public resources in asking the public for feedback they don't feel they need to give.

Governors? I don't know enough to comment other than to say, it seems to have worked since 1927, and I don't think the process is flawed. It is important to have good governors, but this seems to happen.

Efficiency? I was concerned about the sale of BBC assets, and the resultant lease back approach. I do not know whether this is working well, and would like to be assured as to the BBC's efficiency. I do not get the impression that this is a big issue, but any organisation of this size needs to keep its auditing wits about it.

Glaring Gaps: Probably only one. I am concerned that the move to set top boxes etc, is leading to an unnecessary increase in the use of electricity. I would like to be sure that the BBC has a strategy to ensure that its operations lead to an overall reduction in the power consumption of the UK. Clearly you can be efficient in your energy use, but I would want to see that you are considering the impact on the wider community of technological decisions. Can we have set top boxes that turn of completely?

Overall: I think you are doing an excellent job, and I don't know what we would do without you. You are not commercial, and you should not try and be so. You are part of the fabric of this nation, and I am happy to pay for your upkeep.

Neil Kermode,