

23 March 2004

BBC Charter Review Consultation
Department of Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London
SW1Y 5DH

Dear Review Panel,

In response to your request for views on the review of the BBC Charter I am pleased to answer the questions you have posed where I am able to.

* News programmes are generally good - I watch 6pm news and like the regional half for London & SE - my only criticism is that I think they could include more items if there was less repetition during the hour. News 24 is useful. I enjoy programmes on archaeology, history, travel (not holidays particularly), natural history, cookery, gardening, plays and serials which are confined to a specific number of episodes especially classics, some comedy. Also music and dance but I do not think this has sufficient cover although BBC4 has brought an improvement.

* BBC obviously has to adapt to changing technology and enable those not wishing to use computers to gain benefits from television but at the same time remember others who just wish to see a good choice of programmes. I have digital and hope BBC4 can be maintained as a high semi-documentary, educational channel with special interest music, etc. If more or the new services can be used via the television this would obviously be an advantage but not to the detriment of what we have.

* I usually prefer BBC2 sometimes now BBC4 but one can only watch for a limited time and I would prefer programmes to be spread throughout the week more, i.e. all the music programmes seem to occur at once, all the wildlife (why so early on a Sunday - when anyone interested would be outdoors?), all the gardening on one day so a lot to watch one day nothing another. For radio I like mostly Radio 3 - please keep it much as it is, there is nearly always something to listen to, a mixture of favourites and new work.

* The BBC should continue with commercial services. Many of the books based on its programmes are very good. I think BBC Wildlife is one of the best magazines available and well balanced, other subjects I see occasionally maintain interest in programmes as well.

* The licence fee is good value for money - especially compared with cost of visiting theatre or cinema where just a couple of visits would cost more. Why should we have to see and listen to mindless and repetitive advertisements if that happened I probably would not keep my television.

* I cannot comment on how the BBC is organised but on the whole the service is very good so care should be taken not to make sudden sweeping changes.

* Perhaps the Governors could be divided into sections according to their expertise and technical knowledge.

* Is there or should there be a representative panel of various official and public interests to comment on accountability, otherwise those with specific ideas who may be a minority make the most noise which is not always in accord with the large majority.

These are my very non-professional views because I would not like to see any major changes to the BBC. I think it should set a standard and maintain those it has not just follow the fashion of the moment.

Yours faithfully,



Sheila Mason