

BBC Charter Review Consultation
Dept. for Culture, Media & Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London SW1Y 5DH

29 March 2004

Dear Sir/Madam,

To justify a licence fee the BBC must contribute to advancing the prosperity/well-being/health of the nation in ways that private enterprise will not or cannot achieve, much as the provision of free education and policing through taxation does.

Ways of achieving this include providing programmes that are a model of high quality, that exploit television in the provision of education and information, and that encourage active participation of viewers in sport and other activities. Rather than do this the BBC has, in my opinion, become obsessed with ratings and thus the provision of mediocre-quality entertainment, such as quiz shows, that duplicate much of what is available on commercial free-to-view channels.

One might have expected that increased competition over the years through the provision of more free-to-air ^{and other} channels would have improved the quality of programmes, increased choice and reduced the cost to viewers. In practice, the opposite sometimes appears to be the case: quality has worsened; minority interests have been squeezed out in favour of, for example, more football on several channels simultaneously; competition between channels has driven up fees

(for example, those demanded by ill-behaving footballers).

I am a member of a minority-interest group that follows ice figure skating. The BBC has now dropped all coverage of figure skating (no transmission of British, European or World championships) and this sport no longer features on any free-to-air channel. As a pensioner on low income I cannot afford both a licence fee and a subscription to satellite TV for British Eurosport. Even if I could I should still not get coverage of the British skating championships (no, not even by 'British' Eurosport!).

I believe it would be more beneficial to the nation if the British Broadcasting Corporation were to use more of the licence fee in encouraging a wider range of British minority interests. (It would also incur fewer fees and other costs.)

Yours faithfully,

Paul Stamford