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**Submission
to
the Department for Culture, Media and Sport**

**Consultation:
The BBC Charter Review
08/03/2004**

**By
Edmund Wheeler
(Private Citizen / Webmaster / Editor)**

http://licencefee.com/?mode=dcms_08032004

Summary of My Position

The BBC Licence Fee should be scrapped.

The BBC's Digital Channels should be immediately converted to a voluntary subscription system using CAM (Conditional Access Module) technology to enforce fair access.

Effective, secure, and open CAM infrastructure is a public function equivalent to the state's bank and state's currency, essential to facilitate public services, plurality, free trade, and freedom of consumer choice.

The UK needs to develop a CAM and TV "clearing" house to allow broadcasters to trade in spite of their size.

Every digital TV channel must be fairly and equally available on its own without forcing citizens into accepting the flaws of today's bundle systems.

Advertising is not good enough. Adverts are about lying to people. People hate adverts. Advertising creates a false market where the viewer is incidental to the relationship with broadcasters.

Subscription with the option of a per channel basis, is the best way to reward success and punish unacceptable services.

Today's UK broadcasting industry is not a free market, but a highly distorted environment that is dysfunctional.

The BBC has conspired with Sky to operate via bundle effectively censoring and denying consumers choice, lowering quality and standards, and preventing entire genres of content from being aired and available.

The BBC's output since the digital age has become lamentable.

The BBC's present Board of Governors have proven inept and incompetent as a regulator. They have failed to champion the interests of the citizen, the general public, and indeed what is in the interests of the television industry.

OFCOM is a weak economic regulator not suited to safe-guarding matters of culture.

The BBC should NOT be regulated under OFCOM.

The BBC should be governed by troublesome tough Governors determined to stand up to the Government, the BBC Executive, the BBC commercial divisions, and suppliers, willing to champion the interests of the citizen above that of the needs of the Corporate.

The entire UK television "market" - BBC, Channel 3, Channel 4, Channel 5, S4C, radio, World, Freeview, and Sky / Pay TV needs to be rebuilt.

On going Public Service Broadcasting needs to be safeguarded by an independent accountable national trust.

A significant majority proportion of the BBC's output and expenditure IS NOT public service or worthy to justify funding under duress of compulsion.

I support the principles of the Elstein "Beyond the Charter" report.

I support the findings of The Lord Hutton Inquiry.

I support many of the ideas by Professor Barry Cox.

I oppose the BBC Executive's position on Charter Renewal. I am irritated by the BBC's attempts to reject the findings of the Lord Hutton Inquiry.

I am unhappy with the DCMS's "Default Option" of the continuance of the BBC Licence Fee.

(Supporting data and articles are available at <http://licencefee.com/>.)

The BBC today

'What do you value about the BBC?' What do you think of the BBC's contribution to the life of the United Kingdom and to the wider world? Should this change over the next decade and, if so, how?

What value does the BBC add to the wider provision of public service broadcasting?

How well has the BBC met its purposes over the Charter period? What evidence do we have that the way in which the BBC does this is successful compared to other broadcasters?

What is it about the BBC that makes it unique? How do we make sure that it is distinct from other broadcasters? Are there better ways to deliver some of the contribution that we have traditionally relied on the BBC to provide?

How well does the BBC serve the constituent parts of the United Kingdom, including Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the English regions? What changes, if any, would you like to see?

Is the current balance between national, regional and community level programming right?

Does current regional and community content reflect the diversity of the regions and communities served, and deliver what you want? If not, what should be changed?

I used to love the BBC particularly BBC TWO before former Director General Greg Dyke and BBC TWO Controller Jane Root made it a bland dumb channel and before anything of interest was made unavailable to me on BBC FLAW.

Today, the BBC hates me, and I hate it.

The vast majority of the BBC's output, I find completely lamentable, dumb, dim, dreary, homogenised, tiresome, depressing, biased, shoddy, trivial.

It is now so rare finding a good BBC programme, film, drama, or documentary that when one does, that it becomes a major event to find something of merit. And most programmes of merit are commissioned and made by outside contractors anyway.

The BBC excels at patronising me all in the interests of public service mind you.

The BBC has no more unique contribution than any other UK corporation, and I note that during Gulf War II, I preferred to get my news from Channel 4, not the BBC.

The BBC hallmark is dumbness, bias, Shepherd's Bush centric-ness, with a silly [B][C] logo on it.

The BBC drags down other broadcasters rather than elevates standards.

The BBC is unique in its arrogance, self delusion to its importance and greatness, pomposity, and that its own judgements are superior to the citizens that it ignores.

A changing landscape

'How should the BBC adapt to cope with changes in technology and culture?'
How should the BBC respond to the development of new technologies and to changing viewing and listening habits?

The BBC is against freedom of choice. It has conspired to prolong the licence fee and to prevent its Digital Terrestrial channels from supporting CAM infrastructure, whilst colluding with Sky to saturate digital satellite with bundled channels. All of which are unaccountable to the end user.

I am unable to watch BBC THREE and BBC FOUR without the BBC shoving their corporate logo in my face - often insensitively over the content. The BBC could not care less and has told me as much.

I want to be able to choose television programmes that inform, educate, and entertain, without censorship, without on-screen logos, without red-dots, without end-credit advertising and voice-overs, and without excessively frequent amounts of corporate advertising.

The BBC does not allow the viewer this choice.

Technically, to be able to turn off on-screen logos, voice-overs, and choose uncensored sources, is very easy to achieve with today's technology, but the BBC is anti-choice and anti-my-choice.

Digital TV has been a failure and lead to the BBC's destruction.

Publicly-funded services and functions

'What do you think of the television, radio and online services the BBC provides?'
What do you think of the publicly-funded services provided by the BBC, on television, radio and online? What changes, if any, would you like to see?
How well do the BBC's publicly-funded services deliver its core purposes?
In what way should the BBC's services differ from those of commercial public service broadcasters and other purely commercial broadcasters in order to add value? To what extent should the BBC provide 'something for everyone'?

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

If given freedom of choice, I would subscribe to BBC ONE and BBC TWO (but not BBC TWO Learning Zone).

I would not accept BBC THREE or BBC FOUR (whilst the picture is defaced by on-screen logos).

I would not accept BBC NEWS 24. I have no need for a woman-with-big-hair to sit in a red and silver lit studio reading the news in a loop or speculating on the latest giant flashing "breaking news" caption.

I would not accept CBBC and CBEEBIES and I am very concerned that these rolling television services as well as being "dumb", are very **harmful to children's educational and psychological development**. My opinion of the children's digital TV channels is that they exist to justify the BBC and their own existence. They do not have the needs and welfare of children at heart.

The BBC encourages children to watch BBC children's channels continuously, so they can fiddle the viewer ratings and boast of huge audience figures.

I do not accept BBCi as necessary within the BBC's public service remit. I would not choose to pay for BBCi's web or "interactive" TV services.

I find it totally unacceptable that the BBC's Digital TV services carry on-screen logos which the viewer is unable to remove.

As such, I therefore fail to see the BBC as a public benevolent body, and treat it as an aggressive, expansionist, self-centred, arrogant, out-of-touch, potentially "evil", media mega-conglomerate out to grab "market share", destroy competition, deny consumer choice, and generally cause harm similar to other global mega-corporations.

The BBC fails.

Parts of it are worthy just like some things Disney, Nike, and General Electric do are good, but they tend to be the individuals and smaller parts. By and by, the sum of the BBC fails.

The BBC brand bombs.

The BBC logo appears all over children's food and children's products in my local supermarket.

The BBC harmed Channel 4 and FIVE when it pulled out of the Solus Sky Card system in 2003. It did not help the smaller PSB contractors or the viewers affected.

If anything, the BBC is the worst of both worlds. It is supposedly a public service that undermines genuine public service contractors.

The BBC's commercial practices are as bad as the worst commercial corporation, but when attacked, the BBC retreats to the umbrella of pretending it is a public service body and acting in "the public's interest".

If you have ever seen BBC THREE's "Sort it Out Man", BBC TWO's "The Sack Race", BBC TWO's "Horizon" (the science drama that lacks science and relies on dramatic reconstructions), BBC TWO's "The Weakest Link", BBC THREE's "Toilets" or "Jordan" specials, or the utter crap that is "BBC THREE on BBC ONE", and you will understand how sick to death I am of the BBC and its pretence to be a public serving broadcaster.

It is amazing how good Channel 4 and FIVE's public service output can be in comparison.

So long as the present BBC management are in place, I think the BBC are doomed. Unless the BBC gains an "arse kicking" (as opposed to "arse licking") Board of Governors willing to hire and fire, perhaps bully, and punish unacceptable output, I think the BBC is doomed to a fait that is industry typical.

The BBC does not cater for the minority (or majority) that I am in.

It fails, and making it required to earn people's money rather than extracting it by force is the best way to allow dis-satisfied viewers to punish it, and satisfied viewers to reward it.

Commercial services

'Should the BBC run commercial services?'

Do you think the BBC should continue to run commercial services alongside its licence fee-funded services?

If the BBC should continue to run commercial services, how should we ensure that the relationship between the public and commercial services is fair to the BBC's commercial competitors?

Should there be any limits on what the BBC is allowed to do commercially and, if so, what should those limits be?

Commerce and free trade is normally very good for consumers and the economy. In an open market with competition and freedom of movement of cash flow, this allows reward and penalty to allow consumers to select and "choose" what they want.

There is of course the evil and danger of monopoly, oligopoly, and market distortion.

The BBC and the UK broadcast market grossly fails at both poles:

The BBC fails in that although it is meant to be advert free, it is constantly advertising Digital TV, Digital channels, the Radio Times, premium rate phone services, Jenson Button and their Interactive rubbish, The Digital Plan, etc, all of which require the consumer to supplement the licence fee in order to attain. At its simplest, **advertising is the indiscriminate planting of desire and inadequacy in people**, and that the BBC, particularly the BBC's children's channels does this, annoys me no end. The BBC being advert free, is a myth.

Secondly, the BBC engages in **inverse advertising**, to my disgust.

Adverts are not meant to appear on the BBC. To circumnavigate this restriction the BBC (via the legal vehicle of BBC Worldwide Limited) instead takes BBC characters and sticks them on commercial products.

I am furious to find that my child (at the age of 1.5) when taken through the supermarket can at a distance pick out Bob The Builder, Mr Men, Telly Tubbies, and Tweenies characters appearing on products such as baked beans, baby food, pasta, cakes, chocolate, crisps, and lunch boxes.

This is all perfectly legal, and yet branded products can lead to third-world poverty, slavery and exploitation, the rich-poor divide, and fatty food products kill people.

How dare BBC characters and BBC celebrities use their licence fee funded personas to use exactly the same personas in the pure capitalist business of selling and of lying to people.

It angers me that on the BBC, these so called media-personalities are required to be truthful, objective, and moderated by The Producers Guidelines, yet the same personalities when they do advertising and commercial work, retain the objective authority of their BBC appearances but are not subject to these rules of conduct.

Example, Joe "annoying" Whiley - BBC Radio One Reporter DJ / Voice of the "yoof", yet her voice frequently features on adverts when she talks subjective crap about "the record of the year... blah blah blah... best selling world beating album ever". This in technical terms is known as bull-shit speak. And the advertising personae destroys the integrity principle which the BBC has lost.

Let us not pretend that the BBC is an "independent", "neutral", and "public service" body. It is not.

BBC Worldwide fails in multiple ways too.

UK TV basically charges people three times over for what they have already paid for.

The fact is the primary two customers of UK TV (the 16+ UK TV channels are joint venture channels owned by BBC / Flextech) are BSKYB and the commercial advertising sales house.

There are two problems here:

- Advertisers book on the basis of a market profile only. Advertisers do not particularly care about Public Service Television, democratic issues, the merits of particular programmes, or how well those programmes are packaged and broadcast.

- The money that Sky charges end users has no direct relationship with the money that Sky returns to broadcasters. In fact, Sky's payment of channels who "choose to partner with" it, is determined by a contractual negotiation exercise carried out in the equivalent of a smoke-filled room.

In both cases, there is no **direct reward** to the programme or content maker and **no direct relationship** between the viewer making payment and the broadcaster.

It is "screwed about" with and artificial. It is a highly unfair and rigged market.

Consumer "choice" is a mere commodity traded between corporate interests and is an anathema to the end consumer.

Consumers can't actually make a free choice.

Smaller broadcasters (and let's face it that there are no small broadcasters of quality except crappy shopping channels, gaming channels, and really trashy "free-sheet" channels) are barred from entering the market.

Only existing big corporate interests with unfair cross-subsidisation have any significant chance of bringing a quality offering to the UK citizen.

The programme rights trading problem means it is very hard for a small broadcaster to acquire rights to good content (such as "24").

We have to put up with advert saturation, interactive in-programme adverts, premium rate services, and on-screen garbage.

It is very hard for programme makers to gain funding and commissions to make good programmes unless there is a BBC Worldwide or premium rate sales opportunity.

Viewers lose. Britain loses. Cultures loses. The industry loses. And UK TV payers pay three times over for accessing content that the BBC Licence Fee already paid

for.

The BBC is complicit in all of these failings.

What we need is an open, free, and liberal market, not dominated unfairly by certain major players, where there is correction of market failure and market distortion.

The BBC has the wrong relationship with BSKYB. BSKYB is a globally owned aggressive PLC with the pure aim in life of making £400 ARPU and making its shareholders loads of money.

BSKYB (like the BBC) is not interested in choice, freedom, democracy, providing cheap affordable packages, or allowing a direct relationship between broadcaster and programme maker.

A key failing of BBC Worldwide and UK TV is that because it poorly and under serves "minorities" (or majorities) like me, it actually wastes business opportunity. (Business opportunity is the ability to delight a customer and fulfil their needs - a good thing.)

I have stood for BBC Governor. Were I ever to be appointed, my aim would be to double the number of consumers **choosing** to buy into UK TV.

UK TV is unaccountable to end users, poor at delivering financial return to the licence fee payer, and a petty visionless corporation that mis-serves everyone except its own self interest.

By no means do I want to see today's BBC-under-subscription to resemble today's totalitarian homogenised pulp that is BBC TV and UK TV.

Paying for the BBC

'How should we pay for the BBC?'

Does the licence fee remain the best way to pay for the BBC's public services?

If not, what alternatives would you like to see explored?

Does the BBC deliver value for money?

Does a grant-in-aid via the FCO remain the best way to pay for BBC World Service?

The compulsory licence fee must be scrapped as soon as possible.

Each BBC TV channel should be available in isolation as a subscription option.

BBCi's internet services should rely on subscription (or what ever free-market funding it chooses to find) for funding.

As stated in my BBCi paper (http://licencefee.com/?mode=dcms_17112003), I am not convinced that BBCi web services serve a public service remit. I think the BBC's web services are better done already by existing and other players in the real world without state intervention and market distortion.

I think BBCi's Interactive Television services are waste of money, and as such I would rather citizens have the choice not to pay and endorse this crap.

I think advertising sucks as a means of payment. Sky Movies and Film Four do not use adverts during their film content. The notion that the Licence Fee is an alternative to advertising is baloney.

The BBC already has so many adverts between programmes for its own self propaganda purposes that it is clearly practical today for this advertising space to be sold on the open market.

Accordingly, I think the BBC should immediately sell "between programme" air time to commercial advertisers and other broadcasters.

The BBC should not allow adverts during TV programmes, unless it wishes to provide a choice of pay-for-without-adverts AND pay-less-with-adverts.

The BBC's TV Licensing Authority "gestapo" should be disbanded without delay.

Sky have no need to use such tactics. People "choose" to pay Sky £360 a year.

Why should the BBC who broadcast bland identical programmes and inaccurate news services have the right to force their subscription to their biased crap on people?

The present licence fee mis-serves and enslaves people. It produces crap television whilst criminalising 100,000 people a year, and serving as a disproportionate regressive tax on the poor.

The TV Licensing "gestapo" are a remarkably ineffective and expensive way to do what Sky and any mobile phone operator has been able to do for more than 15 years via telemetry.

The BBC delivers poor value for money. My relationship with the BBC is like a slave serf to a left-wing despotic dictatorial tyranny who withholds my freedom of choice, of personal taste, and of self determination.

I want to see subscription on a channel by channel basis with genuine free consumer choice, genuine reward to merited programme making, and punishment for people like BBC THREE Controller Stuart Murphy and BBC FOUR Controller Roly Keating.

The BBC World / FCO funding is not of concern to me. The BBC however is not an organisation that I would want to represent me or my country.

Organisation and infrastructure

'Is the BBC organised in the most effective and efficient way?'
How should the BBC be organised to deliver its functions and services? Should it continue to operate as a single organisation?
Does the BBC broadcast the right balance of independently produced and in-house productions? How important is it that the BBC makes programmes as well as commissioning them?
How should we ensure that the BBC continues to foster world-class broadcasting talent?

The BBC is not effective.

The BBC is not efficient.

In spite of my attempts to talk to BBC executives and find out the hard facts of how the organisation "works" and "makes decisions", as a member of the public, I am not privy to all the information necessary to make immediate recommendations as to how I would restructure the BBC.

Previously I did however suggest the following:

If I were appointed D.G. today, I would:

1. Reduce the Licence Fee to below £100 - and keep it there.
2. "Umbrella" and assist Channel 4 and FIVE to migrate to FREESAT with legal and technical assistance. Screw SKY.
3. Slash BBCi's budget from £150M to £35M. 3/4 of it, I would close, for which FT.com, MediaGuardian, DigitalSpy, and scores of private companies can do better and equally successfully.
4. Line up 2000 employees and make them redundant (Mark Thompson slashed a far higher percentage at C4). Headcount reduced from 20,000 to 18,000. Life-long and over generous employee benefits to be cut (as with every plc today). Unlike every PLC, Executive bonuses will also be slashed. Money to be reinvested in the public interest.
5. Fire Andy Duncan. Close down "BBC Marketing". Consolidate marketing into Home Divisions.
6. Close BBC THREE and BBC FOUR. BBC THREE could be done by ITV2, E4, and other commercial channels. BBC FOUR's content should not be on BBC FOUR but on BBC ONE and BBC TWO in parts of the schedule.
7. ALL DOG (Digital On-screen Garbage) generators to be sold off.
8. All glossy brochures budget and arty-promos to be slashed by 90%.
9. CBBC and CBEEBIES to merge into one channel only sharing resources.
10. Aim to double the number of subscribers to UK GOLD / Flextech / UK TV channels, by selling UK TV channels as a package stand alone direct to consumers. Cease to be the "customer" of Sky, but rather become a service-provider direct to the public available without a Sky contract.
11. Ban on-screen crap on UK TV channels, ban stupid count-down promotions, and transform UK TV from a crappy sat-cab venture, into a BBC-like private venture which aims to attract fee paying consumers. Sell to customers and Expand the business. UK TV to have the same standards of service as BBC ONE and BBC TWO. Aim to build an owned customer base.
12. Main radio services budgets to increase at par with inflation. Digital service to be frozen and reviewed. BBC Digital Radio to be subject to a public inquiry.
13. BBC NEWS to be reviewed. Possibly consolidated. Budget to be levelled. BBC NEWS Agency to be established to provide commercial services. BBC NEWS to outsource parts of its operation to alternate

producers and providers.

14. Register of Contracts to be made public for all deals above £250K.

15. Tougher terms for large suppliers and larger producers. Easier terms for indies and small and regional producers. Major review of merchandising, franchising, and world-market operations to determine best value for citizens. No more sugary-food deals. Public Inquiry into the long term wisdom of the Government's BBC self-help directive.

16. Sack Capita and find a cheaper TV Licensing contractor. Possibly break the contract into Regions.

17. Cease and review Building projects.

18. Look to reverse the Crown Castle and BBC Estates deals. Can the private sector really make it cheaper to operate public infrastructure?

19. Cap BBC "celebrity" payments. If you want £100K a show, go work elsewhere. If you want to work for the BBC, there is sufficient "talent" readily available now to stop this nonsense of paying BBC celebrities 6 or 7 figure contracts. On-air presenters pay should be closer to behind-the-scenes staff pay levels, Executive included.

20. Develop some form of bidding system concept to allow UK citizens a stronger say in where programmes appear, when, how they are paid for, and how much they think they are worth.

21. PCU and Accountability division to be halved. Completely reworked around a 21st century consumer model. The existing "colonial governorship" model to be dropped. Restoration of an interpedently produced "Right 2 Reply" programme.

22. Governors hours to be doubled. Governors to publish full set of minutes. Disagreements and "causes for concern" to no longer be concealed but disclosed (D-Section aside).

I think the BBC should head for the Publisher Commissioner model as used by Channel 4 Corporation and FIVE.

The business of production should be separated from the business of transmission.

The BBC has allegedly been "tough" on some independent programme makers and over generous on other suppliers. Notably under Dyke-ism, the BBC has failed in its obligations to meet its independent production quotas.

I think it is scandalous that the BBC "poaches" pre-established talent from other TV channels.

I think it is scandalous that people like Graham Norton (coming to the BBC in April 2004) Anne Robinson, Johnny Vaughan, and Angus Deacon should be so over-paid without genuine consumer choice in the name of "public service". (I'd get out of bed for half the price.)

The money and air-time wasted on these celebrities could be spent on so much more worthy and intellectually enriching projects.

I hate these so-called "TV personalities"? Where are the real men and women of genius and intellect?

And for goodness's sake, what is it BBC ONE Controller Loraine Heggessey said about Graham Norton when they poached him on a £3M contract: "*I am delighted that Graham will be coming to the BBC to grow creatively*".

Don't give me this crap about the BBC being the nurturers of talent. Bollocks.

Real talent has a way of growing, developing, and rising to the top without mega million pound deals.

In the future, we will need a well funded public trust, out of proportional general taxation, to ensure that all Public Service Broadcasting continues. This trust, freed of worrying about pure consumerism and plain trade, will be able to focus entirely on the important business of building and improving the UK's Public Service Broadcasting services. It will end the BBC's vein tokenism.

Governance, regulation and constitution

'How should the BBC be governed and regulated?'

Do you think that, in the regulation of the BBC, there is the right balance between the Governors and Ofcom?

Does a Royal Charter continue to be the most appropriate basis for the establishment of the BBC?

OFCOM is a weak economic regulator - good at regulating the radio frequencies used by mini-cabs - but totally ineffective at regulating important issues like the democratic structure of public service broadcasting, complex and subjective issues such as fairness, truth, accuracy, consumer taste, and scared to restructure the UK's vertical broadcasting market columns.

Trusting the future of the BBC and of UK broadcasting to OFCOM would be like trusting the Moscow Politburo to administer farms in the Urals. It may well sound

coordinated, but they will be out of touch, insulated from the issues, and not real stakeholders in the outcome.

NO NO NO - OFCOM is not the answer and as the recent Parliamentary Culture Media and Sport Committee reported, is part of the problem.

The present Board of Governors as the Hutton Report showed, has been as much use as tits on a bull.

IMHO, Gavyn Davies was absolutely useless as a Chairman and I am glad he is history.

The BBC should be overseen by a tough two fisted Board of Governors representative of irritating troublesome and annoying people like me!

The requirement for becoming a Governor which should be a full time job - not a hobby - is the person must be determined to make trouble for the BBC Executive, expose wrong doing, and fight fight fight like mad for the needs of the British citizen and the UK national interest (including the BBC's suppliers).

We need wise men and women - trouble makers - on the BBC board.

We need more people who are not Downing Street stooges, and art-house London dwelling, media liberals.

Who is standing up for the ordinary common man?

I think the BBC should become a state owned limited company like Channel 4.

It should NOT be privatised. Ensuring this Corporation, free to trade, is kept independent from commercial control, is essential to ensure the on-going BBC is centred around serving the public interest only.

The Executive Body should be separate from the Board of Governors.

Accountability

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

Is the BBC sufficiently responsive to its viewers and listeners and to Parliament? What improvements, if any, could the BBC make?

The Parliamentary Culture Media and Sport Committee spends just one morning a year scrutinising the BBC Director General and Incumbent Chairman of the Board of Governors.

I think this is ineffective to give about 2 hours per year of scrutiny to an organisation that broadcasts several hundred hours of output per day.

Nether the less, I believe the BBC should have accountability to the Houses of Parliament, and that the Select Committee structure allows the concentration of expertise across the House's political spectrum.

As covered above, the present Board of Governors are dysfunctional.

I think the best way to make the BBC Accountable to the UK citizen is to allow people to reward good programmes and withhold payment from programmes, channels, and brands that fail to satisfy.

The Licence Fee system fails to support any form of accountability to the end user. The bundle and advertising system fails.

The BBC Executive are blatantly unaccountable to the end user. They are accountable only to persons who do not bother to question anything or complain.

To those who point out things and policies that are definitively wrong, the BBC is as accountable as a small state Stalinist despotic regime and treats viewers with utter contempt.

I want to see an informed market, where consumers are able to make choices, where the consequences of those choices matter, and where personal taste is not dictated by small moppets.