



British Red Cross

Tessa Jowell MP
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 BBC Charter Review Consultation
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Wednesday March 31

Tessa Jowell
 Secretary of State

British Red Cross response to the BBC Charter Review

The British Red Cross is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the world's largest humanitarian organisation. In the UK our work relies on some 40,000 trained volunteers.

We believe it is essential for the voice of the voluntary sector to be heard in the Charter Review, for a number of reasons:

- voluntary sector organisations benefit from BBC-hosted appeals;
- the BBC is a respected source of impartial news and information, not just in the UK but worldwide;
- the BBC has an important role in promoting voluntary sector issues;
- the BBC can contribute to social inclusion, community cohesion and participatory democracy.

As part of a worldwide humanitarian movement, we know how important it is that non-UK citizens also have access to the impartial news service provided by the BBC World Service.

The BBC is not just one among many broadcasters in an increasingly crowded and diverse marketplace. It must (and, at its best, already does) ensure that the public is informed as well as entertained - providing information, knowledge and the means to become active citizens.

Access to independent, impartial and free news and information is essential for meeting citizenship and social inclusion goals. But, more than that, in the emerging information society we have the potential to become active users of information, not just passive recipients.



A part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

The British Red Cross Society
 Incorporated by Royal Charter 1908
 Registered Charity Number 220949

A cultural institution such as the BBC, equipped with both broadcast services and online and interactive services, and working at all levels from local to national and international, should be able to provide citizens both with information and the means to respond to it, including participating in debate and social action.

As part of the Public Voice coalition that works for citizens' communications interests, the British Red Cross believes that the BBC of the future needs a new social contract. We say that its overall purpose should be to serve the communications needs, rights and interests of citizens.

To do this will mean a strong, healthy and properly funded BBC, able to provide information, education and entertainment, and helping people interact and participate in debate and action, across a variety of platforms, locally, regionally and nationally.

In return for maintaining its scale, scope and licence fee funding base, the BBC will need:

- a clear core purpose
- a more explicit 'ownership' by the public
- improved parliamentary accountability, on behalf of the public
- stricter conditions to hold it to its purpose
- greater expertise in the governing body
- a partnership 'Compact' with civil society

It will need internal change too. It needs to become less 'top-down', more of a flexible, enabling communications 'partner' to citizens who will increasingly be active users of information.

The British Red Cross urges the government to:

- Retain the licence fee, so keeping the BBC financially secure and independent of the government and the marketplace;
- Rewrite its mission, to give it a new and binding purpose: to serve the communications needs, rights and interests of citizens;
- Make the BBC more accountable;
- Make each BBC service provide public service first;
- Set up a compact between the BBC and the voluntary sector, so that it can be a true partner;
- Improve governance by increasing the range and depth of expertise and skills in the governing body

- Keep the World Service
- Make BBC online a core service

I am delighted the government has given people the opportunity to take part in the Charter Review. I look forward to the BBC of the future.

Yours sincerely,
Nicholas Young

Nicholas Young
Chief Executive