

## Consultation Response



### BASIC DETAILS

Consultation title: Review of the BBC's Royal Charter  
*A strong BBC, independent of government*

To: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Name of respondent: The Digital TV Group

Representing: The digital TV industry  
( For a list of member companies please see: <http://www.dtg.org.uk/dtg/members> )

Address: 7 Old Lodge Place, Twickenham. TW1 1RQ

### CONFIDENTIALITY

No part of this consultation response is confidential.

### DECLARATION

I confirm that this is a formal consultation response. It can be published in full and I authorise the DCMS to make use of the information in this response. DCMS can disregard any standard e-mail text about not disclosing email contents and attachments.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Lindsay-Davies", written over a faint circular stamp.

RICHARD LINDSAY-DAVIES - DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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DCMS Green Paper on Review of the BBC's Royal Charter  
*A strong BBC, independent of government*  
May 2005

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### Range of Interests Represented

The Digital TV Group is an independent body, representing over 100 organisations, facilitating the rapid roll-out of digital TV and convergence across the communications industry in the UK. This consultation response has been confined to its main area of expertise: *A sixth public purpose – building digital Britain.*

While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and to provide a consensus view when required, it should not be assumed that all member organisations of the Digital TV Group support all aspects of this submission. The views expressed in this response are those of members who expressed an opinion and are not the collective view of DTG Council.

### Core of DTG response:

1. The DTG acknowledges that the switch from analogue to digital television is only one part of the digital transition and that new technologies such as HDTV, mobile, pod-casting and on-demand delivery over broadband are important, but also believes that continued innovation in broadcast technology is vital. The DTG urges further consideration to be given to the proposed restructuring and/or relocation which is jeopardising BBC R&D. A robust research function is paramount to the BBC achieving its goals and only an operation of critical mass can accomplish this.
2. Switchover communications should be started much earlier than is currently being suggested if a switchover date of 2012 is to be achieved.
3. The BBC must support the introduction of new consumer electronics products such as integrated digital televisions (IDTVs) and personal video recorders (PVRs) as these are critical in helping the most vulnerable to cope with switchover.

DTG Response to key proposals and questions for consultation

### **Foundations of a 21<sup>st</sup> century BBC**

*Questions 1-3:* No DTG response.

### **A sixth public purpose – building digital Britain**

*Question 4:*

*Do you agree that the BBC should be at the forefront of developments in technology, including digital television?*

DTG response:

**The DTG agrees that the BBC needs to play a leading role in building digital Britain by developing and promoting new technology.** It believes that, in line with those characteristics suggested for content, the BBC should be the benchmark of innovation and creativity in engineering and technology.

BBC R&D and NHK in Japan are the last two world class research laboratories dedicated to the broadcast industry. Similar institutions have either closed or are of insufficient size to ensure adequate representation of broadcasting interests. The second phase of digital will see the delivery of content through one-to-one broadband services and these will coexist and interoperate with more cost effective one-to-many broadcast services.

A principal DTG activity is to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of content to the home. This considerable interoperability task is achieved through specialist groups that examine key issues of technical compatibility. These operate in the areas from the continuous improvement of existing systems to the implementation of emerging technology such as HDTV, Mobile, Metadata and IPTV. Much of this work is mission critical to both digital switchover and achieving the BBC's goal of digital universality in television by 2012.

**The DTG believes that the BBC Research and Development Department has a critical part to play in building a digital Britain and therefore should be maintained with sufficient critical mass.**

The DTG acknowledges that the switch from analogue to digital television is only one part of the digital transition and that new technologies such as HDTV, mobile, podcasting and on-demand delivery over broadband are important, but also believes that continued innovation in broadcast technology is vital.

It is important to the industry that strives to support the BBC services that there is a first class research body to ensure compatibility between broadcasters, programme makers and the emerging technologies provided by manufacturers. This flow of innovative thinking is mutually beneficial and ensures that UK broadcasters are fully informed of technical developments. BBC research engineers are at the centre of key international developments and at the forefront of international standards setting. As an indication of their standing, they are in widespread demand as members of international expert groups, some are visiting university professors, others gain doctorates for their BBC work and numerous national and international awards come to Kingswood Warren regularly. The department numbers a Fellow of the Royal Society among its past heads. The department has a portfolio of more than 300 patents, 10 being added last year. It comprises 150 professional engineers and additional support staff. Together with the Japanese NHK lab, it is one of just two world class broadcasting labs dedicated to supporting this major technology-based industry.

The DTG believes that a robust research function is paramount to the BBC achieving its goals and only an operation of critical mass can accomplish this. **The DTG urges further consideration to be given to the proposed restructuring and/or relocation of BBC R&D which is jeopardising this vital resource.**

#### **Switchover**

The DTG supports the proposal for the BBC to take a leading role in planning, preparing and implementing of the switchover process. The DTG believes that this must begin as early as possible in order to meet a switchover date of 2012 in line with the views of Ofcom, the BBC and the European Commission.

The DTG urges the BBC to ensure that consumer communication is started at the earliest possible date and, unlike the BBC Digital marketing campaigns, on air communications should include information on easy-to-use consumer electronics products and services such as integrated digital televisions (iDTVs) and Personal Video Recorders (PVRs), critical in helping the most vulnerable to cope with switchover. Many DTG members are concerned at suggestions that any significant communication is unlikely to start before 2007.

#### **Replicating the analogue terrestrial coverage in digital**

The DTG believes that close to universal availability of digital on terrestrial will be important at switchover.

#### **Developing alternative reception options**

The DTG encourages the development of services across all platforms.

#### **Coordinating role**

The DTG believes that it is important for the BBC to support the coordinating role of SwitchCo.

### **Information on switchover**

It is vital that switchover is supported by an early and significant communication campaign, at national and regional levels from the BBC. This campaign should include information on the range of products (Set top boxes, integrated digital TVs, personal video recorders) and platforms (DTT, DSAT, DCAB, Broadband) options available.

### **Helping the most vulnerable to cope with switchover**

A mechanism for the support of the most vulnerable in society is critical for switchover and the BBC should work with others to ensure a mechanism is implemented.

### **The BBC's constitution**

*Questions 5 - 8:* No DTG response.

### **Accountability**

*Questions 9 - 11:* No DTG response.

*Question 12:*

*What skills and expertise do you think they (the BBC Trust) needs?:*

The DTG believes that it would be beneficial for the Trust to include at least one member who is an expert in the technical development of broadcasting and media distribution.

*Question 13:* No DTG response.

### **More detailed issues of scale and scope**

*Questions 14 & 15:* No DTG response.

### **Scope of publicly-funded services**

*Questions 16:*

*Do you agree that the BBC should be able to propose changes to its range of services over the course of the next ten years?*

The DTG agrees with this proposal.

*Questions 17:*

*Do you agree with our proposals for handling new services?*

The DTG agrees with the proposals for the introduction of enhanced public value and market impact tests.

*Questions 18 & 19:*

No DTG response.

### **Beyond the BBC**

*The wider system of public service broadcasting (PSB)*

*Question 20:* No DTG response.