

**TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING  
OF THE BBC CHARTER REVIEW  
HELD IN BELFAST  
ON THURSDAY, 4 MARCH 2004**

**FACILITATOR**

I think we have a rather grand stage, because we were expecting rather more people. But as the Minister says, thank you all for coming. You will hear that this is recorded, which again sounds rather grand, but the point of the process really is that we record what it is that you say, because that will be recorded for the Charter Review process, and also some of the views will go up on the DCMS website so that people ongoing can kind of keep apprised of what people in Belfast, and people in Cardiff, and people in Edinburgh etc have been saying.

The point I have just made I think is worth making again, that it is about listening to your views. So part of the process this evening will not be about your hearing lots of views from the great and the good, it is about your views. So what are we going to cover? Three areas really. We are going to cover funding, so how is the BBC funded? Do you agree with the way it is currently funded? Would you personally like to see some different options? Hopefully there will be some questions that will come up, but these are the sorts of questions you might want to ask, but you are not restricted in any way to those questions. You can say whatever you feel. The second area we will be looking at is governance, so we will then be looking at how it is currently governed, and again do you think the way it is currently governed is the way it should continue. Do you think there are other options? Don't you know? Don't you really care about that? It doesn't really matter what your view is, what we want to make sure is that you give your view. And the third area is a very broad area, which is what is the role now of the BBC in society? Is it what it currently is? Do we know what it is? Do we know what it should be? So again it is that broad area, what sort of programme content should they be generating there? Should they be looking at digital channels or not? Should they be looking at subscriptions for certain things there? So again that is for you to give your view on what you think. And at the end we have some electronic voting. Again we had planned that there might have been 180 – 200 people here, so you will have rather sophisticated keypads to do your voting. But in all seriousness, the fact that there are only a dozen of you, we are going to record at each event how many people are here and what your views are, do you think this, do you think the other. So again although it is not statistically relevant, it will record what you actually come to the conclusion of at the end of the evening.

So if we could look at funding first. I will just give you a bit of background that has come out of the research which some people are not always necessarily clear on. The current licence fee is £116, it should be going up to £121 in the near future. There is no separate radio licence, although you probably know that you can buy a black and white licence. But what does it fund? It funds 8 television channels, it funds all of the radio channels, now that is 5 national, 5 digital and about 50 local stations. It also funds the BBC in Scotland, in Northern Ireland and in Wales and in the England regions, and it raises about £2.7 billion every year.

Now as I said, we are not going to have a procession of the great and the good giving you their views, but we thought it might be quite useful just to stimulate conversation if you heard a selection of views in a conversational sort of style. So we have got a couple of actors here – Charlie and Showbu. They are going to come up here and they are going to conduct a conversation around the idea of funding, just discussing what some of the issues are. And then after they have finished we will hand it over to you and you can give us your views.

One of them is going to give a sort of pro-licence fee argument, and the other one is going to give a radical change argument. I will leave it to them.

**(ACTORS NOT TRANSCRIBED)**

**FACILITATOR**

So it is over to you I guess. You have heard some views there. You have got over half of the country's households now have digital. I have read somewhere that technically I think it is 94% of households can get digital, so there is no reason why we shouldn't go there.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER**

I would just like to correct a point here. This question about digital and Freeview. I have a Freeview box, but like most people, I now have 5 televisions in my house, from a 2.5 inch up to a 28 inch widescreen. The 10 inch I take out in the kitchen, which I also use off the car battery in the car when I am out, and the 2.5 inch too, but any digital box only gives you access on one spot in the house. Most modern TVs will last up to 20 years nowadays, if you switch off the analogue, this talk with media moguls wanting the analogues being switched off, people are going to be left with a whole lot of TVs that they can't use. Are we going to have to buy 5 digital boxes? This has never been thought, but these people, Mr Sky, and the Sun and the Daily Express, they have a vested interest in plugging this line because they want a level playing field for Sky, but if you subscribe to Sky you only get one line and you are able to watch Spot One TV, but if you want to watch it upstairs you have to watch the same channel, otherwise it would charge. I think this whole question of the digital is a very misleading thing and no other country is going to switch, well it is now 2010, but no other country in Europe is going to switch off its analogue in 2010, the Republic hasn't even started broadcasting, although they have frequencies, but they haven't even started broadcasting them on digital terrestrial. So it means then we are not going to be able to receive broadcasts from the Republic, which a lot of people watch in Northern Ireland. The whole thing is absolutely ridiculous and driven by the media and the fact that the government are in the pocket of Mr Sky and so forth because the Sun then supports ...

**FACILITATOR**

So what you are arguing is that there is a technical problem first of all in that you have got a lot of televisions, and a lot of other people have got multiple televisions in their households and therefore you would have to buy multiple Freeview boxes or whatever it is to make them work, and the idea that there is perhaps a vested interest somewhere in the background.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER**

Yes. But I was going to say most things on the whole issue, I think the big problem with elective licence fee is, which the BBC have to face as well as everybody else, the big problem is again that it enables media moguls like Murdoch and so forth to make common cause with the poor people who find it difficult to pay. I think it would be far better to have three quarters of a pence of income tax and then poor people don't have to pay, or poor people if you like don't have to pay at all, and you pay a graduate of maybe up to a limit of say £30 – 40,000, like national insurance, and maybe also slightly ameliorated by a 5% extra rise in VAT on receivable things like videos, TV, DVD, recordable DVD. I think that would be a far better idea. But the money would have to be ring-fenced, and this is most important of course because in other countries where that has been done you have found that the money hasn't been ring fenced, so all parties would have to agree that that money would be ring-fenced, and it would be shown on your income tax return that broadcasting tax show that you paid say £60 a year to broadcasting tax because it would lessen the licence fee because more people would be paying it, say that is an average. So I think the BBC should face the

facts, because the problem about the present situation is that media moguls who have a vested interest in a weak BBC and the dominance of Sky and people like that make common cause through papers like the Sun and the Daily Express with poor people who find it difficult to pay. And this was dramatically illustrated in the Politics Programme a few weeks ago by Lembit Opik, and there was a Labour MP from Birmingham who is against the licence fee. Opik, the Liberal Democrat, easily won the argument, but I could see where your other man was coming from, and this is the great difficulty.

#### FACILITATOR

OK, so the point you are making there is, and I think Elsteen also raises it in that report he did for the Tory Party the other day about lots of people who can't afford, get hauled off to the courts, I think he described it as.

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

I want to speak on behalf of disabled people and carers, and I feel to add to what has been said that it should be rated, the television licence, because I personally, and all the carers I represent, do not get £100 a week, not to mention £100 plus, and yes the BBC is a better station, and the radio and what not, and carers do appreciate it, but in saying that I pay the same TV licence as Mrs Thatcher, and every consultant and every judge. It doesn't make sense. And as I say, one week of money is dead before the calendar year begins. It doesn't make sense.

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

My name is Stephen and I am from Lisburn. My suggestion, really I was trying to make my mind up coming down tonight about what changes I think the BBC really needs to make, and that is, to sum it up, the licence fee needs to be £35 really, and BBC 1 has got to go to BBC 2, BBC 2 has got to go to BBC 1, BBC 1 – which is BBC 2 – you are going to be putting BBC 2 on BBC 1, OK, the revs have to be paid for separately if you want to subscribe to it. All radio services should remain precisely as they are, and that is to be paid for by the £55 licence fee, it is the only thing as far as television is concerned that the £55 pays for is the new BBC 1, which is a slightly changed BBC 2.

#### FACILITATOR

We can perhaps come back to that, because I would want to pick up with you this idea that I think experts tend to say BBC 1 kind of matches against ITV, BBC 2 matches against Channel 4 and they push against each other to keep quality up. I don't want to deal with that now, but we should come back on that to see how your idea fits with that. Funding, who else has got points of view about that? Is it a good thing?

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

My name is Barry and I actually work for the BBC, but I am not here in any kind of official capacity. I think there are a lot of misconceptions about the BBC, certainly a lot of people seem to think that we are responsible for setting the amount of the licence fee, or collecting the amount of the licence fee. There was mention there as well of Freeview, and BBC is largely responsible for its success, taking over from ITV On-Digital. So we at the BBC get attacked a lot for the digital channel, and a lot of those things I think the BBC has no choice over because they are in the Royal Charter, that we have to be a leader in new media technology, and certainly now the BBC has taken the decision to broadcast in the clear all its BBC digital channels, so you don't need to subscribe to those. So I think there are a lot of things the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for in the Royal Charter that the BBC has no control over.

#### FACILITATOR

So you are saying that there is a bit of a complication, that you are getting perhaps blamed for certain things that you have not originated at the BBC and are not responsible for.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

... in the tabloids, and they obviously have their own agenda, and the BBC I think can do a better job with PR, but there is a difficulty in that in that we can't do PR promotion for ourselves on our own channels, but that we don't really answer those criticisms.

FACILITATOR

So you think there is an issue of understanding what the BBC is specifically responsible for. OK. Thank you. Who else has got views about the way in which the BBC is funded?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I just wanted to congratulate the first two speakers who mentioned about people who are on low income. I totally, totally agree with them. I worked as a care worker, so I can understand just how important television is to the older person or the disabled person at home. Absolutely necessary. I did say £55, but that is a working figure, but it is certainly the direction I think things have to go, because the BBC is just – and I say this kindly – a little bit too fat, but it has offered an absolutely tremendous service to date.

FACILITATOR

When you say too fat, do you want to be more specific about how you think it is too fat?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It has too much money.

FACILITATOR

It gets too much money?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think it is trying to be too many things to too many people in a way, it has got to be more the public service broadcaster, that is what I meant by putting BBC 2 in BBC 1's slot. Now these fantastic commercial programmes, like Eastenders and so on, could work well on a separate independent company, that is something I am throwing up in the air.

FACILITATOR

How does that universal access argument play though with your care argument that if you took something which was a mainstream and put it on the subscription channel, then what would all the people who were sitting at home, what would they watch for their £55.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

When I came down I thought what on earth am I going to talk about tonight, and that £55 is what came to mind, I just took it from there. The rest may not make sense, but it has got to be put in the melting pot and it is not just my opinion that matters.

FACILITATOR

It is a good example though of once you start removing something and saying well that shouldn't be there, it should be here, how do the people who are going to get access to it actually afford it. You don't need to answer that because I think you have raised a very good point.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

What Malcolm said to begin with I thought was absolutely excellent regarding taxing, of buying the equipment in the first place. We do live in an undivided society really, an undivided world, so I don't think that the poor should be penalised, as they do. And a further - £121, was it – no, absolutely no way, no way, it should not and I don't think it will happen. People don't want it generally, I don't think people want it and it certainly should not happen. It is time that the commercial programmes were put on commercial channels, that is the way it has got to go, and put the quality on to BBC 1 if you want to do it that way, and keep the radio exactly as it is.

FACILITATOR

Just to push any of you a bit further about this, what would you regard then as commercial programming and what would you regard as quality? How do you make that distinction if you are talking about it in relation to what should be funded? Give me an example?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think documentaries, consumer programmes, good drama should all be on BBC and Eastenders and all that crap – excuse my language – should be put out to commercial because they are not contributing anything to society, only putting them down the wrong road because they are so full of rubbish, so they should be put out to farm somewhere.

FACILITATOR

So soaps might go on to a subscription channel and documentaries etc should go on to BBC. OK, that is one version, thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

And by the way, I think the BBC is worth every penny because you have so much on the radio, Radio 4, Radio Ulster, the World Service, I am a great fan of the BBC but I would like to see all these soaps and things just taken away.

FACILITATOR

As you can see, and we will be quite flexible about this, even when you discuss funding you suddenly get drawn off into what sort of programming for funding, so this is a bit of an artificial distinction but I just want to make sure that we cover the areas.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I just want to say that I myself am visually impaired and all the Blind Societies get their thing free, I am only representing some carers, and pensioners get their TV licence free. But in saying that, it should be rated like the rates, that is our opinion. We don't mind paying a small subscription, but it is being expected to pay the same, as I said earlier, as everybody else.

FACILITATOR

Which was the point you made, of some sort of banding really between what people can afford. And also I think it is quite interesting in terms of digital channels bringing visually impaired people into our thoughts, is that digital can now, as you probably know, carry different tracks so that you can get a voiceover that tells you what is happening on a particular programme, so that is an interesting development. And it comes back to what you are saying that you would want universal access for that sort of activity. Anyway a couple more points about funding before we move on to think about governance.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

A good example, if we are talking about funding and quality programmes too, but a very good example of what happens when you change a method of funding is Channel 4. Channel

4 in the 1980s had a different method of funding, it was a rather complicated formula but basically it didn't have to always pay its own way, ITV companies paid a levy. Admittedly it was a Conservative government that did away and made it funded, now it is still a public corporation, it is not a private thing, but to pay for things like the 7.00 News and documentaries, they have had to go into these reality TV programmes and the big ratings winners, which they probably wouldn't have had to do if the method of funding had stayed as previous. And again this was forecast remember, because I am the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland and we have links with Liberal Democrats, and I remember reading a Liberal Democrat pamphlet about this and I exactly forecast that this would happen, in 1989, I forecast exactly what would happen, and it has happened. So you know there is always a correlation between funding and public service broadcasting and I think you can't just say that advertising will pay for public service broadcasting, it won't. You have to have another way of paying for quality programmes. And I think even soaps, there are different kinds of soaps. I would certainly disagree with some of the others, I think Eastenders is actually a better quality soap than some of the others, they haven't had to go into the same sort of controversial bad taste programming, as Emmerdale has been with the plane crash just after Lockerbie, which was in very bad taste, and things like that. Eastenders have done provocative issues, but they have done it in a much more sensible way than commercial broadcasters who are just interested in creating ratings. And radio is another very good example of good quality. Popular radio was Radio 2. Now Radio 2, 13.2 million people listen to it and to my mind it is quality popular radio, it is popular radio which is quality and it is like no other radio station, and people know it is not a narrowcaster, like most radio stations have come into in the commercial sector particularly, it is not a narrowcaster, it is a proper broadcaster and people listen to it and they want the quality, they want the mixture of Jeremy Vine talking at lunchtime about the important topical issues and the mixture of modern contemporary music. They want the 2 in 1 which you don't generally get in other stations which are narrowcast. So that is a good example of quality popular radio, quality popular broadcasting.

#### FACILITATOR

The points that you raise are interesting because when you get into trying to define what it is you are talking about, quality obviously differs. Just around this table, she thinks that Eastenders is of a certain quality, and you think it is of a different quality, and it is quite interesting when you get into defining it in terms of what people should have on a particular channel, how do you define that? Some of the issues you seem to be talking about are what is appropriate for a citizen and what is appropriate for a consumer? What do people have a choice to buy, should they be free to buy what they want? Or is there a broader remit? So each time you come up against exactly what we mean.

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

And don't forget, the like of UK History and Discovery Channel, a lot of their programmes, in fact UK History particularly, virtually all their programmes are ex-BBC and it wouldn't be there if it wasn't for the BBC to start with.

#### FACILITATOR

There is certainly an argument, which we may as well deal with, which is the level of funding that would go into programming if something like a publicly funded broadcaster wasn't putting that money in. Because as I understand it, a high proportion of the money that is put into home grown production – I think something like 75% of the TV in particular that we watch is home grown. Elsewhere in the world it is nowhere near those levels, and the argument is that it is because of public funding keeping the quality up. And if it wasn't there – which is your argument I think – then slowly you would lose that competition and therefore the quality. Something to think about. You have got a view here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I am just finding amongst everyone here, there has been a lot of talk about funding and the BBC ... this money away, but I am just wondering amongst everyone here how much awareness there is of how many people it actually takes to make a television programme and how much money that actually costs to produce perhaps maybe a half hour of news, or a half hour of drama, or whatever. Could the BBC do more perhaps to promote that?

FACILITATOR

Certainly we will record that. There is no-one to comment, but that is the point that you are making really, that the BBC perhaps needs to promote its virtues.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I just wanted to say that in case I sounded a bit anti, or misinformed, I realise it does take a lot to put television and radio programmes together. It is just that if that was in any way directed at myself, I don't mind in the slightest.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I am not here on anyone's side, it is from my own interest, it is the kind of level of awareness within the general public, it takes for example on Who Wants to be a Millionaire, it takes 70 people to put together one hour at least of that programme. So that is where the money goes, the BBC is an employer as well as a broadcaster.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Could I just mention quickly about ITV. ITV does a lot of popular stuff, a lot of people would think it does absolute rubbish and it is becoming even worse, I think it is time the BBC distances itself from what is becoming rubbish.

FACILITATOR

Just to pick up on your point, it is a kind of a process thing, although there aren't many of us, this is a debate, so that is fine. Even if you say something which you think consequently, actually I didn't have enough evidence for that, that doesn't matter. This is not a focus group, so we are not here for everybody to ... let's argue it out and see what makes sense actually. So that is fine. We will come back to some of these issues, because it is all interwoven.

I want to move now on to just thinking about the governance issue. As you probably know, or don't know, there are 12 BBC Governors as I understand it, and they have a dual role of overseeing the BBC and also regulating it, so looking at its standards and accuracy, impartiality, fair trading, and the Crown appoints those Governors. So now what we are going to do, Charlie and Showbu are going to come back up and they are going to talk through some of the issues and again they are going to give you two views – one which is keep it the way it is, and these are the reasons why; and another which is saying I think we should look at this and change it, and here are the reasons why.

**(ACTORS NOT TRANSCRIBED)**

FACILITATOR

OK, so you have heard a couple of arguments there, what are your views? Should it be exactly the same, should it be changed, in what way, how radically? Do we care?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

My name is Tony Macerlane, I am a Public Affairs Consultant here in Belfast. Basically it comes back to what was done in the sketch there over the Lord Hutton inquiry and the independence of the BBC. Having watched it for weeks and weeks, or months and months, however long it went on for, at the end of the day Greg Dyke leaving looked almost like a punishment from the government for having stood up to them, when as a matter of fact the government should have had absolutely no say in what the BBC did or didn't do, because it is meant to be an independent organisation. I will back the suggestion in the sketch for a completely independent regulator. A regulator cannot be a member of the organisation they are trying to regulate, that is completely ridiculous. It would be like in the energy industry here, the energy regulator being a member of NIE, of course he is going to take decisions in their benefit, of course his outlook is going to be coloured. So the people who regulate the BBC have to be completely independent, and finding people like that and choosing them is quite tough. I suppose there could be some form of election to see how these people could be chosen, but I think that some serious thought would need to be given to that.

FACILITATOR

You mean electing the current Governors or electing a new set of governors?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Electing a completely, ombudsman-type regulator for the BBC who has no role within the organisation whatsoever.

FACILITATOR

Who else has a view on how it is currently regulated, should it be regulated in the same way?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think as mentioned in the sketch, the BBC has been around and governed in this way for so long and it has never really been a problem before until the recent Hutton inquiry, and we obviously don't want to go into great detail on that debate.

FACILITATOR

There is no reason why not to, it is a debate.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well I imagine it would be ... But as I say it is something that has worked until that recent debate, something that has worked well.

FACILITATOR

What has worked well about it for you? What do you take out of the fact that it has been regulated and governed in a certain way that makes you think it is a success?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Because we haven't had instances like the Hutton inquiry before, we haven't had any accusations of conflicts, there hasn't been that problem before. I think you can make an analogy between the BBC and the Governors in general with the Monarchy. If you were to set out to design from scratch how the BBC should be governed, or what the BBC is, you wouldn't come up with a situation where you had no choice, you bought a TV, you had to pay the licence. But it exists as a result of an historical accident, it is something that is admired around the world, it is something that every other country in the world would be envious of.

FACILITATOR

So you are kind of where Sherbu is at in her sketch here, which is that it seems to be working, so why change it. You are saying – to pick up on your point – it should change because it is wrong to regulate something that you are running. I just want to push you a bit further on that. It is not particularly a private company which is making use of particular resources, it is not an energy company which might be involved in, let's say pollution of the environment for example, so is there really a conflict? Are you saying in principle it should be separated, or are there things that it has done and therefore it should be separated? Why is it you are saying what you are saying?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think it is largely based on the principle of independence. I just find it very hard to think of a regulator being independent and being a member of the same organisation, it just doesn't sit with me. And as for working for 81 years, yes it has and I suppose the fantastic programmes that we see on the BBC and hear on the radio are evidence of that. However, as with changes in technology, changes in people's attitude, if it has worked for 81 years, that was fine for those 81 years, but as we saw with Lord Hutton, there were some significant problems, whether that came completely down to personalities or systems of governance within the BBC. There should be some sort of review.

FACILITATOR

As this seems to be the issue, can anyone else think of another example, apart from Hutton, where this governance hasn't worked, because we may as well discuss why it didn't work. So I just want to get anyone else's views, are there other examples of the governance issue where it hasn't worked and therefore should be changed? OK, well let's just look in perhaps a bit of detail and about why, what is it about that one instance do you think that means right we have had that one thing, we must change?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Again it could come down to personalities as opposed to systems. I just think the way Greg Dyke in particular was handled during the whole affair was quite wrong. I thought having the courage to stand up to a government and present the views that were presented in the way that they were should have gained him a pat on the back, certainly not a kick in the pants if you like.

FACILITATOR

It could be argued he kicked himself in the pants.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes it could be, maybe a little bit of the conspiracy theory can come into this, but there was an awful lot of pressure put on the man and his whole operating procedures, had he stayed on, would have been coloured by this one government pushed incident. As I say again, it is largely a principle of independence and again the whole Hutton thing could come down to personalities because as we have already seen from the room, nobody else can recall any other time that it happened.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Since I have been hearing people speak tonight specifically on this subject about the governing and whether it should change, no I do not think it should change at all. Without wanting to sound like a typical old-fashioned Northern Ireland Protestant, I just want to say, in case you are listening in Downing Street – Tony, keep your hands off the BBC, you and your party and any other political party, it belongs to the people, not the people who govern the country.

FACILITATOR

OK, let's explore that. How does it belong to the people?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

The people pay for it, it is not to be controlled by the government surreptitiously, it is not to be whatever way that everything has just gone on lately with the Hutton report, it has just got to be as much as possible for the people, by the people, and not by Ministers, not government. Yes, they have to instigate what happens to initiate things. I don't mean to sound off the wall or a bit weird by saying that.

FACILITATOR

You are not sounding particularly weird to me.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

The less the government has to do with the governing of the BBC, or any other broadcaster as such, the better. But yes it has to be accountable.

FACILITATOR

So do we think that the independence of the BBC is better served then by separating out the regulatory function, or keeping it as it is. What are you saying?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

To be honest, I have absolutely had no problem with the way it has been ever since I was born. I don't see why it should change.

FACILITATOR

So no evidence?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

No.

FACILITATOR

Who else wants to contribute on this? I know it can seem a little bit of an arcane subject that we don't necessarily think of.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

The only other choice really, as opposed to the Governors, would seem to me to be Ofcom, which regulates the other broadcasters. I am not completely sure how that would change, what that would actually mean. I can understand people's suspicion about conflicts of interest when the Governors are appointed by the government, but Greg Dyke for example is good friends with Tony Blair, good friends with Alastair Campbell, it is inevitable with people in that high level of media and the people that are often successful businessmen, they are going to have contacts in the government, they are going to be close to government people. But I think when people join the BBC they join up to the principles of the BBC. I think it is one of the few institutions in our society that has principles that the vast majority of the time does live up to it.

FACILITATOR

Just to push that point, because you are saying that someone like Greg Dyke or whatever has been appointed by the government, they might have contacts. But how would that differ with Ofcom?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well that is it, I don't really understand how that would change if it was Ofcom and what changes that would actually mean.

FACILITATOR

So there is a vagueness in your mind about how Ofcom would work anyway?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

No, well I understand that it regulates the other broadcasters, but if the Governors were to be scrapped and Ofcom was to be introduced to regulate the BBC, would that make any significant changes, what would that mean other than there being new governors.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Just on the idea of Ofcom being the overall governing body. Forget that. Leave it exactly the way it is. Keep the BBC Governors just as an entity by themselves and let Ofcom get on with the rest of them. There is no point in giving one person all the power.

FACILITATOR

I suppose a Minister who has to take that decision might say well that is exactly what we would be doing by giving someone else a degree of the power, it is taking away a concentration of championing the reorganisation and regulating, it is saying well actually it is putting another check by having it separated.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I can't quite explain my reason for saying that, but I just think there has to be two different bodies.

FACILITATORS

OK, fine. Thank you. Who else wants to comment on this subject of Governors. Do you want to say a word?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Not really. The only thing I would say is that this whole question of political interference and Hutton and so forth, you think of the Greg Dyke situation, he was, as somebody remarked, a friend of Tony Blair, before he joined the BBC he was a member of Labour, or should we now say New Labour. So you know if Tony Blair does that to his friends, what does he do to his enemies quite honestly? But I think at the end of the day you will get in any organisation, we don't want to go into the whole character of people, but individual reporters who will see an opportunity of a story and not check it out. It was suggested, I don't know, that one of the reasons that Mr Gilligan was brought into the BBC was because he was a bit of a shit-stirrer – to use the expression – and that was one of the reasons he got the job in the first place. I don't know. But you know even locally I have heard all sorts of stories where people have tried to put words into politicians' mouths locally, and certainly in the party that I am involved with – the Alliance Party – I will not mention names but they have certainly tried to put words, and they will not take no for an answer when they are told that it isn't true. So I think this sort of thing unfortunately is inevitable, but I think certainly public broadcasters have to set a high standard.

FACILITATOR

I don't want to drag this governors bit out if there is nothing else to say. Is anyone else wanting to say something about this tension?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well I was just going to mention the last point, is the BBC sufficiently responsive to its viewers and listeners? I wondered if anybody, if that is an area in the BBC that I work in, and I wondered what people thought about that, and let's say ...available to contact the BBC with your opinions on programmes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

There is many the thing that comes on the BBC, I am a great fan of the BBC, I will say again, but there are quite a few things goes on and I am absolutely irate with them. I have no way in the world how to get my point of view through to them, it is never mentioned how you can ...

FACILITATOR

There is no obvious mechanism?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

No.

FACILITATOR

Without sounding terribly corporate, but how do you interact with the BBC, but how do you get in touch with the BBC, is it basically do you watch television and listen to the radio, do you go online?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I don't have a computer. I have called, and I live quite near to it actually, I have called in a couple of times, but I haven't been happy with what has happened you know. There should be some way, there are quite a few presenters that I would take issue with, they are just hopeless at their job and I resent them getting any part of the licence fee because they shouldn't be on air in my opinion. And I don't know who I could approach and say that to, do you know what I mean. There are quite a few who shouldn't be anywhere near the air waves in my opinion in Northern Ireland.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Personally, if we are talking about who we contact, years ago Mary Whitehouse, everyone in this room knows who Mary Whitehouse was. Can anyone tell me who replaced her?

FACILITATOR

I can't.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

So what I am saying is, we need to know who replaced Mary Whitehouse. I am not saying that is going to be up to the BBC to do that, but I am here tonight to find out who, and I suppose maybe you are too.

FACILITATOR

And is that your primary reason for coming?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

We are very, very slow to give credit, and we are very, very quick to complain.

FACILITATOR

Are you talking as a nation, or just as people?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Go into a restaurant and you say oh that food is horrible, they come along and they ask you – did you enjoy your meal? Thank you very much, it is lovely. And so that is basically what we are in this country, most of us anyway, we will say one thing under our breath and we will say something else in public. So what I am trying to say is that we need to be able to know who it is that we can complain to, if we desire to do so. Because I think a lot of programmes are made and watched by people who do not enjoy the content, but they don't bother to do anything about it, and I think we need to. But give credit where credit is due, but it is a bitter sweet.

FACILITATOR

So there could be much better feedback mechanisms so that you can say yes I really liked that, but no I didn't like that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Again on behalf of disabled people and carers, we depend on the BBC a lot. And saying that, we find being the minority, and even those not only who are disabled but are unique and multi-complex, we find it hard, not to express the negative but to express that we are just as important in society and have a role to play and loads of people, lots of people could learn by things that we experience and do and how we progress, and we can't always get through. I have personally tried to get through on some of the documentaries, but because the medical aspect isn't understood, or it is hard just to get through about carers and their role, and it is not necessarily depressing because not everybody wants to tune in, it is a way of life. Who knows what way they are going to be in 20 years or whatever is going to happen, and people should see it as a progression and a learning procedure. Everybody is out in life for money. Well money isn't our God, and the BBC shouldn't grade and classify people in that sense. And when we are unique – as I am myself, and I have a daughter with multi-complex unique, and as I said I am from organisations of unique disabilities – I tried to get through to the BBC about perverts, now I don't intend to go into that whole big subject, but you will see a case very soon, if I have anything to do with it, in the papers and when the BBC gets their face around to it, seeing it through, but I am dealing with that case with about half a dozen carers in south and east Belfast for 10 years, and some of them have even experienced it for 12 or 15 years, but if it got publicity for 5 minutes, it would be sorted out. But because we can't get that publicity it has dragged over and dragged on unnecessarily. I know they need evidence, I understand all that, but in saying that, if we get the publicity, and radio is the same. I rang ... Anderson and George Jones, and I thought George Jones would have had a heart because he has a daughter with visual impairment, but no, the whole subject was smoothed over. So whether the BBC likes it or not I will have equal rights and respect in this society.

FACILITATOR

That moves us quite nicely on to the next subject for discussion, which is this broader aspect of what is the BBC's role in society. Because I think, if I am understanding you correctly, that what you are talking about is a role in terms of your rights as a citizen, not just as a consumer of programming, you know how do you get certain social issues raised? Is it the BBC's role to do that for you, etc? So I think we should have a wider discussion about that, because I think that is a very, very important point. So I am going to ask Charlie and Showbu to come back up. They are just going to do a quick talk around what some of the issues are about the role of the BBC in society, and then we will pick some of those issues up.

**(ACTORS NOT TRANSCRIBED)**

FACILITATOR

All right, that is the last you will see of Showbu and Charlie tonight. So let's kind of get your reactions to this. What would it be like if the BBC, for example, wasn't here? What are the sorts of things that you would miss, what is the role that it plays, and why don't we pick up on the point that you made last – at the front – about its role of perhaps making access to minority interests. What is its role? Should there be someone else doing that, or should there be a broadcaster doing that? We will start with you and see what your thoughts are, and then we will go round.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well I personally think they shouldn't be selective. When you are unique or multi-complex, I myself am one in a million, but my husband doesn't appreciate it, so I don't expect the BBC to appreciate it. But I think it shouldn't be seen as negative, as somebody said, many positives can be thought of it. I myself work for Social Services and I feel that now that I have gone full circle, and being a carer and what not, and had my own business at my finger tips, that it is a positive that because I had to become a carer, and the BBC, if I was Kate Smith's sister or something and went to the BBC, they would snap me up. If I was Daniel O'Donnell's wife they would snap me up. Anybody. But just because you are a plain carer, unemployed or whatever, they just don't want to see it through, and yet and all they could deal with it so good, as I say the whole situation, and this pervert wouldn't go on, he has assaulted so many people in south and east Belfast, it could be dealt with in 5 minutes, 5 minutes flat, and I can't get air for it.

FACILITATOR

And why do you think you can't get air time for it?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Because I have called into the BBC, I have e-mailed them, I have done everything, and lots of other carers, and we just can't get air, because as I said to you earlier – evidence. Well you are not going to have evidence for everything in life.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

This is not really about the thing. You know you are talking about legal issues, we don't want to have a kangaroo court for somebody. You can't expect the BBC to have a kangaroo court for ...

FACILITATOR

Yes, but to be fair, what I said was that she is entitled to give her view, and what I think she is driving at is there a specific role or not? So it is not about saying well let's kind of vote on that particular issue right now, but it is about us bringing up in this debate, is that a role that the BBC should or should not play? So we don't have to take a decision on that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

No, I am not saying that, but from what I could see – maybe I have got it wrong – but she wanted a particular incident.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Mmm – being unique.

FACILITATOR

I think what she is talking about, and I don't want to paraphrase you too much, but you are talking about access, and what we are talking about here are journalistic standards and stuff like that. So we have heard that point, so that is fine, I just wanted to make sure we had got that. Well let's ask you – you have got the microphone – thinking about this role in society,

where do you think the BBC should be going? Do you think its role as currently defined is what it should stick with?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes I think generally speaking, and in particular in Northern Ireland it does have a good role. I may not agree with everything it does, but locally, for instance there is a programme that I don't watch – Give Your Head – on BBC local television, which is a comedy programme, but satirising the troubles to a certain extent, and I don't particularly like the programme, but I accept that some people do, and also that it provides work for actors as part of a general remit which they may, if that type of work wasn't available, obviously they subsidise it with subsidising and with various other shows and things, but if that work wasn't available they might have to go back to their sort of novel job and we wouldn't have full time comedians to a certain extent. So that is a public service which probably Ulster Television might not be willing to provide. So you have the general remit. We have just had for instance, in the ITV sector, heard about last week the BBC – sorry, not the BBC, what is now the joined-up ITV effect.

FACILITATOR

Carlton-Granada

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes, pulling out of Leeds-Midlands, about 350 people, one of the largest studio complexes in Europe in Nottingham, and that has completely gone, and they are even going to do the news for the East-Midlands apparently from Birmingham. That is a shame and disgrace, but at the end of the day it is systemic of the situation. The people in the merged ITV are answerable to shareholders, and shareholders want the maximum return on their capital invested.

FACILITATOR

OK, so just drilling down to that, what therefore is the role of the BBC, what can it do that the commercial broadcaster can't do? Because you are saying, quite rightly, they need to make money for their shareholders, therefore what is it that they can't do that the BBC can do?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well the BBC can provide a wider range of programming, and he is originally from here, as Pat Lochrie (phon) has rightly said, the BBC will have to try and move into these areas that ... ITV, if they are cutting down on their regional programming. It is all the more reason why the BBC should increase its regional programming and maybe have smaller sub-divisions and so forth which modern technologies allows for. Now this all has to be paid for.

FACILITATOR

Let's explore with someone over here who might want to give a view, about this idea of regional programming.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I wanted to mention as well some of the services that the BBC does provide, some of them were mentioned of course there. Not a lot of people know about BBC Education, which provides free educational material to all the schools in the UK. We get a lot of feedback from the schools to say that that makes marked improvements in results for schoolchildren. ... but you mentioned about taking care, and you may be aware of the BBC's Taking Care campaign, which has just finished recently, which was to raise public understanding of people in care and people who are carers.

FACILITATOR

OK, so let's just explore that. Do you think that role should be expanded?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think it is a role that the BBC does well.

FACILITATOR

Why does it do it well?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Because other commercial stations wouldn't be interested in it. It is not something their advertisers would want to advertise inbetween.

FACILITATOR

So if it so good, why would anybody want to do it anyway? If no-one wants to listen to it, or watch it, why would we do it?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

You take sub-titles, you mentioned earlier for the visually impaired, it is called audio-description. We are leading in that technology. Commercial ... don't have to, they don't have to do it because there is no profit in it. It is because of the unique way that we are funded that we can.

FACILITATOR

So this again is a more citizen rather than consumer role?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Newsnight is an example of a programme that, if the BBC was commercial, wouldn't be made. And the BBC regularly has campaigns to raise awareness of ...

FACILITATOR

Do you want to make a point?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Specifically on the points on the board? I will forget about the first one, and the second one – should it run commercial services? Yes, it should, definitely... the strength to do it and do it even better than ITV and independent stations. Well done. Look at its cookery books as an example. Should it focus on making programmes that others cannot make? Definitely, for this country and for the whole world, especially in television as well as radio. And if I can just finish off on the bottom bit – should it have a local presence and local focus? Definitely yes.

FACILITATOR

But tell me, you are talking about this point about making programmes that others cannot. Partly from your points here, because there is no money in making some of those things, but let us say that we take up some of the arguments that you made earlier as a group, and you say that actually we are going to take some of those mainstream commercial programmes off the BBC and we are going to put them somewhere else, and we are going to put programmes that are minority perhaps interests on to the BBC. Why should anybody watch them? Because the point that came up in Charlie and Showbu's thing – why would anybody bother to watch them if they are not interested?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Leave the minority stuff specifically for local regional programmes to make it specific to Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, wherever. Make Eastenders earn a lot of money to pay for other stuff.

FACILITATOR

But surely part of the issue this lady is raising here about a minority issue is that this is not like marketing, this is about making a minority issue available and into the consciousness of people who are not in a minority.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes, but the thing is that if the BBC did 90% of what it really should, and did that well. Fine, leave the 10% to the independent stations, for example like Northern Visions Radio in Belfast, Shine FM, a station in Bambridge where there are these little RSLs, it doesn't always all have to belong to the BBC. They don't have to be all things to everybody.

FACILITATOR

OK, but who else would do it? I know I am pushing, I am not having a go at you, I am just trying to work out who else would do it?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

You have to do the important national public service broadcasting, you have to do a sweep, you have to do that. But the way to do the nitty gritty stuff is to leave it to the small community stations. Radio Ulster can do it so far, and when it has the time to do it I think it does it very well – and I do say this as a former Downtown presenter, that it actually does it now a bit better than Downtown does it now. But having said that, ...

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think the BBC does a great job in informing and educating in entertainment, particularly national BBC. I think regional BBC leaves an awful lot that needs to catch up with the national.

FACILITATOR

Sorry to interrupt you just as you have started, but could you be specific about how regional could catch up with national. What is missing?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Right. For example consumer programmes here, very serious topics are glossed over in a very flippant way, they try and squash too much in in the half hour. There should be an hour long programme, there should be a sympathetic presenter, which there isn't, there is the worst presenter which you could possibly get leading the consumer show.

FACILITATOR

There is someone you don't like, isn't there?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

There is, somebody I really don't like, and I can't see why everybody else doesn't like him either.

FACILITATOR

It is the way of the world.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It would need to be an hour long, there are so many issues that it could cover, which they don't, and this flippancy in the way that they handle very serious issues really annoys me.

FACILITATOR

So this slips into this feedback thing again about what issues should be covered and how might you put pressure, for want of a better word, to get some of these issues covered.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Another issue too is the schedule. They put these really interesting programmes against things like Coronation Street, which a lot of people watch. The scheduling is terribly bad. These programmes should be on when there is nothing really on the other side, you know what I mean, there is a very bad schedule. Another thing is there are a lot of issues over the years that I would have loved to have seen investigated by regional BBC here. I have no idea how to go about that. There should be some kind of massive publicity campaign by BBC Northern Ireland to let us know how we go about getting them to investigate very serious issues and getting an air of proper investigation. There should be massive publicity.

FACILITATOR

So the public side of it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

And as I say, the national BBC do a great job at informing, educating and entertainment, except for Eastenders, yet again.

FACILITATOR

You do know Showbu was on Eastenders, don't you? She keeps shrinking into the chair.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Can I just come back to it, because I think it is relevant, one of the points you made about I think there might be a case for having a relationship between the BBC and small local community radio stations that take advertising ... because for instance I was in Fort William in the summer there on holiday and was listening to Nevis Radio. Now it only has 3 full time staff and 40 volunteers, it has to take its news from ... Radio 1 Inverness because there is no money to employ journalists. If there was an arrangement say with the BBC with some situation where the licence fee could pay for, say, Nevis Radio – just quoting as an example of a small community station – was able to employ say 3 full time journalists to provide a news service for ... and they were then the correspondents of BBC Scotland in Fort William, so it was a two-way street, that may be a useful way of doing what their colleague over there says, because I thought of that at the time, because there are these situations, and especially when we are getting now into places like Scotland where you are getting into small community stations, and in Northern Ireland too, but where they don't have the money to provide a proper news service and they have to take their news from a neighbouring bigger station, and some relationship with an organisation like the BBC. Now in the Republic under their legislation, some of their licence fee does go to small, initially to one community radio station in north west Donegal for instance does get some funding from their licence fee to employ journalists.

FACILITATOR

But that idea of them sharing basic information with smaller stations is interesting, given that there should be more digital channels, given that there is going to be more radio channels available over time, digital radio becomes more prominent. I think that is a very good point.

## AUDIENCE MEMBER

I just wanted to comment on the last point there about should it have a local presence and a local focus. I think that in the United Kingdom it is important that the various regions do reflect the regions in which they operate. And within Northern Ireland, particularly in cultural terms, we do have a rather unique cultural mix that is different from any other part of the United Kingdom. There are lots of jokes that begin: there was an Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman, and in a sense that is what Ulster is, because there is an Irish influence, a Scottish influence and an English influence that all helped to shape and make what Northern Ireland is today. The BBC commits itself in its various commitments to viewers and listeners to reflect the regions, and to reflect the diversity within those regions. I would contend that within Northern Ireland BBC Northern Ireland does not properly reflect the cultural diversity of this place, that certain cultural traditions receive preferential treatment, and other cultural traditions are largely ignored. I give you as a simple illustration of that, the fact that as a public service broadcaster the BBC is required to make, under the European Charter for regional minority languages, commitment and provision for the recognised minority languages in Northern Ireland. And yet whilst one minority language in Northern Ireland receives somewhere in the region of 230 hours, or whatever it is, of broadcasting on Radio Ulster each year, the other minority language gets about 2 hours. And then you are told this year, with great acclaim, that we are going to double our broadcasting. Yes, double almost nothing still remains almost nothing. In the programme for government that has just come out, the government is committing itself to provide somewhere in the region of 70 hours of television broadcasting for one minority language by 2007, nothing for the other. Now it is that differential that I think needs to be addressed. If we have diversity, we should also have equality. I don't think the BBC has delivered on that. And the other thing I would just say is that the other way that that is reflected is that the BBC Northern Ireland goes into many co-productions with broadcasting companies outside Northern Ireland. Almost entirely those are with RTE in Dublin. Now for some people in our society, that is a natural direction in which to look, their mindset of north and south, for some of us our mindset would be more east-west. And I would like to see the BBC equally look at doing co-productions with Scottish Television or whatever, and not just automatically look north-south. The whole move today in Northern Ireland politically is to look at north-south relationships, and east-west. I don't think that BBC Northern Ireland has necessarily faced up to that reality. And my third and final point is to say that having raised these issues on many occasions, I find that people almost live in a state of denial that this is the case. There is a tremendous reluctance to face up to these facts, and you can make your point and you can make it as eloquently as you want, but if people have a mindset that refuses to face up to it, you are not going to get very far.

## AUDIENCE MEMBER

Just a few points that were said by the last few speakers. Facing reality, which has just been said, but I think the BBC, yes they have made lots of good progress, but the educational aspect, yes is well appreciated between disabled, as I said I have a child with special needs with that, I can take her through a programme, or repeat it several times, you are not on a time limit and so on, yes it is. And Children in Need is another good thing that the BBC does, and it also gives publicity on educational aspects about different conditions because you appreciate, although it has been said, that there are opportunities for visually impaired and the deaf throughout the year on different stations, but for someone even like myself who is neither blind, I am registered blind but I still have adequate sight, I find all the documentaries and that that I watch, and science programme quizzes and what not, when a telephone number is given out they go 792416, and you know you just can't write that down. And with technology nowadays, it doesn't take money, everybody categorises things and it is very important that it doesn't take a lot of money, it takes a little bit of common sense. Like here tonight, I wasn't aware there was a board in front of me, you know a little

print-out, even if we had to pay for it I don't mind, but just a little bit of common sense, give out the numbers slowly or with technology it must be possible to put the number at the bottom of the screen. And some weeks back I was looking at the e-mail, they flipped through giving out the e-mail address of Trevor McDonald's show, and I called in for that, all documentaries, and when I called into the BBC for that I couldn't have that, they didn't have it on record, and I went into the web and they didn't have that. There are ways of putting it at the bottom of the screen when it is educational.

FACILITATOR

So again what we are talking about is a bit more responsiveness to local and minority issues, whether that is how they come up with a balance between different groups, and whether they address some of these issues about ...

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think there, it is very, very good about getting through to people. If this morning, whenever I heard just in the back of my head about this being on tonight, I didn't get it repeated, I think it was only said once, I don't think there was any contact number, though there might have been. So I phoned the BBC – is it on tonight? Yes. Is there a number? I don't know. Who would know? The Spires Centre. I phoned the Spires Centre, oh yes, yes, the BBC have it taken tonight. What is happening? I don't know. Do the BBC not know? No. So what I am saying is, I am not criticising you.

FACILITATOR

It is a very fair point.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

This is something that has taken a lot of money to set up here tonight, to bring you folks over here. OK, unfortunately we haven't turned out to give our views, but still there should be at least a little bit more encouragement to those to come along, that in a sense it is over before you know it is there.

FACILITATOR

I think that is a very fair point.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

So what I am saying is that if the BBC in Belfast on their reception desk can't have the information, if you like it is the bottom step. And the reason why I am here tonight - I have to go, that is why I want to make this point before I do go - is that I think the BBC are good programmes, they have quality, they have to keep that up. To get popularity it doesn't mean to say you have to drop everything, you have to have a standard and I believe that the standards of the BBC is something that is good, there are a lot of things wrong with it, but if they have more rubbish on than what there is already. But I definitely feel that I am here tonight to find out how my voice can be heard, to give credit where credit is due, but also to complain, and the BBC have to realise that that avenue for both those issues needs to be opened up, and that I think is really something that is very, very big and ...

FACILITATOR

Because you have been at this a little while, there is coffee over there, get yourself a coffee, if you come back here then we will do the voting on a series of issues and then you can go.

**(VOTING NOT TRANSCRIBED)**

So thank you all very much for your time. I am going to hand over to the Minister in a second just to say a few closing words. I would just like to say thank you first of all for making the effort to come out and join this vast throng, but your views are very important and they have all been registered, so I thank you for your time, and I will hand over to the Minister just to say some closing remarks.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I would just like to say a little word here, because this meeting, it is disappointing that we only have about 14 people here tonight, both from the point of view of the organisers and those who have supported it, but I think there should have been a lot more publicity given to it. Yesterday morning it was mentioned on radio and it actually said that the meeting was yesterday at 2.45, and then when I phoned up the BBC to ask, I asked for Information, Information didn't even know anything about it, and one lady in that department asked another, she didn't know anything, so they put me through to Good Morning Alistair and the clerk there said excuse me just for a minute, I will have to look up the file. So I don't think that was very good publicity for it, and it is so disappointing to have all this set up and just 14 people arrive, because it depends on our response just what your reading of it all is.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I just want to add to that, that a few comments said earlier about them being the minority, that if there were documentaries on those who are unique, it would be educational to society, because I know when people meet me or my daughter, they quite often don't know how to react, and people should see it in a positive way, because I have contributed a lot, I am in lots of charities, I am very active and I can see what it was to be for me in this life, to be unique, and I am Treasurer, I do lots and lots of good work and people should see it as a positive thing, and that is where the BBC would have a winner in a sense in training and be educational to other societies. And even for my daughter and loads of other people with multi-complex unique conditions, and even to complement themselves within documentaries like that, that the educational aspect can be very good, because I know when my daughter is programmed, and children like her, when that time is selected and the time is put into it she can be taught even to go on to A levels, and that is a positive thing that the BBC and society should get through to. But when people meet us in general, in public, in the café or whatever, they can't relate to you because they don't know how to communicate.

FACILITATOR

OK, so that is the point that you have made, which is that there is a definite role in your opinion for the BBC to take on that issue.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes, just you said earlier about what you call it, the people who choose the programmes. I often wonder in any of those stations or whatever in society, are they aware of lots of other things, you know is it in their training on a wider and deeper level to select?

FACILITATOR

Certainly I think this is part of the point of doing this sort of exercise, is to draw these things out as part of the Charter Review process.

MINISTER

A very few words indeed. Yes, I am disappointed there are so few people, but that really was quality rather than quantity. Thank you all very much for your contributions this evening. I accept the criticisms about the publicity entirely, I do think we could have done it a lot better than we did, but I think we should all be grateful to Aiden for the way in which

he has conducted this exercise over the last, well nearly two and a half hours now, and as I say particularly grateful to all of you for coming and contributing.

I think I should make it clear in the light of one or two comments that this is not organised by the BBC, this is organised by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, because it is the government that has the responsibility of conducting the review of the BBC's Charter. But it is also the case that the BBC, we ought to have told the BBC how to answer questions about this particular session, and you made a very good point on that.

Thank you again. Have a safe journey home, and we have certainly listened very seriously to everything that has been said tonight.

**(END OF TRANSCRIPT)**