

Independent Panel on Charter Review

Seminar: Informed Citizenship

PAPER: RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION: BBC'S CONTRIBUTION TO "INFORMED CITIZENSHIP"

Contents

Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom

Churches' Media Council

Citizens Online

Community Service Volunteers

Hansard Society

National Union of Journalists

Public Voice

Society of Authors

Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

Response to the BBC's Contribution to Informed Citizenship

1. The concept of informed citizenship is central to the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom's aims.

We argue that free and democratic media are central to an active democracy, and that the members of a democratic nation should be served as participating citizens of that nation whether or not they are also served in other capacities –for example as consumers.

Our comments on the BBC's paper on their contribution to 'informed citizenship' are made with these basic principles in mind.

2. A commitment to informed citizenship has been at the heart of the BBC's remit since radio stood alone in the 1920s. We welcome the renewal of that commitment in the multi media age and its extension into digital channels and interactive services. We agree that the BBC should be at the forefront of technological innovation, in order to serve its users in their capacity as citizens as broadly as possible (4.3.2).

3. The exercise of citizenship does not only involve receiving information, but also requires participation. The BBC is in a unique position to provide outlets for many diverse voices, and also to create space for debates, audience participation and interaction. We welcome the expansion of these aims, across the BBC's numerous outlets, including digital and interactive services (3.2: 4.2.1: 5.2.1: 6.3).

4. We welcome the commitment to universality of provision and of appeal, which goes along with the aim to serve groups of citizens who have little market power, and so are likely to be overlooked by a market based system, in particular children and the poorer members of society (3.2.3: 4.1).

5. The renewal of the BBC's long standing commitment to high quality news and current affairs programmes, which must be accurate and impartial and directed at the population as a whole, is to be welcomed and is clearly at the heart of the democratic project (2.1.1; 6.2.1). We applaud the BBC's achievements, the breadth of its coverage, its specialisms and its expertise, and we note several points:

5a. diversity of journalistic formats. With a proliferation of outlets, there is space for clearly labelled *partial* reporting, as well as innovative formats, a vigorous expression of opinion and risk taking –even in the most prestigious programmes. Recent criticisms of the BBC by the Hutton Enquiry have meant that the language of the BBC's paper on Informed Citizenship is over-cautious in this respect (3.1). In our view citizens who seek to be informed tend to welcome journalism that probes into difficult areas.

5b. independence of BBC journalism (3.1). Because the Corporation is dependent on the government of the day for the renewal of its licence fee –and indeed for its very existence as a non-commercial broadcaster- there is a real danger that political pressures may compromise some challenging programme making, and reporting in sensitive areas. There have been some notorious occasions in the past when pressure has very publicly been brought to bear (Kate Adie criticised over her reporting of the Libya bombing; Margaret Thatcher's demand that reporters should refer

to 'our' troops; the Broadcasting Ban on the voices of members of proscribed organisations, as well as the Hutton criticisms). Research done at Cardiff University showed that BBC reporting of the Iraq war actually tended to support the government line (despite the government's own impressions!). A commitment to informed citizenship is a commitment to independence, and the BBC should be seen to be completely independent of the government of the day, and of the state.

5c attractive programmes (3.2.2) The aim to make difficult material accessible may take several forms: the introduction of new and innovative formats (Holidays in the Axis of Evil; huge studio discussions on the war in Iraq and other urgent topics); the use of explanatory visuals, reconstructions and the whole gamut of available technology to make complex topics accessible (7.1.4); the introduction of formats which focus on a 'softer' agenda (Fiona Bruce); the personalisation of reporting. We feel that this broad range of informational programming is welcome, and, indeed very important to the democratic project, but the development of newer formats should not be used as an excuse to marginalise mainstream journalism.

5d marginalisation of current affairs. Despite the commitment expressed in the BBC's paper (5.1), and the introduction of some innovative political programmes late nights and midday (4.1.1) the shrinking of mainstream current affairs –in other words journalist-led series which can pursue a journalistic agenda without any concessions- has continued apace. The only remaining long running series, Panorama, has long been removed from a peak time slot, and other highly respected journalist-led series, such as Correspondent, have long disappeared. Continuous news services like BBC News 24 cannot do the job of carefully-researched and well-constructed current affairs programme. One of the hallmarks of BBC journalism has been the ability to provide topical documentary programmes which get behind the headlines. That must remain one of the standards on which the BBC is judged.

This marginalisation of reliable current affairs series is particularly serious in the broader context of pressure on the commercial channels, which means that ITV has virtually abandoned mainstream current affairs, and Channel Four has no regular slot. The maintenance of mainstream, serious current affairs is the core of any commitment to an informed citizenship.

6. Having said that, we would argue that the BBC's paper tends to use a relatively narrow definition in identifying the elements which contribute to informed citizenship –concentrating on journalism, education and newer interactive services (Introduction: 5.1). In our view the strength of the BBC and the public service framework within which it operates is precisely the ability to juxtapose information with entertainment, and everything from lifestyle and travel, to games shows, soaps, sport and major dramas. Above all it can innovate with programming that does not fit pre-conceived genres --producing highly political dramas, satire as well as current affairs in popular styles. The knowledge that there is a core audience which is aware and well informed, can affect the whole of the programming output. In this way the concept of informed citizenship is seen in a broader context. An informed democracy does not merely reside in journalist-led programming but also in the cultural context in which it is presented. The scope of the BBC should not be reduced merely to material that a market system is unlikely to produce.

7. With this in mind we regret the language of 'market failure' which is used in this paper (4.3.1). Such a phrase implies the predominance of the market, and could lead to a situation where an organisation such as the BBC merely slots in any bits which happen to be missing. This is a pernicious concept. The BBC should not be required to address 'market failure', but should operate according to its own priorities, as indeed it has claimed (4.3.2). Citizenship is independent of the market and includes social groupings who may have little or no market power, such as children, the poor, minority language groups, the elderly and others.

8. We would emphasise that the BBC is the central component of a broader 'public service system' in UK broadcasting. Broadcasting can operate as a system, competing for quality rather than revenue precisely because of a diversity in funding sources. Hence the BBC provides competition

and benchmarks for the terrestrial commercial channels, and for satellite and overseas based channels, including Sky and CNN (4.3.1).

9. The BBC, as the UK national broadcaster has a duty to make the machinery of democratic government accessible to its users, so we welcome and support the broadcasting of Parliament, select committees etc, and argue that this role could be extended.

10. Importantly the licence fee has ensured that the broad range of the BBC's output is available to every household with a television set. This means that all citizens have absolutely equal access to the whole range of services –including on the other channels. This has been an essential component of informed citizenship which it is important to extend into the digital world. The introduction of the Freeview box is an important innovation in this direction.

11. (3.3.5) The account of the safeguards posed by the Governors in this paper is relatively weak. Traditionally BBC Governors have been establishment figures, usually ignorant of broadcasting – the sort of people who are reported on, rather than those who do the reporting, (or even watch television with any consistency). There should be a full, extended and rounded debate over BBC governance, in the run up to the White Paper next year. It is to be recommended that the governors should represent a broader spectrum of society, should include a democratically elected element, and some experienced broadcasters.

Patricia Holland
For the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom
November 2004

Consultation on

The BBC's contribution to informed citizenship

Submission to the Independent Panel on Charter Review

Closing date for responses: **15 November 2004**

Response from the Churches' Media Council

Introduction & Context

In.1 The Churches' Media Council welcomes this further consultation. It has already made a submission on 30 March 2004 to the Review of the BBC's Royal Charter, the DCMS Public Consultation, and does not propose to repeat all it said then here.

In.2 However, this response should be read in the context of our submission on 30 March 2004 and we here reiterate a few points and make some new ones to put this submission in context.

In.3 The churches – and other faiths, we believe – are concerned for the well being of society and this leads to our involvement in public life. We recognise and support the importance of freedom of expression as a general principle but expect this to be balanced by standards that are enforced representing our concern for society, particularly including vulnerable people, such as the young, the old and the psychologically vulnerable. We want broadcasting policy to promote public benefit from broadcasting.

In.4 We repeat that we are passionate supporters of the principles of UK Public Service Broadcasting in which the BBC plays such a leading part. Broadcasting is not a consumer product to be left to market forces. It is today's public meeting place. As such the BBC plays a crucial, leading role in contributing to the building of society and public value.

In.5 In recent years, the churches have promoted the concept of the Common Good, which is a basic principle at the very heart of Christian social teaching. The Common Good is more than just a simple sum of individual goods in society. It is the total of conditions that allow people to reach their fulfilment more fully and easily. These conditions vary according to the concrete historical conditions, but include such elements as a commitment to peace, a sound juridical system and the provision of essential services.

In.6 The state has a responsibility to safeguard the Common Good, but individuals and institutions are also responsible for helping to develop it, according to the possibilities open to each one. The state is also charged with reconciling the particular goods of groups and individuals and the general Common Good. This is a delicate task and in a democratic system authorities must be careful to interpret the Common Good not only according to the wishes of the majority, but also respecting the good of minorities.

In.7 Clearly in the highly developed society we enjoy in the UK, the BBC has a vital role in contributing to the Common Good, enabling people to reach their fulfilment more fully and easily and by contributing to the building of society and public value. As well as being builders of social capital, the churches are amongst the main providers of social care and strive for social justice.

In.8 In the most recent national census 72% of people said they were Christian and (in round numbers) 80% of the people of the UK expressed themselves as having a faith. Recent surveys have

shown the greatest ever levels of interest in spirituality. Recent BBC surveys of local radio and Radio 4 listeners about religious broadcasting have convinced hitherto sceptical controllers and managing editors of the value of and need for increased religious programming and reinforced the resolve of those who had already been convinced.

In.9 In December 2003 the Church of England and English Heritage undertook a survey. This showed that 86% of adults in Britain visited a church or place of worship during the previous year. 17% had attended a concert; 13% were 'walking past and felt the need to go in'. 19% went in to find a quiet space. Others had attended Christmas or Easter services, baptisms, weddings or funerals, as well as regular worshippers (regular may mean say once a month or more frequently).

In.10 Twice as many people go to church every weekend as attend football matches. Worshippers take an active part in their faith (crowds at sporting events might be said to be less involved). We would not for one minute suggest any lessening of the coverage of sport. However we would ask that commensurate respect and coverage is given to religion.

In.11 We use this information to show the huge level of involvement with religion in this country. Religion, and in particular Christianity, plays a large part in celebrations and at times of crisis and tragedy, be that in the lives of the nation as a whole, communities, families and individuals. However, religion also plays an important part in the daily lives of the people of our country and is an integral part of people's lives.

In.12 Thus religion is a very important aspect in the way viewers, listeners and readers see, hear, understand and interpret broadcast programmes and content. Faith groups and religious programming in all its forms must be closely involved in playing a positive role in contributing to informed citizenship. The BBC's broadcasting has a vital part to play in overcoming and breaking down ignorance and prejudice, so that understanding is promoted and increased, diversity is valued and effective bridges are built between and within communities.

Comments

2.1 Having read the BBC document it seems largely to be an elaborate defence of the BBC's coverage of news and current affairs. Most of the points are well made and taken. We applaud and agree with what is said, but the focus of the BBC document seems to be far too narrow, being mainly just on news and current affairs, and also on the Hutton Inquiry which we do not believe has had a damaging nor long term impact on the perceptions of viewers and listeners.

2.2 At the Churches' Media Conference in June 2004, Edward Stourton said that he and his colleagues could not do the job of reporting news and current affairs and commenting upon it today unless they had a good grasp and understanding of religion. This observation has never been more relevant than today in the post '9/11' world and especially with so many areas and topics of tension and conflict in the Middle East, Far East, US, Southern America, Africa and Europe. Recent events bear out this need for informed understanding graphically; for instance in Iraq, the death of Yassir Arafat, the debates around the EU Constitution and new Commission, Northern Ireland, the rise of the BNP in the UK and the US Presidential election. Tragedies such as the death of Ken Bigley and the Berkshire rail crash are always attended by pastoral action and comment from local faith leaders and by church and other services. Remembrance Day is a good example of a national event with a very significant Christian and religious content. The importance of this background, as Edward Stourton commented, goes beyond stories with an obvious religious angle.

2.3 Recent reporting of embryo screening to produce a therapeutically compatible sibling to save a child's life merely reported that religious groups were opposed to the process. This gave the impression that religious groups were merely Luddites who could not accept the technological advances being made. A better knowledge of the basis of the religious objections would have made it clear that the objection was not to the therapeutic process involved. The objection is to

the use of the embryo when other sources of the necessary stem cells can be researched in preference, involving no morally compromising use of an embryo.

2.4 Religious broadcasting was hardly mentioned in this BBC document and does not appear to be covered in any of the other subjects being considered by the Independent Panel and the other BBC submissions to it. This is very disappointing. In the last three years we have worked hard with the Government, authorities and broadcasters to build up the understanding of the importance and role of religious broadcasting. This was reflected well in the Communications Act 2003, Ministerial statements, Parliamentary debates and the early development of Ofcom and its work.

2.5 We have developed some excellent working relationships at all levels with the BBC. In particular we have welcomed the Religion & Ethics policy to promote quality and integrated religious programming under the four headings of Celebration, Diversity, Scrutiny and Surprise, led by Alan Bookbinder. This has worked well, particularly on network radio. Religious broadcasting in the Nations and Regions has also developed well, led by Andy Griffie. His appointment of Ashley Peatfield as Editor of Religion & Ethics for English Regions is already proving fruitful as it has brought more stability to religious producers and improved programming on local radio stations.

2.6 However, despite our various efforts and those of the Religion & Ethics Department, we remain concerned at the apparent lack of awareness of the relevance and importance of religion by those responsible for BBC One, BBC Two, Radio 1, Radio Five Live and some digital radio and television channels. We have pointed this out to both senior executives and the Governors in response to Annual Reports, reviews of recent programming and Statements of Programme Policy.

2.7 We have been pleased to see the development of Asian Network into a national station. This was born from the particular ethnic mix in Leicester and is an outstanding example of good practice. We welcome the BBC's commitment to diversity. However we have been disappointed that recent changes at BBC Radio Leicester have led to what is widely regarded by many faith communities and listeners as a backward step in its religious broadcasting.

2.8 Generally there is a worrying lack of specialist coverage of religion. Andrew Marr is not a politician. Alan Green is not a footballer. But they both are specialists who know and understand their topics intimately. If being replaced temporarily or permanently their replacement would know the difference between Conservative and Labour, between football and rowing, between Tony Blair and Michael Howard and between Chelsea and Arsenal.

2.9 Sadly the same cannot be said about religion. There are very few BBC specialist religious reporters. Regularly in BBC news, current affairs, and local radio we are faced by researchers, producers, reporters and presenters who hardly know there is a difference between Christianity and Judaism, do not know the basic beliefs of the faiths and are completely in the dark about the different Christian churches. We reiterate our sincere condolences to the BBC, her colleagues and family on the recent sudden and untimely death of Martha Doyle, who was the archetypal professional religion reporter for BBC network and local, radio and television. We trust that she will be replaced and that the present Religion & Ethics Department will be bolstered.

2.10 Religion & Ethics is a national, regional and local genre which should benefit from: the move to relocate BBC departments out of London (the R&E Department already being based in Manchester); the greater emphasis on current affairs in its broadest sense; the BBC's commitment to PSB and building Public Value; and, the Governors' review of religion on BBC television. This is NOT an area that should be subject to ANY cuts in jobs as part of the economy review. Instead this is a PSB genre that should be one of the first to benefit from increased investment coming from any savings made elsewhere. The BBC must reflect the fact that the UK is highly culturally diverse and, as we have already seen, within this diversity religion is hugely relevant to large parts of our everyday news, current affairs and lives. Otherwise the BBC will fail to *"reach all sections of the population with services and programmes that offer trusted and authoritative insight in ways that*

engage people's interest" (Mission and purposes, 2.1 P7); this is just one of many quotes we could have chosen from the BBC's document which should be applied to religion and other specialist areas as well as to news and current affairs.

2.11 In this context it is important to recognize the worrying tendency to conflate the cultural and religious, for instance, especially with regard to communities that are predominantly Muslim. There is still a lot of concern within religious communities about the way religious topics are framed and presented, about the language and distinctions made in relation to religious groups, eg the use of the word "fundamentalist".

2.12 More broadly, there does not seem to be any discussion in the BBC document about the range of topics, which might be considered essential in considering what "informed" citizenship could be. In other words, the BBC appears simply to work on the basis that the topics that it traditionally covers in the news and in current affairs are those that are necessary. It gives no weight to the different subjects. There is no discussion, for example, about the relative importance of political coverage and the coverage of science or business, nor of the huge contributions made by community and voluntary activities and agencies. However, the BBC makes such qualitative judgments when it appoints a specialist business correspondent or a security correspondent. It makes a host of decisions about what stories do not get onto the main bulletins.

2.13 We call for a wider debate about the place and importance of religious coverage in the context of informed citizenship and that of other specialist genres such as science, history, business and children's programming. Our support for PSB is not limited just to religion. We recognise that a wide range of programming contributes to informed citizenship and encourage and support it all. We agree that "the BBC has an important role in keeping the public informed about what is going on in the UK" (1st para, P6); there is a lot of religion 'going on'.

2.14 There does not appear to be any mention of the *Sunday* programme on Radio 4 in this document. *The Heaven and Earth* show is mentioned as an indirect source of coverage but not *Sunday* (Appendix D). We wonder why this is. What does this omission say about the importance and understanding of religious news? Also in 5.2.2 on page 36 in the paragraph on 'Indirect activities and their contribution' reference is made to '*The Heaven and Earth Show* on BBC Two'; however, *The Heaven and Earth Show* is usually shown on BBC One on Sunday mornings. This apparent carelessness with religion may be unconscious but nevertheless we may regard it as symptomatic. There are just four fairly minor references to religion in the document. One of these refers to the new impartiality monitoring reviews, one of which was about religion (P21). We would be interested to know the outcome of this review.

2.15 On page 24, in 4.1.1, the paragraph on 'Consultation' refers to the BBC's advisory bodies. These are made up of individuals who are invited to join by the BBC. Whilst we enjoy good informal contacts we do believe that in today's climate of Governance and Accountability there needs to be a more formal relationship between the BBC and representative bodies such as ourselves who have formal consultative mechanisms, lobbying and advocacy mandates, and can enter into effective partnerships and deliver solutions.

2.16 We welcome the BBC's commitment to 'restore the prominence and appeal of serious current affairs and analysis on BBC television – including on BBC One' (7.3 on P58). This needs to take current affairs in its broadest sense, include religion and be in sufficient and appropriate depth. It also needs to extend to radio and new media.

2.17 We point as an example to the upset of the US Presidential election when religion played a big part. We ask if the response by the BBC (and others) in terms of coverage is really adequate in terms of informing citizens about what is happening or is it more likely that religion is a blind spot in this regard?

2.18 Finally the religious broadcasting on BBC Nations and Regions is not mentioned or included in the BBC document. We suggest that this is a further oversight. The weekly religious magazine programmes on most BBC local and national radio stations range somewhere between *The Heaven and Earth Show* and *Sunday* and generally last between 1 to 3 hours. In addition there are also some regular inputs by BBC local radio producers to the news and current affairs output of the local radio stations. Also there is some religious content in the regional BBC TV output.

-oo0oo-

C.1 Once again, we are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation and look forward to the seminar on 24 November 2004 and the outcome in due course. We have tried not to be too repetitive with our points and ask that they be taken wherever they are applicable. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any stage if you think we may be able to assist with this or any other relevant exercises and activities.

C.2 The Churches' Media Council brings together the Churches, Christians in the media, Christian broadcasting organisations, the broadcasting authorities and training organisations. This response is submitted on behalf of the Council's representatives of the member Churches and Christian organisations (in no particular order: Church of England; Roman Catholic Church; Methodist Church; The Free Churches' Group; Baptist Union of Great Britain; Salvation Army; Evangelical Alliance; United Reformed Church; Church of Wales; Church of Scotland; Scottish Episcopal Church; Church of Ireland; Churches Together in Britain & Ireland; Churches Together in England; Action of Churches Together in Scotland; Churches Together in Wales) and is the result of an ecumenical conversation between them. Some individual institutional churches may make their own responses to this consultation.

15 November 2004

Peter Blackman, Director

Churches' Media Council,

PO Box 6613, South Woodham Ferrers, Essex, CM3 5LJ. Tel 01245 322158

www.churchesmediacouncil.org.uk email: office@churchesmediacouncil.org.uk



CitizensOnline

Citizens Online response to the BBC Charter Review and Informed Citizenship

1 Citizens Online

Citizens Online is a national charity (1087794) committed to researching and addressing the issues of Universal Internet Access and the Digital Divide.

Citizens Online was founded in 2000 and the trustees include:

Lord Anthony St John of Bletso
Mark Adams
Kevin Harris
Margaret Moran MP
Charles Lowe

The organisation is based in Swindon but has project offices in eight locations across the UK. There is a full time staff of twenty-two which is supplemented by a register of specialist associates.

BBC Charter Review, Informed Citizenship and Digital Inclusion

Citizens Online would like to specifically address the digital inclusion issues raised by the paper.

We note the following areas of particular relevance for the points we wish to make :

Pg 12 – the strategies of the BBC, specifically: engaging and accessible output, interaction and participation, devolution and community

Extensive references to web-based output and initiatives, such as I-Can

Pg 23 “to be more effective in reaching under-served groups”.

Pg 27 The desire to work in partnerships and community initiatives using the web to connect people.

Section 7.1.3 discussion on the fully interactive world.

1. Digital Inclusion is a key issue for the changes the BBC wishes to see, such as greater participation, supporting community, using the new technologies etc. This issue is not referred to in the document as far as we can see.
2. Content is a key issue in digital inclusion and clearly the BBC is providing an extremely valuable service here for many excluded groups and communities. We often use BBC content in our "EverybodyOnline" initiatives which help bring new users to the Internet.
3. The BBC also have a number of other initiatives which have been valuable in promoting digital inclusion- such as ICT buses and suites and the Webwise materials.
4. As part of the Media Literacy Task Force and links therein to OFCOM's work in this area, the BBC are at the heart of discussions that centre on digital inclusion agendas.
5. However, having seen the Task Force and also OFCOM's materials on this subject, Citizens Online are highly concerned that the digital inclusion agenda will not be focussed upon with sufficient strategic, focussed input.
6. Following on from the Government's Digital Inclusion Panel report, launched this October 12th, to which the BBC contributed on working groups and the panel itself, an industry body has been formed, the Alliance for Digital Inclusion (ADI- including AOL, BT, Cisco, IBM, Intel, Microsoft and T-mobile) as a key recommendation. This grouping would wish to see the BBC as a partner.
7. We recommend that the BBC has a key contact with responsibility for digital inclusion that can join-up across the various initiatives that the BBC is involved with in this area, that this person joins the ADI to promote collaborative, partnership approaches in this area and lobby's Government for change and action.



CSV Media

237 Pentonville Road, London N1 9NJ
Tel: 020 7643 1375 Fax: 020 7278 7912
<http://www.csv.org.uk/media>

22nd October 2004

DCMS consultation on BBC Charter Review: - additional response from CSV Media on Informed Citizenship

Organisational Background

Community Service Volunteers (CSV) was founded in 1962 by Mora and Alec Dickson who also founded the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and seeks to reconnect people to their community through volunteering and training. We believe that as a result of this we can enrich people's lives and make a difference to communities and groups across the UK.

CSV Media is the arm of CSV which seeks to use radio, TV, video, web and print to inform, empower and inspire people and to give different communities a voice. It was established over twenty five years ago and is a broadcaster, trainer and advisor across the media and voluntary sectors.

CSV Media is a member of the Public Voice coalition, as well as the Community Media Association (CMA) both of whom have - alongside CSV - contributed their opinions on the BBC Charter Review debate. In addition, CSV Media has been asked to provide additional comments on the latest BBC responses, and these are outlined below.

Informed Citizenship

CSV Media supports the general principles behind the BBC's response. In particular we recognise the value that communities and citizens derive from a high quality, independent and impartial news and current affairs provider.

However, that said, there are a number of areas in the BBC's response on Informed Citizenship which we would like to see emphasised more fully, or which we believe have been overlooked. For the sake of brevity we will seek to outline these as concisely as possible, although many issues overlap and therefore cannot always be labelled separately. Our key outstanding concerns are:

Media Literacy: We would like to see the BBC explicitly state how their media literacy agenda and obligations will contribute to informed citizenship. This is not just about news content, but also about providing the tools for audiences to make informed decisions and be able to contribute to the debate. Initiatives such as i-Can therefore should be encouraged further as should user generated content and effective sign posting to other sources.

As a result of this sign-posting and facilitation of debate, we would hope that the BBC would be able to measure an increase on the 17% of people identified on page 52 who "claimed to have been directly influenced by BBC coverage to participate further in the democratic life of this country."

Improved media literacy would also enable licence fee payers to more explicitly make the link between programmes which indirectly contribute to informed citizenship such as *State of Play*.

We believe that many audiences may currently struggle to reap the full benefits of indirect programming and that the BBC perhaps overstates their case. However, through improved media literacy (educating the audience to understand and evaluate content more effectively) the full benefits of these programmes in supporting the informed citizenship agenda can be realised.

Localness:

The BBC's *Building Public Value* document provides a range of evidence to show that people lead the majority of their lives in a small geographical area.

Localness is therefore important to many, and in an age of globalisation, becoming increasingly important. With this in mind, we would therefore like to see the BBC outline in more detail its commitment to localness, including the expansion of local TV, alongside a summary of its market impact.

Diversity:

Localness – coupled with the drive to move more BBC staff and departments out of London – should reflect a more diverse news agenda. Arguably the majority of BBC output remains very urban centric, reflecting a middle class London agenda which whilst relevant to many, is also irrelevant to many more.

The focus on localness and the move out of London should help redress this, but we would like to see diversity targets – both in terms of portrayal and staff – also included in the informed citizenship agenda.

By broadening the range of voices available to audiences, and drawing on a more diverse talent pool, the BBC should provide a richer vein of content and opinions, which will directly broaden their agenda and thus contribute to more informed citizenship.

User Generated Content:

Technological advances have offered the opportunity for broadcasters and programme makers to have a dialogue with the public as never before. CSV Media believes that the BBC can develop this relationship further in order to enhance informed citizenship.

In particular user generated content and input can allow the public to enjoy a direct dialogue with politicians and opinion formers (rather than just through the conduit of a single interviewer,) allowing the BBC to understand the range of issues, concerns and questions that the public wants answered.

These are not always the same as those addressed by the Corporation, and therefore the BBC should welcome any input which allows audience expectation to inform the BBC's editorial approach.

Furthermore, user generated content can provide perspectives which the BBC cannot. Firstly it allows for a much broader range of opinions to be aired – opinions which an impartial broadcaster could not itself make.

Secondly it hears from people on the ground in their own words on the issues which concern and affect them, as opposed to the interpretation of an outsider.

This can be very powerful both in terms of offering different perspectives but also in giving individuals and communities a voice and platform for expression.

We therefore would encourage the BBC to make the most of continuing technological advances so that it can make more of user generated content in mainstream programming (as it does for example on *Newsround*,) so that it becomes an integral part of the output rather than simply a value added.

Partnerships:

CSV Media recognises the role that partnerships can play in the BBC being able to reach out and affect people so that they can become more informed citizens.

We currently run an Action Desk network with BBC Local Radio which seeks to do just that. The Action Desks promote and encourage opportunities for people to take an active role in their community or engage in learning activity.

CSV Media also uses its links with VCS organisations and groups encourage a plurality of voices and stories on the airwaves, enabling the BBC to access content which arguably could not be accessed without our partnership.

As a result, we recognise the benefits that partnership can bring in contributing to informed citizenship and we welcome the BBC's efforts to do more of them so that the Corporation can reach out to more members of the public, reflect their views so it can reach and connect with more people than at present.

The Community Chest example given on page 27 of the BBC's response is an excellent example of how the BBC can do this, and we would encourage the BBC to roll out pilots such as this, and the principles behind it, across the country.

In addition, we would like to see the BBC give more weight to acknowledging the role that partners play in allowing it to contribute to an informed society. Arguably, at present, the BBC typically takes the lion's share of credit so that the contributions of other organisations can appear to be overlooked. As the BBC becomes more experienced and adept at partnership working we hope to see this situation redressed.

Furthermore, in light of our experience of working with the Corporation, we are keen to work with the BBC on developing their approach to partnership so that we can help to facilitate a culture shift in how partnership works – encouraging the BBC to acknowledge the contribution that others make in connecting with audiences and recognising that a one size fits all approach to partnership is both impractical and unworkable. Flexibility remains vital.

CSV would like to see the BBC continue to become more inclusive in its approach to partnerships – understanding that this means working together to agree a process and outcomes – rather than imposing its own views and frameworks. The BBC is a powerful organisation but it must recognise that it can only deliver maximum benefit from partnerships if they are a truly inclusive process with both sides – however big they are – involved on an equal footing.

Community Media: CSV Media encourages the BBC to develop a productive two-way relationship with community media groups. This relationship is at an embryonic stage and will no doubt develop further in the coming years.

The benefits for both are considerable, with the BBC potentially benefiting from access to people, stories and material that it would not necessarily be able to obtain otherwise.

The Corporation has recognised this and is seeking to develop the relationship with this sector, however we would like to see an acknowledgement in future documentation of the role that this relationship could play in creating an informed society.

UK Political Focus: The aims of the BBC's recent review of political coverage are highly laudable, and we would encourage the BBC to continually analyse whether it's political programming is helping to service the needs of the full societal spectrum rather than just the Westminster Village and political aficionados.

We do note however that the focus of political coverage remains highly UK orientated. Coverage of European or World issues – whilst engaged with – seldom receives much coverage outside of main news bulletins, and CSV Media believes that this balance still has room to develop so that coverage reflects the global nature of politics and the world in which we live than typically comes across at present.

The most obvious example of this is the current US Presidential Elections, which have seldom been explored outside of bulletins and where coverage of the Presidential debates and conventions were typically to be found either late at night or only on digital/Web.

Whilst the time difference is clearly a key factor here, we believe that the impact which these elections can have on key issues from Iraq, through to the economy and environment, means that audiences should be encouraged to be more aware of the issues and outcomes being discussed. The BBC can help play a key role in facilitating this engagement through more positive scheduling and analysis at different times of day, not just the main news bulletins.

Using New Media: As the BBC acknowledges on page 55 of its submission, it has a key role to play in delivering high levels of public understanding of complex issues. Surveys have frequently shown that the level of basic news and current affairs knowledge amongst many licence fee payers is, at times, worryingly low. For example recent research showed that a very large percentage of the audience believed that it was the Palestinians who were occupying the 'occupied territories' in the Holy Land rather than the Israeli's. The discrepancy of knowledge between audiences is clearly a key editorial challenge.

CSV Media believes that new media has a key role to play in engaging difficult to reach groups and tackling complex issues in an innovative way. In particular (video) gaming culture could be utilised to do this – teaching people about the world around them almost by osmosis.

Either way, we would like to see an explicit commitment from the BBC to innovate and experiment in the way that it seeks to create an informed society and believe that DCMS should encourage the Corporation to pioneer new methods and techniques from which others will hopefully learn and follow.

Sue Farrington,
Director, CSV Media

Damian Radcliffe
Strategy & Development Manager, CSV Media



HANSARD
SOCIETY

Hansard Society comments on the *BBC's contribution to informed citizenship* submission to the independent Panel on Charter Review

The Hansard Society is an independent, non-partisan educational charity which exists to promote effective parliamentary democracy. Our work starts from the principle that a robust parliamentary democracy needs the widest possible participation from informed and engaged citizens. Democracy is only as strong as its citizens and good citizenship requires both knowledge and participation.

Our Citizenship Education Programme educates people of all ages about parliamentary democracy and how it works. In particular, we give thousands of young people throughout the country their first taste of democracy and political debate through mock elections and national curriculum resources.

This paper highlights seven aspects of the *BBC's contribution to informed citizenship* submission to the Independent Panel on Charter Review.

1 Public service remit

Recent Hansard Society research: *Audit of Political Engagement* (Hansard Society/Electoral Commission 2004) showed that citizens believe that the media is the most influential factor governing people's lives (more than Parliament, business or local government). In this context, delivery of programmes within a public service remit to inform and engage citizens in the political life of the UK is crucial. The Hansard Society public policy commission *Parliament in the Public Eye*, chaired by Lord Puttnam, is currently examining the question of public service broadcasting. It is due to report in 2005.

2 Impartiality

The Hansard Society believes strongly that broadcasting is a primary means by which the electorate (and young people in particular) become aware of, and interested in, the process of government and the legislature and the connections between contemporary issues and the work of Parliament. To be effective in promoting active and informed political and civic understanding and debate, public service broadcasting must be highly trusted as an impartial provider of independent news, information and comment demonstrably unbiased by commercial, advertising, sponsorship or other outside interests. Hansard Society research conducted among 16-24 year-olds in 2002 (*Digital Jury- the final verdict*) demonstrated that BBC News was the most trusted source (82.6% "trusted highly", 17.4% "trusted") compared to ITV News (43. % "trusted highly", 47.8% "trusted") and Broadsheet Newspapers (30.4% "trusted highly", 43.5% "trusted").

3 Range of programmes

Notwithstanding some excellent examples of innovative BBC formats (e.g. *Radio 1 election web site*, 2001 and *Five Live Goes To Parliament*) recent Hansard Society research on the *HeadsUp* forum

(www.headsup.org.uk - a debate platform to promote political awareness and participation amongst young people under the age of 18) showed that young people are turning off the political coverage they encounter. The presentation of it is unattractive and the coverage of the issues that young people are interested in is proving to be inadequate. Moreover, the confrontational nature of the relationship between the media and the politicians is proving a barrier to young people's receptiveness to politics. Many of the young people involved in the forum were confused by basic media terminology and could not differentiate between the approaches taken by different journalists and media formats. This impairs young people's ability to utilise media effectively on an elementary level. Taken together with the fact that young people identify television and newspapers as their top sources of information about political issues, this suggests that educating young people about how to use the media as an effective resource presents a clear opportunity to develop the political awareness and participation of young citizens.

4 Coverage of democratic institutions

It is essential to a healthy democracy that citizens understand their institutions. In particular the Hansard Society believes that coverage of Parliament and its proceedings is a core element of public service broadcasting. In 1999 MORI carried out an opinion poll for the Hansard Society which showed that 75% of the general public agreed that it was important to have live extracts from Parliament showing what MPs actually say, rather than relying on mediated political reporting.

5 Engagement with the democratic process

The Hansard produced major research into *Election Call* in both the 1997 and 2001 elections. The conclusions as to the strength of such a programme as a contribution to the democratic process can be carried over into a more general appraisal of the BBC's commitment to informed citizenship:

- **Interaction** – The programme places politicians in a position where they must face direct challenges from members of the public
- **Seriousness** – The programme is neither facile nor condescending in its approach to the public; it expects members of the public to have interesting views and questions to raise and provides senior politicians with whom the public can engage
- **Credibility** - Both callers and the listening-viewing audience regard the programme as fulfilling a democratic service and consider that callers are often articulating the views of the wider public
- **Fairness** – The programme is honestly produced and fairly represented, in a non-partisan fashion, with an emphasis upon allowing members of the public to speak and be heard.

The BBC should allow itself to be used by the public as a resource for securing greater accountability and a channel for citizens to engage in the democratic discourse on their own terms. *Election Call* should become one key element within a dynamic network of public deliberation and activity, rather than a rare political moment when the represented meet their representatives.

6 Evaluation

The BBC's contribution to informed citizenship needs deeper analysis of its impact. In this area "Reach" figures tell only one side of the story – it would be useful to have an evaluation process which revealed what effect the delivery of citizenship in its various guises actually had on those it was aimed at. Furthermore, the assumption that new media services are the main way to serve younger people needs investigating. 44% of young people do not have access to the internet outside school (DfES survey 2002). Concentrating on new technology as the main

way to connect young people with citizenship ideas raises the danger that other methods ignore this need.

7 Consultation with Young People

Attracting a young audience for political coverage would be aided by encouraging an agenda of participation in both the planning and making of such programmes. This entails more than mere "consultation" – it would mean putting young people on editorial and relevant decision-making bodies so that they could feed into the content and timing of programmes aimed at them.

Conclusion

In the Hansard Society's submission of evidence to the Ofcom review of public service broadcasting (June 2004) we stated:

"Currently the BBC (TV/radio/online) makes an unparalleled contribution to democratic debate and enhances both civic and political discourse in the United Kingdom. The Hansard Society considers that diminution of this trusted and valued position would be detrimental to a democratic society with an engaged and informed citizenry."

Hansard Society
November 2004
hansard@hansard.lse.ac.uk
www.hansardsociety.org.uk

Response to BBC's contribution to informed citizenship

The NUJ welcomes the opportunity to make further contributions to the debate concerning charter review. Our contribution here takes the form of a commentary on some of the statements and commitments contained in the submission: The BBC's contribution to informed citizenship. This response must be seen in context; the BBC is currently engaged in a series of comprehensive reviews of many aspects of its organisation and finances. The form and content of any proposals following these reviews are unclear at this stage although press speculation would suggest that large scale cuts are being seriously considered. The NUJ has invited the BBC to reassure its staff that rumours of large-scale job cuts are untrue. Unfortunately the BBC has declined to make such a commitment. The union is due to meet with the BBC in early December at which time clarity will be sought.

The NUJ has a proven track record of working with the BBC to deliver considerable efficiencies and savings. This has been achieved through careful management of change. We have ensured that, in the context of any redundancies of members in areas of news output, any job losses have been managed without compulsory redundancies. Our willingness to engage over reductions in job numbers has been predicated on this joint approach. As far as our members are concerned, this is a core element in our relationship. Whilst we will engage with the BBC over any proposals for change, our members would react very strongly if the BBC was to move away from the approach outlined above when dealing with any proposed job cuts now or in the future.

The BBC's own submission here demonstrates that members have worked increasingly hard with the same or reduced resources. Output has increased substantially since the last charter review. Chapter five of this report shows that increases in output have come about against a background of stringent efficiency targets and flat funding;

NEWS OUTPUT (over a five year period)

“Network News up (25,000hrs to 31,000hrs).

**National and local news and current affairs hours up
(158,000hrs to 167,000hrs)**

**bbc.co.uk news stories up
(66,000 to 120,000) “ (page 33)**

Increases in output of 24%, 5.7% and 82% respectively

The BBC goes on to state

“Since 1997/98, expenditure in the BBC's News Division has remained almost flat in real terms yet the total volume of output has more that doubled over this period”
Page 42

and

Network television news has generated 40% of the £30m of efficiencies found in TV genres in the three years to 2002/03.” Page 42

When new initiatives are considered, the steps which have already been taken, are sometimes forgotten. Here the BBC clearly states the levels of efficiencies that have already been delivered. We believe the emerging picture in news and current affairs is that the departments already work on a highly efficient and cost sensitive basis.

The report's introduction contains a very important statement:

“Accurate, impartial and independent journalism is the principal way we support informed citizenship. Our journalism and our editorial values are the cornerstone of the BBC’s remit and constitute a core rationale for public funding.” Page 2

We agree entirely with this. The public values the BBC’s contribution to democracy. This role is unparalleled and significantly contributes to the UK tradition of an informed democracy. However, the BBC itself recognises that this costs money.

“Fulfilling our mission requires significant investment; we currently spend £0.5billion a year on programmes and services that directly seek to inform citizens. This represents 18% of the licence fee and is necessary for us to fulfil our mission.” Page 3

We would seek for the BBC to be held to this commitment.

We believe that this level of funding represents the minimum necessary to fulfil the mission outlined above. The NUJ has commented during the review of journalism at the BBC, in the light of the Hutton report, that the effects of a 24-hour news agenda need to be carefully considered. Our members have been asked to respond to the demands of 24-hour news across all outlets. This has resulted, for example, in correspondents contributing to many different programmes at different times during the day. The NUJ has called for a review of such working practices to ensure that journalists and BBC journalism are not stretched beyond reasonable limits. Obviously we would not wish to see a reduction in ambition. However, at all times editors and commissioners need to ensure that the demands on journalists are reasonable and consistent with good practice in health and safety. If the BBC were to seek to cut back on investment in journalism then quality would undoubtedly suffer. Whilst members will always wish to do the best possible job, the results are entirely dependent on the level of resources and managerial commitment provided.

The report gives a strong justification for current levels of spending;

**“Our investment is substantial because we need to:
provide a wide range of programmes and services to enable us to engage everyone
- Ensure that what we offer is sufficiently distinctive to that provided by the market
Address market failure by offering services the market does not provide at all”**
Page 3

Statistics show the importance (to the BBC) of news and current affairs even when measured with the simple yardstick of originated programming:

“Overall 73% of the BBC’s total originated TV output (excluding repeats) consists of news, current affairs and parliamentary coverage.” Page 4

As indicated above, this is delivered against a general background of 18% licence fee funding.

The BBC puts forward a good case outlining areas of journalistic endeavour including a commitment to; first hand reporting, specialism, a broad and serious agenda and investigative journalism.

“In each of these areas we aim to act as the benchmark – a guarantor of quality.”
Page 5

The NUJ is pleased that the BBC concludes that news and current affairs represents good value for money:

“We provide good value for money. The current weekly cost per person reached by our programmes and services that seek to deliver informed citizenship is around 25 pence (about half the price of a single edition of a broadsheet newspaper).” Page 5

We are further encouraged by the BBC commitment:

“No matter how other news organisations may respond to an increasingly competitive market, the BBC will provide a guarantee for audiences that serious, independent and trusted journalism will remain the core of our purpose and we will continue to commit resources accordingly.” Page 6

We are pleased that the BBC has made these commitments, they will be measured of course in actions and not promises. The BBC's journalism is the envy of the world. The reason for this is that the BBC, through its current funding mechanism and structures, has a unique ability to maintain independence from Government. The NUJ is committed to ensuring that journalistic standards of excellence at the BBC are maintained. This includes ensuring that successive managements at the BBC prioritise this area of its activities in terms of funding.

We would be pleased to contribute further to Lord Burns review. As you might expect, we also have views for example concerning the BBC's international role and the role of Governance in ensuring the BBC's independence. We do not comment here on either of these aspects as they fall outside the scope of the BBC's report.

Paul McLaughlin
National Broadcasting
15 November 2004

FAO: dcms and Lord Burns' advisory panel

THE BBC AND INFORMED CITIZENSHIP

Summary

- Public Voice supports the BBC's goal of creating informed citizenship and recognises and applauds the excellence of its news and current affairs services as one element to achieve that goal
- Public Voice believes the 'purpose' of building public value in this area should extend far beyond the provision of news and current affairs. We recommend that:
The BBC in its pursuit of public value, the advisory panel in its deliberations, and the dcms in the preparation of the green paper, should reflect further on the nature of the BBC's five proposed 'purposes' and the extent to which they should be pursued as interrelated goals across BBC services
- Public Voice believes there is an urgent need for the creation of consensus on the nature of citizens' interests in relation to communications matters. We recommend that:
The government should initiate -- and government, regulators, broadcasters and civil society groups should collaborate in -- a new project of research and dialogue to develop a consensual definition of 'citizens' interests in communications', and to examine the implications for communications services.
- Public Voice believes that in order successfully to pursue the purpose of creating 'informed citizenship' during the next Charter, the BBC will need to strengthen and extend the initial concepts in *Building Public Value* in **five key areas**:
 - Partnerships
 - 'Participation' as a distinctive part of public value
 - Working with community media to extend public value
 - Internationalism
 - Statutory framework
- Public Voice wishes to see the BBC recognise that **partnerships** with civil society organisations and communities are a precondition for increasing citizens' engagement and participation; that these partnerships may be led from below, not only by the BBC; and that specific and appropriate partnership protocols may be required to work with civil society partners (as opposed to, say, commercial contractors).
- Public Voice recommends that achieving **participation** – the active engagement of users with BBC services and the debates and initiatives they generate – should be made the defining characteristic of the next Charter, and be given a much higher value in the 'public value test'. As part of the pursuit of participation the BBC should have a sector-leading **media literacy** strategy.

- Public Voice recommends that the BBC should adopt a clear policy towards **community media** that:
 - Recognises it as an extension of public service provision
 - Pledges not to undermine or duplicate it through the BBC's own services
 - Creates specific partnership protocols for working together
 - Creates a mechanism for significant support to community media expansion
- Public Voice recommends that the BBC should be required to establish an **international strategy** to integrate global and international content into all its mainstream, domestic services
- Public Voice recommends that the new Agreement should be radically rewritten to enshrine the new goals of *Building Public Value* under an overarching '**principal purpose**... to serve the communications needs, rights and interests of citizens'
- Public Voice recommends that this new Agreement should be written as a concise plain English document expressing what the BBC will do for citizens, in order to increase public understanding and 'ownership' of the BBC

Introduction

The BBC submission to Lord Burns' advisory panel on Charter review takes as its starting point a definition agreed with the dcms:

"The BBC's contribution to informed citizenship refers to those of the BBC's activities that are designed to help equip the public with the knowledge and capability necessary to act as informed citizens, through:

- *Providing accurate, impartial and balanced coverage of news and current affairs in order to help the public make informed choices*
- *Reporting the proceedings of the political process in the UK and internationally*
- *Stimulating the public debate on a range of social, political and other current affairs issues."*

This presents an immediate problem for groups like Public Voice that campaign for 'citizens' interests in relation to communications matters'.

The definition is contestable and limits the discussion almost exclusively to the BBC's performance in news and current affairs. In our view, however, the debate about the potential contribution of the BBC to informed citizenship should encompass all its services and programming.

Furthermore, Public Voice sees as central to this debate the nature of the relationships between the BBC and citizens as individual users of services; between the BBC and 'communities'; and between the BBC and potential civil society partners such as voluntary organisations and community media providers.

In our view there remains a vacuum behind the term 'citizens' in relation to communications, and our first recommendation would be that:

The government should rapidly initiate -- and government, regulators, broadcasters and civil society groups should collaborate in -- a new project of research and dialogue with the aim to develop a consensual definition of 'citizens' interests in

communications services’, and to examine its implications for communications services.

Public Voice has strongly welcomed the *Building Public Value* ‘manifesto’ and pledged to support the BBC in working to achieve its goals. Increasingly, however, as the Charter review process continues, we are becoming concerned about the nature of the five ‘purposes’ through which the BBC aims to build public value.

Are the five ‘purposes’:

A] *segmented* goals, which will be applied discretely to certain services as deemed appropriate; or
B] a *matrix* of goals that will be applied simultaneously and contiguously to the operation of all services and channels?

Our initial impression was the latter – promising a radical and thoroughgoing evolution in the BBC’s social and cultural roles. Our impression from the terms of dcms’ questions and the BBC’s submissions is more of the former. For example, building ‘global value’ has been taken to mean exporting cultural values and content, rather than having an impact on the nature of ‘informed citizenship’ and ‘connected communities’ in the UK; while ‘informed citizenship’ is here being tackled in isolation from the related goals of connecting communities and supporting lifelong learning.

Our second recommendation, therefore, would be:

To encourage the BBC in its pursuit of public value, the advisory panel in its deliberations, and the dcms in the preparation of the green paper, to reflect further on the nature of the five proposed ‘purposes’ and the extent to which they should be pursued as interrelated goals across all domestic BBC services.

Public Voice sees it as important to open our submission in these terms because it fundamentally affects the nature of our response to the BBC submission.

We support much of what the BBC says in its submission, applaud the positive case studies, and with some caveats welcome the excellence of the BBC’s provision of news and current affairs and its reporting of parliament and public policy issues.

However, we note that the BBC itself states that:

*“Delivering this mission falls mainly on the BBC’s local, regional and national news and current affairs output. But the BBC’s purposes are **shared by the whole organisation** and a wide variety of other BBC programming also contributes to informed citizenship.”*

This thought is not followed through in the rest of the submission. But it is this question that to Public Voice is crucial: how should the BBC extend and capitalise upon the excellent provision of basic information through some parts of its services in order to provide the maximum benefits to citizens?

Before we can tackle that, it is necessary to discuss who these ‘citizens’ are.

Definitions of ‘citizens’

The Communications Act 2003 gave Ofcom the ‘principal duty... to further the interests of citizens in relation to communications matters’ (as well as the interests of consumers).

No such duty or phrase was in the Bill when it started its parliamentary progress. It was a campaign by Public Voice, supporting former members of the joint scrutiny committee and others, which led to this amendment – although it took a Lords vote against the government to push it through.

As we understand it, this was the first use in UK legislation of the term ‘citizens’ in a context other than that of nationality.

But what are ‘citizens’ interests in relation to communications’?

Nobody knows, although many people have opinions. That is because no definitional work has been done, either before or since the amendment, to specify the nature of citizenship in relation to communications matters. Without such groundwork, there can be no consensus.

Public Voice has repeatedly suggested to Ofcom that it should initiate a process of consensus-building, to no avail¹.

For this reason Public Voice recommends that:

The government should initiate -- and government, regulators, broadcasters and civil society groups should collaborate in -- a new project of research and dialogue with the aim to develop a consensual definition of ‘citizens’ interests in communications’, and to examine its implications for communications services.

In the meantime, each player in the communications policy field is working on his or her own definition.

The BBC appears to believe that ‘citizens’ are an outcome of the work in which it is engaged. The ‘audience’ begins as ‘individuals’, unconnected to societal processes. Through the receipt of information and analysis (provided by BBC news and current affairs) these individuals graduate to ‘citizens’, able to take part in democracy. Citizenship is an alchemical reaction to the BBC.

For Public Voice the starting point is different. We begin as citizens of the information society. That citizenship is recognised in European policy on the Global Information Society and in the documentation of the ongoing UN World Summit on the Information Society.

That citizenship is non-negotiable. It exists regardless of the degree of contact we have with BBC services. We are citizens of the information society regardless of whether we watch BBC Parliament every day, or only see BBC news by mistake while trying to tune in to football or movies.

What is at stake is the nature and degree of that citizenship: to what extent are we able to achieve our full potential as citizens?

This in turn depends on a number of factors, only one of which – although a vitally important one – is our access to unbiased news information. Others include:

- Access to a wide range of information, analysis and educational content
- Access to the means of communication
- An understanding of how to gain and use such access
- The freedom and ability to participate in dialogue and debate with others in both geographical and non-geographical communities
- The ability to own and create our own content

¹ See, for example, submissions to Ofcom on its annual plan 2004-05, on the public service television review, et al

These factors immediately bring into play some of the other goals that the BBC intends to follow during the next Charter, including:

- Connecting communities
- Supporting a learning society
- Using the ‘unique’ tri-media ‘offering’ (TV, radio and Web) across all levels from local to global as part of a seamless whole
- Working in partnerships

as well as other goals which, in our view, are under-emphasised in the BBC’s documentation, including media literacy and working with community media to enhance and extend public service provision.

A discussion of this wider set of considerations relating to ‘informed citizenship’ forms the core of this submission.

To preface those discussions, however, we note one further aspect of the definitional problems associated with ‘citizenship’ in the information society.

Both the BBC and some BBC-supporting civil society groups are concerned that defining the BBC by how it meets citizens’ needs would unduly emphasise the ‘worthy’, ‘information and education’-related aspects of its services, and by implication undermine the BBC’s ability to provide a full range of programming that also includes entertainment and leisure.

This debate needs to be played out more fully in the process of Charter review, and we will value any opportunity to do so.

Our argument would be that it raises a false dilemma. The law, in the shape of the Communications Act 2003, makes clear parliament’s will that the definition of the ‘purposes’ of public service television² is to provide ‘programmes dealing with a wide range of subject-matters... in a manner which... is likely to meet the needs and satisfy the interests of as many different audiences as practicable...’, and in the form of services ‘for the dissemination of information and for the provision of education and entertainment’³.

Furthermore, among the legally specified aspects of such services are ‘drama, comedy and music’, ‘feature films’, ‘visual and performing arts’, ‘sporting and other leisure interests’ and ‘a suitable quality and range of programmes for children and young people’⁴.

The question is, *why* should the BBC be providing that full range? And the answer is, in the service of the citizen. In other words, the BBC does not provide entertainment, leisure interests and so on in order to make profit or to keep consumers happy. It does so because its provision is designed to meet the all-round needs of citizens.

This partly entails, for example, raising standards across the broadcast market; providing formats which may be under-produced elsewhere, or would be produced to less high standards were the BBC not engaged in their provision; and providing programmes that bring the nation, or parts of the nation together in what *BPV* calls ‘shared experiences’.

It also entails – and this should be integral to the concepts of public value in *BPV* – building upon the general programming it provides to make it something more than might be produced and

² This would need explicitly extending to cover radio and online

³ Communications Act 2003, Section 264, (4) to (6)(a)

⁴ *ibid*, Section 264, (6)(b) to (6)(h)

consumed elsewhere. The BBC's package of converged services enables it, potentially, to use any programme format as a basis for wider and deeper engagement of the viewer (as a 'user' of information rather than a passive consumer).

Areas for attention in developing the 'purpose' of informed citizenship

If the reader is willing to go with us as we depart the terms of the BBC's submission, we propose to discuss some of the ways that the BBC's work to create informed citizenship could be strengthened during the next Charter. We draw upon Public Voice's recently completed response to *Building Public Value*. We have yet to share this bilaterally with the BBC and out of respect for our dialogue with them we will only publish part of the argument here.

There are **five areas** in which Public Voice wishes to see the BBC (and the dcms) **strengthen and extend** the goals expressed in *BPV*. Several of these areas touch on the extent to which citizens' voices are genuinely heard -- by the BBC as it secures its partnerships; through the broadcast output; and in the interactive relationship that active users of the BBC's services will increasingly expect. They are:

- ❖ Partnerships
- ❖ 'Participation' as a distinctive part of public value
- ❖ Working with community media to extend public value
- ❖ Internationalism
- ❖ Statutory framework

1. Partnerships

BPV promises that an important element of the BBC's culture change will be to become more 'open', 'responsive' and embracing of partnerships. It will, indeed, 'put the idea of partnership at the centre of the BBC's strategy'. Before the end of 2004 it will publish a draft 'partnership contract' to set a framework for 'every part of the organisation' to engage with partners.

Public Voice welcomes these statements and looks forward to further discussion of the partnership contract.

We will be watching these developments to see whether the contract is adequate to the needs, interests and concerns of the voluntary sector, and of the communities with which voluntary organisations work.

Such organisations and communities are, in relative terms, powerless when it comes to dealing with the impacts that a large and influential corporation like the BBC can create. Partnerships with them will necessarily be different to those with private and public sector institutions.

Yet these partnerships will be at the core of many of the BBC's attempts to build public value through, for example, lifelong learning, connecting communities, and creating an informed democracy. The BBC will have a special responsibility to seek out partners in marginalised, disadvantaged and powerless communities.

It should also be said that there are prizes of enormous potential value in terms of the creativity, inspiration, insight and knowledge that such organisations and communities can bring to successful partnerships with the BBC.

We want the BBC to recognise, first, that strong and effective partnerships are a **precondition for participation**. That is, it is the sense of genuine trust and shared enterprise that will enable individuals, communities and civil society organisations to take part in building 'informed citizenship' and 'participatory democracy' in interaction with the BBC.

Second, partnerships that build public value must be able to be **led from below**. Service users, generating their own themes, topics, and ways of interacting, and increasingly generating their own media content, will be looking to the BBC to provide the space and openness to allow them to direct the debate. The BBC will have consciously to decide to attempt to be *inclusive* of citizens' voices, rather than *exclusive* of certain views and perspectives. Otherwise users will shun partnership and the BBC initiatives will be sterile.

2. Participation

The Overview of *BPV* promises 'a future where the historic one-way traffic of content from broadcaster to consumer evolves into a true creative dialogue in which the public are not passive audiences but active, inspired participants'.

But the importance of 'participation' to the BBC's new vision and purposes is not adequately carried through in *BPV* and does not figure highly in its submission on informed citizenship. In particular, the 'public value test' as outlined in *BPV* should – but doesn't – make 'participation' a key indicator of the success of services, and a distinctive part of the BBC's public value proposition.

The achievement of widespread engagement and participation, not necessarily in formal elections, but in engagement with social and political debates, should be a *defining characteristic* of the new

Charter. In that way it would become part of the essence of the BBC's *distinctive proposition* for the digital era – something no other communications provider will aim to achieve on this scope and scale. Generating 'participation' should be a *key legitimising factor* for the existence of the BBC and its services in the digital era.

Striving for high levels of participation will require that the BBC has a clear strategy for media literacy. The BBC could be a sector leader in developing approaches to media literacy that aim at the genuine empowerment of citizens through mastering and using the means of media production.

3. Community media

Not for profit community media are increasingly well established and have proven success in creating media literacy, giving communities access to and control over the means of media production, and stimulating engagement and social cohesion. Community media could therefore be useful and creative partners in the BBC's attempts to connect communities and create informed citizenship.

Yet *BPV* contains no statement of how the BBC intends to work with community media. We recommend that this should be rectified through a clear statement of BBC policy.

We wish to see the BBC adopt a policy towards the community media sector that:

- Recognises it as an extension of public service provision
- Pledges not to undermine or duplicate it through the BBC's own services
- Creates specific partnership protocols for working together
- Creates a mechanism for significant support to community media expansion

4. Internationalism

In a globalising world, where all aspects of our lives are increasingly bound up with and affected by international events and processes, a knowledge and understanding of the wider world, and the ability to connect with it, are of vital importance to 'informed citizenship'.

Public Voice supports the submission made by one of its member agencies, 3WE, to the panel regarding the BBC's international role. This has discussed in detail the fact that the provision of international *news* information – on which the BBC's track record is excellent – is inadequate to give citizens a wide and deep understanding of the world.

[As such, international content forms a key case study on the general inadequacy of news programming alone to create informed citizenship.]

We will not repeat the arguments here but will support the recommendation that:

The BBC should be required to establish an international strategy to integrate international themes and issues into its mainstream, domestic services

5.

Statutory framework

The Burns advisory panel seminar on governance and accountability on 16 September 2004 scrutinised the BBC's proposals on governance. In the course of it two important statements were made:

- Michael Grade, Chairman of Governors, twice stated that, if the governance proposals were deemed the right ones, they should be 'codified' in some way that ensured they would outlast any specific 'regime' of governors and executives, for example through the Agreement.
- Lord Burns noted that there was general satisfaction with the BBC proposals and that the panel should next move on to consider the other elements of entrenching the *BPV* governance reforms.

Public Voice recommends that the Agreement should be radically rewritten.

The first aim of this new Agreement should be to entrench the purposes defined in *Building Public Value* in a framework that goes above and beyond the set of individuals that at any time are governors, and to which the governors and the BBC can be held to account. For us, this relates to 'informed citizenship' because the way those purposes are written into the Agreement should be by giving the BBC an overarching 'principal purpose' to serve the 'communications needs, rights and interests of citizens'.

Such a principal purpose would bring the BBC – the most important delivery mechanism for citizens' communications needs – into a contiguous framework with the rest of the communications sector, for which Ofcom is charged with the 'principal duty... to further the interests of citizens in relation to communications matters'.

It would embrace and justify the five 'purposes' proposed in BPV and give them a designated goal – serving the needs of the citizen.

It would ensure that the 'renewed BBC' is indeed '*placing the public interest before all else*', as the Chairman promises in the introduction to *BPV*.

It would give clear expression to the BBC's own elaboration of 'public value':

"In other words, [the BBC] aims to serve its audiences not just as consumers, but as members of a wider society, with programmes and services which, while seeking to inform, educate and entertain audiences, also serve wider public purposes".

The second aim of the new Agreement would be to increase public understanding, and the public sense of ownership of the BBC – in itself a small but perhaps significant step towards 'informed citizenship'. Public Voice sees the development of this sense of ownership as **essential to the continued survival** of the BBC through the next Charter and beyond.

The new Agreement should therefore be short, concise and in plain English, and written to express what the BBC means to us and what it will do for us in terms the lay person can easily understand.

Appendix: About Public Voice

Public Voice was formed in early 2001 to campaign around the Communications Act 2003. It successfully influenced that Act and is now working on BBC Charter Review, and with Ofcom on regulatory policy and operations.

Public Voice seeks to represent voluntary sector views on citizens' interests in relation to communications policy and regulation. Its steering group includes the National Council for Voluntary Organisations – the umbrella organisation for the sector in England – and the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations.

Public Voice campaigns to ensure that the primary objective of communications regulation is to serve the communications needs, rights and interests of citizens.

We define 'citizens' interests' as follows:

"We are all citizens of the global information society with interests in a fair and just society in which fundamental human rights such as the right to freedom of expression and freedom of thought are recognised. We need access to a wide range of high quality information and knowledge, together with the means to participate in debate, in order to play a full part in this society, at local, national and international levels."

Public Voice therefore campaigns:

- To maintain, develop and extend public service broadcasting and related communications services
- To promote new and emerging forms of public service communications from the not-for-profit or 'community' sector
- To ensure that communications regulators uphold their duties to protect and further 'citizens' interests'

We believe communications regulation should at all times seek to protect, maintain and strengthen the provision of public service broadcasting content. This should become the driver to extend citizens' communication services across other platforms, enabling greater engagement, interaction and debate.

Regulation should enable access, not only to content produced by others, but also to the means to generate content, individually and collectively. It should seek continual innovation in public service offerings, especially in 'true' converged services, at all levels from the very local to the national and international.

Society of Authors

Dear Mr Hill

BBC Charter Review - Informed Citizenship

You wrote on 20 October requesting any further views the Society of Authors might have, following the BBC's submission to you about its contribution to informed citizenship.

It seems to us that the terms of reference of the BBC's submission have been conceived too narrowly. The document concerns itself almost exclusively with news, current affairs and matters of consumer interest. Impressive in its facts and statistics, it sets out in great detail the ways in which these matters are currently disseminated, and how new methods of interacting with the public about them are being developed. However, we believe that the term "informed citizenship" should be interpreted far more broadly. Public service broadcasting should incorporate within its remit a responsibility to inform its audiences about the enormous richness of the national culture in all its aspects. The BBC, as the largest national patron of the arts, should accept a positive obligation to inform citizens about cultural activities both national and local, support and encourage such activities, and disseminate the best to its audience. In brief, we believe that citizens should be perceived as not merely consumers or voters, but individuals who also possess cultural and spiritual impulses.

It is in this sense that the BBC, as a Public Service Broadcaster, should be markedly different from other broadcasting organisations - which may, indeed, produce public service programmes inter alia, but whose primary aim is to deliver audiences to advertisers and make money for owners and shareholders.

Another issue arising from the development of interactive services concerns us. There have been a number of instances of the BBC involving members of the public in talent schemes of various sorts - literary, musical, photographic, etc. Almost invariably the BBC requests an assignment of copyright in perpetuity for the work produced. This is a practice of which the Society does not approve. Rights should not be signed away - especially by amateur contributors not aware of the disadvantages of doing so. They could as easily - and should - be licensed for a limited period.

Moreover, when the BBC goes on to offer contracts - often through BBC Worldwide - the terms are almost invariably more onerous than other commercial publishers would apply. However, the output from these competitions rarely see the light of day. The Society receives a stream of complaints about this, and related matters, from creative contributors concerning the BBC's commercial activities.

The Society is concerned, also, about some of the implications of the BBC's proposal to place large parts of their archives into the public domain. This could be considered to form part of their drive towards an informed citizenship, and if access can be confined to non-commercial uses, there could be few objections. The concern arises when the practicalities of so doing are considered. It would not always be easy to determine when a commercial use had been made of a freely-available archive. Use of creative work with no return to its creators would run counter to every principle governing rights and copyright in this country. The Society would wish every aspect of the BBC's proposals in this field to be discussed, and perhaps a system established to ensure that archive material used commercially results in a financial return to the contributors involved.

We should be content for these remarks to be published as a further contribution to the consultation from the Society.

Yours sincerely

Neville Teller
Chair of the Broadcasting Group