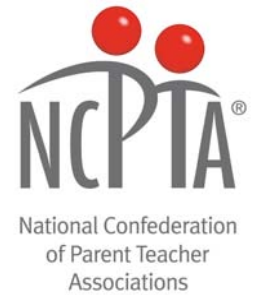


22 July 2002

DWB/mlc/15251



The Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP  
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport  
2 – 4 Cockspur Street  
London  
SW1Y 5DH

Dear Tessa Jowell

### **BBC Application for Digital Curriculum Service**

Thank you for offering the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations (NCPTA) an opportunity to comment on the BBC's new application to provide a Digital Curriculum Service.

The National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations (NCPTA) is a registered charity that advances education by promoting partnerships between home and school and providing support for Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs). NCPTA represents more than 6 million parents and teachers through some 12,000 individual PTAs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Our response to the consultation exercise is set out at Annex A.

Yours sincerely

**David W Butler**  
**Director**

cc: Caroline Thompson - Director, Public Policy, BBC

**National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations (NCPTA):  
Response to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's Consultation on the  
BBC's Proposed Digital Curriculum Service**

NCPTA would first like to acknowledge the significant contribution that the BBC has made to the education of our children through the high quality education programmes and support materials that it has produced over the years. Any proposals made to widen the Corporation's education provision deserve careful consideration.

Parents recognise that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can transform teaching and raise educational standards. However, services such as the proposed Digital Curriculum should firstly be seen as an aid and support to high quality classroom teaching for use at the teacher's discretion. Secondly, as a way of enabling parents to help their children learn by providing affordable and accessible ICT materials for use at home.

We welcome the BBC's commitment to providing a universally accessible Digital Curriculum Service. However, we are concerned that in the short to medium term, some schools that wish to use the Service will not have full access as they do not have broadband links. In addition, many families will be prevented from using the Service, as they do not have any form of internet link at home. This means that pupils from less well off families are likely to be at a disadvantage to their peers.

Despite the BBC's claims that falling subscription prices are creating renewed interest in broadband access to the home, there are others who predict the cost of internet access, including broadband, is likely to increase because of instability in the ISP market.

We hope widespread demand for this service will develop and that it will become genuinely universally available to schools and homes. In these circumstances there is justification for providing an element of funding from the licence fee. However, given the commercial offshoots envisaged, we think the BBC should consider funding part of the Service from other sources. We would also support the Government providing some element of grant funding for the initiative.

The proposed content for the Digital Curriculum seems sensible, as do the plans to update and refresh the materials. We particularly welcome the recognition that there is a need to provide materials for more than just the core subjects.

We welcome the BBC's proposals to stimulate new sources of supply for digital learning resources in order to providing increasing choice for the consumer.