

**1. Do you agree that securing plural sources of impartial news for the Nations, locally and in the regions should be a key priority?**

Yes	<b>Yes</b>
No	

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

Independent and verifiable local and regional news is one of the cornerstones of a properly functioning society and democracy.

The variety and quality of provision is threatened by structural and cyclical changes which are undermining the viability of commercial media organisations. The impact of these changes has been seen in the closure of some local newspapers and the declining profitability of others. Meanwhile, ITV has indicated that beyond 2012 it no longer wishes to provide regional news, therefore further reducing provision of news about local life.

Local and regional news connects people with their local communities and fosters community spirit and engagement. Credible and professional local journalism also ensures that decision makers and public bodies are subject to proper scrutiny and are held to account. Any loss of local or regional news provision creates a democratic deficit.

Enabling the continued prosperity of diverse and independent journalism should be a key priority for the Government and other interested parties.

**2. Do you agree that sustainable, impartial news in the Nations, locally and in the regions is likely to require some top-up public funding?**

Yes	<b>Yes</b>
No	

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

It is iniquitous that, because of its generous and guaranteed licence fee income, the BBC is the only media organisation immune from the challenges assailing the industry.

I believe that public funding can quite properly be used to support local and regional news provision beyond the BBC, providing that robust structures and arrangements are put in place to protect the independence from Government or political pressure of any media organisation – or consortia of media interests – that may receive such funding, either directly or indirectly.

**3. Do you agree that the Television Licence Fee should be used to support impartial news in the Nations, locally and in the regions in addition to BBC services?**

Yes	<b>Yes</b>
No	

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

I believe that the public would support use of a proportion of the licence fee income to support

independent local and regional news, beyond that provided by the BBC.

The licence fee is now at such a level that the income it provides is more than sufficient to support high-quality news and other public service content from the BBC and other providers. Indeed, currently the BBC's sole receipt of licence fee funds has enabled it to expand enormously beyond its core remit and into areas where it poses a direct threat to commercial media organisations, limiting their ability to develop audiences and revenues and stifling innovation in the commercial sector.

**4. Do you agree that any funding within a contained contestable element of the television licence fee not required for impartial news should potentially be available to fund other forms of essential public service content, or should such funding be limited to news?**

Yes	
No	<b>No</b>

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

The purpose of this funding should be to secure plurality of local and regional news coverage, in the interest of those communities served and society generally.

**5. Are there alternative funding mechanisms that you believe would deliver the above objectives more effectively?**

Yes	
No	<b>No</b>

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

The media industry is in a state of flux with traditional revenue streams in decline or threatened and new opportunities for income, such as the potential charging for online news, yet to be tested.

Funding of public service content via the licence fee is long established and accepted by the public. However, it is no longer equitable or sustainable for this funding to be limited to BBC services alone.

**6. Do you agree with the proposal to set a maximum percentage of Television Licence Fee revenue which could be set aside as a contained contestable element?**

Yes	<b>Yes</b>
No	

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

However, it is questionable whether the proposed proportion of licence fee income set aside for the contained contestable element (approximately 3.5%) would be sufficient to support

high-quality and geographically relevant local and regional news provision across the UK.

**7. Do you agree that amending the BBC Agreement could provide the necessary protection to the BBC's future funding and independence?**

Yes	<b>Yes</b>
No	

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

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**8. Do you agree that the use of any contained contestable element within the Television Licence Fee should be restricted to the public purposes set out in the BBC Charter?**

Yes	
No	<b>No</b>

Comment (max. 4000 characters)

The BBC's Public Purposes would be too limited in the context of licence fee funding being made available to other media organisations or consortia of providers.

I think it would be necessary to create a new definition for purposes for which the funding would be used. The key objective would be to support the provision of independent, verifiable local and regional news in the public interest.