



HOUSE OF LORDS

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The Select Committee on Communications

Inquiry on

BBC CHARTER RENEWAL: PUBLIC PURPOSES AND LICENCE FEE

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Questions 92 - 111

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Witnesses: Mr Tony Collingwood and Professor Jeanette Steemers

Ms Sophie Chalk and Mr Adrian Greer

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Members present

Lord Best (Chairman)
 Earl of Arran
 Baroness Benjamin
 Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury
 Lord Goodlad
 Lord Hart of Chilton
 Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill
 Baroness Jay of Paddington
 Baroness Kidron
 Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury

Examination of Witnesses

Mr Tony Collingwood, creator, writer and director of children's animated series, and **Professor Jeanette Steemers**, Professor of Media and Communications, University of Westminster

Q92 The Chairman: Welcome to our two witnesses, Tony Collingwood and Professor Jeanette Steemers. Thank you both very much for joining us. We are being broadcast, so everything you say is firmly on the record. I would like you to introduce yourselves very briefly, say where you are coming from and how you fit in with our inquiry today. This will be for the record; we already have your biographical details, but people watching will not. We will go with you first, Professor Steemers.

Professor Steemers: My name is Jeanette Steemers and I work at the University of Westminster where I am co-director of research. I have a special interest in the children's television industry both as a researcher and having worked in the industry many years ago for a company called Hit Entertainment.

Mr Collingwood: My name is Tony Collingwood. I have been running an animation company for the last 25 years, making children's TV series for most of the major channels in the UK, so obviously I have an interest in how the BBC and the whole of the broadcasting spectrum is working in the UK right now and how it can change in the future.

The Chairman: Thank you, and congratulations on "Dennis the Menace"!

Mr Collingwood: Thank you very much.

Q93 Earl of Arran: As you know, we live in an increasingly online world. What importance do you think children have when they have access to tablet computers and smartphones? Is it really valid or necessary to promote and protect children's programming?

Mr Collingwood: I think you are right; children are nomadic in how they view their content these days across a number of devices, but still the content has to be there. It has to be created for them to watch, and even more so as content is seen around the world on certain channels and broadcast around the world, homogenising content. So it is not so much for the UK population and UK children, mirroring their culture and lives, and the kinds of shows that they like to watch. So even though they are watching content on different platforms, it needs to be created by somebody like the BBC or entities which still have broadcast channels

where the majority of children are still watching content. Even though they are looking at stuff on other platforms, it is still very much television that is the first port of call for children.

Professor Steemers: Yes, I think children's broadcasting still matters. It is important that British children can still enjoy high-quality UK content and stories that reflect their experiences and their culture and society. It may be that three-quarters of children have access to tablets and I believe that a third of them own their own smartphones, but a significant minority do not. So there are issues around equality of access, but all homes have access to broadcast television and that is a key reason for protecting children's broadcasting, because it is a service that all children can access for free. It is true that children's television viewing on a TV set has gone down slightly from about two and a quarter hours in 2009 to just under two hours, but viewing spread across different devices is growing. Research done by Ofcom recently showed that children are watching a whopping three hours a day of audio-visual content, and much of that viewing is still broadcast television. So if you are looking at children aged six to 11, more than three-quarters of those three hours are TV programmes made for broadcast TV which they mainly watch live, but sometimes they watch later as recorded TV or on the iPlayer. Only 5%-6% is consumed on services such as Netflix. That is why it is still valid and necessary to promote and protect children's broadcasting: because children still watch a lot of children's programmes which are mainly originated and funded by UK broadcasters, even if they end up watching them on Netflix or YouTube.

Earl of Arran: You mentioned the importance of protection. Do you think that there is sufficient protection at the moment? I think that is critical.

Mr Collingwood: Protection in what sense?

Earl of Arran: The protection of programmes, so that children do not get abuse or any kind of irrelevance from them.

Mr Collingwood: Certainly the terrestrial broadcasters have compliance in place so that nothing would ever be broadcast that was not right for children. When it comes to the internet and the use of YouTube and other platforms, which are not as well regulated, there are problems. I believe that YouTube are now starting to ring-fence their children's content and I know the BBC with iPlayer is starting iKids, which again will be a place where parents can feel comfortable about having their children view content. So the wild west of the internet is gradually being tamed.

Professor Steemers: I concur with that. The BBC and the other public service commercial broadcasters have special rules; it is a safe place for children to go. Parents know when their children are watching CITV, CBeebies or CBBC, that it is safe content and that it is mainly British content. You cannot say the same thing for what you find on the internet.

Q94 Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: We know that the creative industries are a thriving and growing sector of the economy and that television, in particular the BBC, is crucial to this. How important is children's television and radio production in that?

Mr Collingwood: It is incredibly important—and all the more important for the fact that it seems that some of the PSBs are pulling away financially from providing content for children and leaving the BBC as nearly the sole supplier of original content created in the UK. It is incredibly important for us to make sure that the PSBs and the BBC maintain a constant flow

of new product for children in the UK that reflects their lives because, otherwise—and it is starting to happen already—so much content is coming from America. It is wonderful content, but to have that override anything that is happening in the UK is a dangerous situation where we may find that our children or the next generation are pronouncing the last letter of the alphabet “zee” because they are seeing so much from America and not enough from the UK. So it is incredibly important that we maintain a steady flow of content for our children created from the UK.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: Even when I was growing up—and I am not going to cite the programmes because it will give away my age—a lot of the children’s programmes I watched came from America; there always have been.

Mr Collingwood: Yes, there always have been and always will be—and they are wonderful shows. It is just the amount and the percentage of those shows.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: The balance has changed, has it?

Mr Collingwood: The balance has changed and it is changing. It is not changing on the BBC, but it is changing through American channels having satellite operations in the UK, primarily showing American shows to our children. You would not dream of seeing that percentage of UK shows shown to American children.

Q95 Baroness Benjamin: At the request of the Secretary of State, Ofcom is conducting a review of the operation of the television production sector, of which the BBC is a large part. In fact, Ofcom said that 97% of money spent on children’s productions is spent by the BBC. He has therefore asked Ofcom to consider whether regulation can help promote content investment, particularly in at-risk genres, which are defined as current affairs, art, religion and children’s, taking into account that the Government have made provisions for the children’s tax credit. Do you believe that children’s programming is an at-risk genre?

Mr Collingwood: It is absolutely at risk outside the BBC. We have reached the point, as you mentioned, where the majority of the spend in the UK on children’s television is coming from the BBC. Even though the PSBs have within their mandate a requirement to provide various amounts of content for children, certainly Channel 4 has backed away. Milkshake is still producing children’s shows, but not with the spend it used to. ITV has a children’s channel, CITV, which has stopped producing shows for pre-schoolers and is now only producing shows for older children; so we are left purely with the BBC as the guy who bangs on doors and tries to get shows financed. If I am trying to create a brand new show which has a point of difference, the BBC is the only place I can go to get escape velocity from the United Kingdom to have a show that we own and we can make. It is a shame, but that is the case and the reality of the situation right now.

Contestable funds have been mooted to bring the PSBs back to the table, and the first port of call for that obviously is the BBC’s licence fee. I think it is a little crazy to ask the BBC to pay for a failure in another part of the industry. To find a contestable fund from elsewhere to pay or to bring the PSBs back to the table, one would have to ask the PSBs how much money they would need to seduce them back. Is that right—should we be asking a broadcaster if the decision to make children’s shows should be based solely on their bottom-line figures and whether they can make a profit out of them?

Baroness Benjamin: Do you think it is an at-risk genre?

Professor Steemers: Yes, I think it is an at-risk genre. I think that children's programming is not at risk in terms of the sheer amount of programming that is broadcast. The commercial broadcasters, such as Disney and Nickelodeon, broadcast about 136,000 hours a year in 2013, but in 2013 only 111 hours were first-run originations, and their originations are declining. It is a very profitable business for them because it involves large-scale imports and 90% of what they show is repeats, because companies know that they have a new audience every two or three years as children get older and move on, so they can constantly recycle content. What is at risk, as Tony said, is the commissioning of original UK content, particularly drama, factual and entertainment programmes. The BBC spends what it can, but ITV's spending or commercial PSB spending has really dropped to about £3 million a year, so the issue is less about the BBC failing to deliver and more about how to incentivise the commercial sector.

You talked about regulatory interventions; the Government have put some emphasis on contestable funding, but I think there are not really that many regulatory interventions which would help the situation at the moment, and the biggest hurdle is really a lack of political will to look at alternative solutions other than top-slicing the licence fee. The Government have introduced tax reliefs which have been incredibly helpful; they were introduced last year but they have not really led to a massive increase in funding by the broadcasters. What they tend to do is bring money in which allows for international productions; they attract money into the UK.

The best regulatory intervention in the past was quotas; they were excellent for ITV. ITV was supposed to broadcast 10 hours a week of children's television, but that got waylaid in the Communications Act 2003 and there is no appetite to bring that back by Ofcom, by the Government or even by ITV. You could look at levies on broadcasters, on cinema tickets or on video-on-demand, but I do not see much political will to introduce that. You could introduce retransmission fees from distribution platforms so that that money could be fed into children's, but, again, you would need legislation to do that. Some people have raised Lottery funds as a way to finance television, but, again, I think that would be difficult. There is little appetite for other forms of public subsidy.

We have to emphasise that around the world the most effective regulatory intervention for diverse, high-quality, home-grown children's productions has always been public service broadcasting, and around the world you can say that without regulatory interventions such as quotas, commercial broadcasters will not invest in domestic children's productions because these are very small audiences without buying power and it is much cheaper to buy in.

Baroness Benjamin: Tony, do you think there are any regulatory interventions which could help the situation?

Mr Collingwood: I cannot think of any other than to take the PSBs back into tier 2. They were moved into tier 3 whereby their remit was very soft as to what they had to provide for children. Tier 2 forced them to commit to a certain number of hours and have a certain spend on children's, although I believe that Ofcom is not able to get them to do that any more—nor does it say that it is worth its while to do it.

Professor Steemers: In the past, Ofcom had some leverage over them because, if you satisfied those quotas, you had privileges such as space on the electronic programme guides

or you have access to the spectrum. Spectrum is not so valuable to broadcasters these days, so doing children's television is just a cost and they do not really want to invest in it.

Baroness Benjamin: You paint a bleak picture here. Is it the role of the BBC to go above and beyond the statutory regulation?

Mr Collingwood: I think that is linked to the amount of money it has to do it. I think that it does a fantastic job in children's television, not only in the amount that it spends on the shows but also the infrastructure it has within, to help us as independent producers develop our shows. The kitemark of the BBC Commission is incredibly valuable around the world, in a very risk-averse industry, when it comes to raising the rest of the finance, so I believe that the BBC's children's department is doing a great job. All it can do to any greater degree would be finance-based: to commission more shows or put a higher percentage of the finance into certain shows to enable shows that may be a little bit more daring and risk-taking to happen.

Professor Steemers: I think that the BBC does need to invest more in its children's services if it wants to maintain its existing services and if it wants to do new things. On the internet, it has just announced this new iPlay online initiative. The problem is that, if you start ring-fencing funding, that decision needs to be made by the BBC. There are some within the industry who talk about ring-fencing, but when the Government starts to do that, you start to get a little bit worried. One area the BBC might look at is the commissioning process. At the moment, as I understand it, independent producers get about 40% of commissions and in-house gets about 60%. Under the BBC Studios initiative, all production is going to be opened up to competition, except certain areas, including BBC Children's and BBC Sport.

There could be discussion about opening up commissioning because, if you want competition, you want competition for quality programmes. The danger is that the industry is already under a lot of stress and, if the BBC does not commission material from independent producers, then in a few years' time those independent producers might not be there or the BBC will only be able to commission from a very small pool of big companies, such as Fremantle or DHX, rather than small independent producers who have done amazing things; Ragdoll, which produced "Teletubbies", was a small independent producer. That is what I worry about; that you will lose that capacity from smaller producers. So I think the BBC could do something about loosening up some of those commissioning quotas. I am not entirely convinced that BBC Children needs that much protection of its in-house capacity.

Q96 Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill: The Committee has heard evidence from the Children's Media Foundation, which expressed concern about the level of commitment to older children over the age of 10. Does the BBC recognise and serve audiences of children over 10 and, in particular, what assessment have you made of the BBC's programming and content for children over the age of 10? Is this an area that you think should go out to more independent production?

Professor Steemers: I think the BBC serves children up to the age of 12 really well. It has got two brands, the CBeebies brand for little kids and the CBBC brand for older kids. The problem is with the CBBC brand. When you look at the schedules, there is amazing stuff there for children up to 10, but it really struggles for older children, aged 10 to 12, because children want to watch up. Two-thirds of children's viewing is actually of normal mainstream programming; they like to watch "X Factor" and such like. I think the BBC knows this. It

knows that the transition is really difficult and it is because you are locked into these channels. I think the iPlay initiative could help it to target different age groups because that is a more on-demand service: it means that you do not have those channel or brand distinctions and that would allow it to cater for older children.

The other thing which might help with older children is if they extend CBBC's hours from 7 pm to 9 pm because that is the time when 10 to 12 year-olds are really watching. Above the age of 12, it is really difficult. The BBC does not have a specific commitment to children over 12, and this is an age when they are watching a lot more adult television: apparently 20% of their viewing is of YouTube. I think that other players in public service broadcasting fail to do their job, notably Channel 4, which is supposed to cater for children aged 14 to 17 and has not met that commitment. I think that the BBC is in a position now where it can do something and, if it has the funds to invest in iPlay, which is the online initiative, there are opportunities for catering in a much more focused way for children aged 10 and upwards.

Mr Collingwood: I think it does an awful lot for older children that the other channels in the UK do not do—for example, live action drama. If you are writing live action drama for children, it is the BBC or nobody, apart from maybe one or two exceptions; that is something CBBC does incredibly well. When my children reach 10 to 12, I cannot tell them where to sit and what to watch in any respect, so I do not see why they should continue to watch any channel religiously; it is not part of human nature, and of course they are going to move on.

Baroness Jay of Paddington: I would like to follow up the last point that Tony Collingwood made. I would like to press you a little more on your definitions of children in the context of television viewing because, as you say, over 12, you cannot tell your children what to view. In a grandmotherly way I might like to say that they were children up to 17, but that is pretty unrealistic in today's world. In addition, reverting to the question that Lord Arran asked first of all about the access of those older children, however you want to define them, to other methods of communication, presumably that becomes much more widespread once you are reaching the point of iPhones, et cetera. I am not sure that I completely accept your point about how a significant minority does not have those accesses. I am sure it does not, but also that tends to be the significant minority who do not watch BBC programmes, for example, anyway. So I have two questions. Are you being a little old-fashioned in your definitions of childhood and realistically apportioning them to children's services? Secondly, what is your view about older children and other methods of communication and receiving input or output, whatever you want to call it?

Mr Collingwood: CBeebies is an environment where, when you have very small children, you are happy to sit there and leave them to it.

Baroness Jay of Paddington: Yes, I think we should go beyond the under-5s.

Mr Collingwood: I think children do identify with certain channels as they grow up. For a particular sense of humour, boys will start watching Cartoon Network and they will wear a badge of a character on the Cartoon Network not just because they like that show but it is their sense of humour and they want to identify with it. I think the same is true with some of the CBBC shows, where it tends to be more about the drama and actually seeing something that reflects their lives. Beyond that, I do not think you can say that a child will particularly gravitate to a particular channel—but that is where the iKids initiative that Children's BBC is bringing in is a very good idea, because it stops ghettoising their viewing into one channel. It says, "You are growing up, you are 10, you are watching these shows, but you can now move

on to things that you will find interesting: the more adult shows, the more intelligent shows, the ones that are going to push you mentally to discover new things and yet still keep you within the BBC world". In that respect, it is very astute and clever for the BBC to be pushing that non-linear approach to allow children to choose the programmes that they want and to use their childhood as a launch pad to other BBC shows.

Professor Steemers: I think that there is also a distinction between how TV defines childhood and how we might define it in a legal sense or a United Nations sense.

Baroness Jay of Paddington: A cultural sense.

Professor Steemers: The industry as a whole internationally does not really cater for children above the age of 12. When you are pitching animation shows, it does not go beyond that, so it is difficult to get beyond that. As far as older children and young people are concerned, I think the BBC does other things: it has Radio 1, family programming, "Doctor Who", "Sherlock", "The Voice" and all those kinds of things. Some people might argue that there is not enough there specifically for young people, but they are really difficult to cater for and, when you get down to it, it is also a money problem: is there enough money to cater for this small audience? If you talk to young people, as I talk to my students, and if you ask them for their favourite programme at the moment, many of them put their hands up and say, "'Game of Thrones'". Now, I would not say that that is a programme that is entirely suitable for children. Those are the sorts of things that children in their late teens and upwards are looking for, but I should reiterate as well that they are still watching a lot of hours of live television.

Q97 Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: Perhaps I can come in here. I understand that Channel 4's remit is actually to be responsible for content for the older children that Baroness Jay was talking about. Whether or not it provides it is not really for here, but considering that that exists, is it something that the BBC should accept as the responsibility of another channel?

Professor Steemers: I think it should be doing something different. I think a lot of the things that Channel 4 does, which is a much more edgy channel, and some of the stuff that it does for younger people—

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: I think it is 12 to 16s.

Professor Steemers: I think that some of that stuff would not be acceptable on the BBC; it would find it difficult to do that. So if the BBC is going to do something for that audience, I think it has to be different from Channel 4.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: I accept that, but does that mean that the BBC can be less responsible?

Professor Steemers: No. We also have to remember that Channel 4 just does TV and online. The BBC caters for younger people in other ways; it has Radio 1, it has quite a strong online presence, it has a presence in education as well with things like Bitesize; it does things which are different and complementary to Channel 4.

Mr Collingwood: I agree that there is no one character that defines a 20 year-old. I think the BBC does a good job, especially with podcasts and things where kids of that age are not necessarily watching TV but can access the content that was on BBC3 and see some quite innovative comedy that comes out of the BBC, which fulfils that age group.

Professor Steemers: Music as well. If you think about the Glastonbury broadcasts and how many young people they engage, that is really fulfilling its public service remit.

Q98 Lord Goodlad: What is your view is of the appropriateness or otherwise of BBC Children's programme purposes as a foundation for the assessment of the performance by the BBC in children's programming?

Mr Collingwood: We have covered some of it in that the BBC's point of difference is that it is creating shows for the children of the United Kingdom, as opposed to shows that are bought in or made for no children in particular; the BBC does appear to be providing that across the majority of its children's content. I can see very few examples on CBeebies or CBBC where a show has simply been bought in from another country and does not actually touch the lives of the children in the UK. That is why these channels are as successful as they are. Parents understand that; they intuitively know that they are watching shows that are made for their children and not simply bought in for them. That is not to say, as I have said before, that those shows from abroad, from America, are not great shows, but the fact that we have the majority of the BBC's shows made for UK children is their major point of difference and continues to be a larger point of difference as the years go by compared to the other channels.

Professor Steemers: If you look at the purposes one by one, you can see that they are met. There are high levels of home-grown content, as Tony said, including fantastic dramas, like "Wolfblood", and that contributes to creativity and cultural excellence. There is a contribution to citizenship and civil society through "Newsround". Education and learning occur through the BBC's factual programmes for older children and through the integration of early-learning goals for CBeebies. The nation's regions and communities are reflected in content that reflects the diversity of the UK much more so than many other children's channels. The BBC brings the world to children through its news and through programmes which show children in other societies and, if you are looking at emerging communications, the BBC provides online content and apps for children; it really meets those purposes and will hopefully continue to do so.

Lord Goodlad: Staying with purposes and the remit that goes with them, it is part of the purpose remit for promoting education and learning that the BBC should promote and support formal educational goals for children and teenagers. It is a kind of formal statement rather than relating to all those different purposes in different ways. We understand that the BBC Trust has suggested changing this purpose remit, so that in future it would be to support learning and education for people of all ages. It sounds like a watering down, although that might not be the intention: a move away from particular education slots on TV and more generally towards all the content having to play a role in helping people to learn. It seems to generalise away from that rather specific purpose about promoting and supporting formal educational goals for children and teenagers. Are we seeing a shift here by this recommendation of the BBC Trust?

Professor Steemers: I have seen what the BBC Trust have put in and I think that there is more to that statement. It adds to that by saying it wants to provide specialist education content to help support learning for children and teenagers, so I think that suggests that the more formal aspects of BBC Learning for children, such as Bitesize study guides, are going to continue. I think there is an additional bit to that BBC Trust statement which does not come through. It is quite important to draw a distinction between education and learning here.

BBC Learning is really the place for education and formal learning. It is not the place where children go to be entertained, but where they go to do their GCSE revision. BBC Children's is the place for informal learning, where learning takes place by stealth, because children do not really want or expect school-like content from BBC Children's. If it is for older children, that means informal learning about culture and citizenship, and a good example of that might be "Horrible Histories", which is incredibly entertaining, but also children learn from it. If you are looking at pre-schoolers, all the BBC's pre-school shows incorporate early-learning goals and use specialist advisers, so you might have something like a craft show, like "Mister Maker", or a science show, like "Nina and the Neurons". Even something like "The Clangers" can be educational because it has stories that reflect little problems that children might have. I think the key thing is to make that distinction between education and learning, and BBC Children's is about learning.

Mr Collingwood: Certainly for the last 10 years, for all the shows that we have made for pre-schoolers we have had an educational adviser on the budget for every single episode, looking at the scripts, looking at what our educational goal is for that episode, and how that is infused into the very structure of the TV series we are making. There is always a reason for making that show beyond entertaining children. We are doing one at the moment for CBeebies where, again, there is a very clear cognitive learning guide, and that is happening on the show for every episode with "Learn" at the top of the scripts, explaining to our broadcasters what that episode is there to do. That also helps guide the worksheets that follow, the pieces you can get on the website, the games you can play which follow through whatever the learning strategy is for that TV series. So it is very much embedded and ingrained in the shows that we make for pre-schoolers and, I have to say, not just for the BBC but shows we have made for other broadcasters, too. For pre-school, because you are dealing with children at an early age, you take a responsibility for that and want to know what they are going to walk away from the screen with. You hope it is a positive message or a small piece of knowledge that they take away with them, so it is inherent in how we make the shows now. It is not a mandate from above, it is just the best way of writing and making shows for children.

The Chairman: Fascinating.

Q99 Baroness Kidron: You have both referred to iPlay, the new service. What do you think the opportunities and the risks are with it?

Mr Collingwood: The risk is that CBBC and CBeebies slowly slide into iPlay and become an online entity and not a broadcaster; that is the biggest risk. Obviously the BBC has said that that will not be the case, but in 10 years' time it will be interesting to see where we are. The other risk is the amount of money and where the money comes from to pay for this service; whether it will come out of the children's budget. Hopefully it will not come from money that would go on the screen on new shows. I generally think it is a good idea. Children are migrating online, as we said earlier, and it is good for the BBC to be there and to use it as a portal for older shows as children grow up. It all makes perfect sense as long as it complements the channels and does not become the channels. If it does, I know that the budgets will go down again and it will simply bring in content or use older content to keep it going. So for the foreseeable future, channels are the right thing for children because they come with budgets, they get the eyes on the TV set, and it will become a self-fulfilling

prophecy if we start to move TV shows online while children are still watching them on television.

Professor Steemers: It ticks a lot of the right boxes in terms of a safe, UK-run public service that is an advertising-free response to online offerings such as YouTube. There is value in the BBC being able to take a risk, particularly if the benefits from iPlay benefit others, and it could turn into another example of how the BBC can drive changes in audience behaviour that could benefit the wider industry, just as iPlayer did and as CBeebies and CBBC benefited the wider industry. As I said earlier, it could work for older children because it removes those barriers between demographic groups, particularly that difficult transition between CBeebies and CBBC. I hear what Tony is saying about the problems with channels, and I think the BBC and other broadcasters find themselves in a difficult situation at the moment because we are in this transition phase, so they will have to put funding into both iPlay and channels because they do not really know yet where the audiences are going. In 20 or 30 years' time, we may not have channels; I cannot forecast that.

Baroness Kidron: That was actually my question—that this emphasis on channels is actually an emphasis about funding. If we are all migrating to this new digital world, your concern is more about quality access. Can you just extrapolate on that for me?

Professor Steemers: It is where the money goes and, because the BBC has not really provided us with those answers in the plans as they are set out at the moment, we do not know where the money is going to come from to fund iPlay. We do not know whether it is going to extract money from its existing channel budgets. I know it has set aside, I think, £150 million—but that is across everything, not just Children's. The other problem is that the BBC is facing cuts and it has to pay for pensioners' licence fees, so where is it going to find the money for new things like iPlay? It has to come from somewhere. I would say that we do not know yet. The BBC needs to provide answers—it has not really provided them yet—on where the funding is going to come from and the detail, the commissioning structures for iPlay, whether there are going to be quotas so the independent producers can bid for things. It is not just about TV programmes; it is also about interactive games and other applications. We do not have the full picture yet, but the BBC is in a difficult position. It has to, as it says, ride two horses.

Baroness Kidron: Do you think that the BBC is doing a good job? I hear what you say about needing more information, but, in the digital world, kids are going to be the first people to jump that barrier—the first of the BBC citizens, if you like.

Professor Steemers: I think it is doing a good job, as far as it can, as a public service broadcaster. I think there are certain limitations on it and what it can do. Children will go on YouTube or on social network sites where they do things that are not permissible in a public service environment; there are all kinds of things about moderation. If you have iPlay, there are questions about privacy and data collection, about users and moderation and all that. I have no doubt that the BBC will take that enormously seriously, but those sorts of things cost money and they need planning. I agree that it is a good direction to go in, but I think we do need a little more detail on it, about how it plans to introduce it and how it intends to run it.

Q100 Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: I want to draw a bit more on the point which came earlier in our discussion about the way in which the BBC is by far the biggest provider of

children's television. Mr Collingwood was rather sceptical, I thought, about the idea of a contestable fund for which other people might bid, so can I just explore that a little? First of all, as you indicated, it is not immediately obvious where the money would come from for that fund, but, if you had to make some suggestions, what ideas do you have? And if there were such a fund, do you think it would be an effective way of widening the provision of children's programming across the board? If I can ask you a wider question about the BBC in particular, are there any areas of children's programming which you feel the BBC is not providing, and areas where it could actually provide programmes in addition to what it currently does?

Mr Collingwood: There are a few questions there. I would never say no to a fund to make children's TV shows, but the question really is: what would that fund do to stimulate and change the environment to bring other channels to produce more children's shows? In a way, it is a simplistic answer to say, "Let's get a pot of money and then they'll all come running and make new shows". The question is: would Channel 4 actually have a block where it began to run children's shows regardless of how much money we gave it or gave the producers from the pot, and would CITV? How much money would a commercial broadcaster need to supplement children's programming for it to feel that it was worth its while to do it? I have no idea. Really, you should be asking Channel 4, ITV and Channel 5, "What would it take for a fund to make you change your policy?" In a sense, you should not really be asking me; it is for the channels and, if they could give a clearer answer as to what would bring them back to the table, then that is how the fund should be directed or formed as to where the money should come from. I have talked to PACT about this a number of times and, apart from the knee-jerk reaction to raid the BBC to pay for other broadcasters' problems—and I do not believe the Lottery funds television or film—would outside investors come to the table in some kind of quasi-EIS fund to make money out of this? That is kind of happening anyway in small pots of venture capital on a show-by-show basis. Who would manage a fund? Who would decide who got the money? At least with a tax break, it is based on the industry deciding it wants a show and then the tax break is triggered by a show that is going to be made anyway, as opposed to a fund where it becomes a little more difficult to decide who should be getting that money and it is not linked in any way to the financial structure or return—unless it was. The short answer is, I have absolutely no idea how to raise money for a fund or whether it would bring the PSBs back to the table. It is too complicated a question for a simple answer.

Professor Steemers: I think there are bigger issues as well that are not just about children's television. As phrased in the Green Paper, contestable funding really is about a funding cut for the BBC, and I think it is questionable whether the Government should decide how they should cut that funding or ring-fence it, or decide how an independent BBC should spend those licence fee funds. I completely concur with Tony; it is bad news because it will be top-sliced from existing and declining licence fee funding and that is going to mean less money for everyone. Even if you commission that programming, it still needs to be promoted and distributed. There are issues around defining who deserves that funding as public service content, the cost of administering such a fund and ensuring that it delivers value for money. Some have suggested the commercial public service broadcasters—they never mention online providers—will match funds, but I am not sure that they will because they only put £3 million into children's production last year. There are questions about whether the licence fee payer should really be subsidising profitable commercial public service broadcasters who

do not produce children's television because they see no commercial market for it. I do not think top-slicing is a long-term solution for children's funding. I think it will weaken the BBC overall—not just in Children's—and, by extension, its ability to expand children's content into new platforms. So I think it is a very, very bad move.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: That is a very clear answer, thank you. In terms of the kind of content, are there any areas in children's programming where there are gaps which might be filled?

Professor Steemers: I think this has already been addressed. If we are looking at children's provision as a whole, I think there is a gap for 10 to 12 year-olds and I think that is not just with the BBC but across the whole spectrum. I think the BBC does a fantastic job with sub-genres of children's programming that other broadcasters will not touch; it does news, documentaries about children in all kinds of circumstances and it does fantastic dramas that really speak to children. You do not see that in the rest of the broadcasting environment: you do not see it online and you do not see it on Netflix, so it is crucial that the BBC continues.

Baroness Benjamin: Do you think that Children's BBC output reflects the diverse society and world that today's children live in?

Professor Steemers: I would have to do a very detailed content analysis to be really accurate. Under the last service review that the BBC Trust did, I know that some questions were raised about how it represents children in the north and that it was not so popular in multichannel homes. I think that it really tries to address that. We have to remember also that it does not have a bottomless pit of money to fund it, so I think that it does a good job. Obviously it can always do better, and I am sure that it would admit that, but, compared with some of the other channels, it really is much more diverse. Look at dramas like "The Dumping Ground" or "Wolfblood" or the amazing documentaries, some of which won international Emmys—that is how good they were.

Mr Collingwood: Certainly when I am pitching to the BBC, diversity is one of the first things mentioned. When they look at shows I bring in they say, "Is there diversity in this? How are you reflecting British society? How is it working?" They are there to help you as well. There are actually people on board within the BBC who say, "Hey, have you thought of doing this, that or the other?" as the show is actually still being formed and created. So it is not just a case of them saying, "Have you ticked the right boxes?", they are actually proactive in helping and informing us of ways of making these shows work. So I believe that it is doing a great job.

Q101 Lord Hart of Chilton: There has been much talk of cuts, budgetary constraints and the review of the purposes. You have obviously expressed concern about funding: how deep is your concern that funding will be questioned for children's programmes?

Mr Collingwood: Because the BBC is pretty much the only place I can go to with certain types of shows, it means it is fairly black and white as to whether I get a show made or not. It is dependent upon whether the BBC is still a viable entity with enough funds to spread across an entire independent children's community in the UK, so I am very worried that any impact on the funding of children's shows by the BBC will mean that companies go out of business. It is as simple as that and it has never been quite as stark as it is at the moment. I have been reading that 95% of the spend in the UK on children is coming from the BBC.

Baroness Benjamin: It is 97%.

Mr Collingwood: I cannot even believe that, but it is true, otherwise it would not be said in this room. That really does frighten me, the fact that that amount is coming from the Beeb.

Professor Steemers: I think that the funding situation would be exacerbated if they introduced contestable funding. I think that the BBC could spend more on children's programming, but obviously that is a decision it has to make. The situation has been exacerbated by the recent licence fee settlement. Locating more money from declining BBC income is a really big challenge because it requires BBC Children's and the independent producers it works with to seek more funding from things like co-production finance or pre-sales overseas and international tax breaks. That is fantastic and allows some really good programmes to be made, but it tends to benefit animation with international appeal and/or remakes of past classics, such as "Tellytubbies" or "Dangermouse", which are easier to finance in the global market, rather than the things that are really important such as home-grown drama and factual programming that is distinctively British. We need to support and protect the BBC's funding. Like Tony, I would love to see another fund out there for children's programming, but I do not see much political will to make that happen. I would like to remind you that one of my colleagues, Professor Barwise, said that every £1 cut from BBC TV funding decreases investment in first-run originations by 50p. That leads to less consumer choice and less value for money. It is a disaster for independent producers but it is even worse for children's producers because they have nowhere else to go.

Lord Hart of Chilton: If there were to be further cuts in the area of children's programming, what effect do you think that that would have on the development of children in the United Kingdom?

Mr Collingwood: Well, children were developing in the United Kingdom long before television was invented, so I think that we will be fine, but it will be the fact that American shows will take over. It is just about any area of entertainment. Do you want to see your children's lives reflected in the programming they are watching that mirrors their culture? That would go—as well as my job!

Professor Steemers: I think it is also important to see the BBC for what it does. It fulfils its public service purposes for adults, but you can see it in microcosm for children. If you have less BBC, any cuts to those initiatives are going to jeopardise those initiatives that contribute to social cohesion in respect of citizenship and civil society, because children learn about the world from things like "Newsround". They would meet fewer programmes that speak to their experiences of living in the UK, there would be fewer opportunities for learning and there would be no "Horrible Histories". It is a media-saturated world and children have lots of choices, but it is really important that they have access to a trusted space that is safe, with high-quality content that is designed to appeal to them. I agree with Tony that without the BBC, that space is largely dominated by US-aimed channels and largely unregulated social media which, while they do very important things as well, are not making British content or appealing specifically to UK children.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: Something Tony said has prompted me to ask whether we export our children's programmes. You talk about the effect of American programmes on our children, but presumably it is important—and this leads on to our next session—that we have children's programmes that we export abroad and are consequently British.

Mr Collingwood: We do. All our shows are exported around the world to fund them.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: Successfully?

Mr Collingwood: Successfully, yes. And, as I said, it is not the case that we do not want American shows; it is the percentage of American shows against UK content. UK shows are seen abroad, around Europe and America. We have talked about the BBC being pretty much the only game in town, to an extent, but still one has to remember that, if I am making a new show for the BBC, the maximum the BBC would pay would probably be 24% of the budget, so I am still raising the rest. The tax break gives me another 20%, so there I am up to maybe 45%—so 65% of the money is coming from elsewhere and, by making the show in the UK, when I raise that money, that is inward investment; from the very start of the show money coming to the UK to pay for UK jobs. That is where the tax break has worked. Getting a commission from the BBC does not mean that we can just sit back and say, “Oh good, the BBC has bought it”. I went to art college, but the most creative part of my job is raising money, I am afraid.

The Chairman: Well, that brings us to the end of our session. Thank you both very much. You were both incredibly clear, convincing and helpful, so thank you very much indeed for your evidence to us.

You were both incredibly clear, convincing and helpful, so thank you very much indeed for your evidence to us.

Examination of Witnesses

Ms Sophie Chalk, Head of campaigns, International Broadcasting Trust, and **Mr Adrian Greer**, Chief Operating Officer, British Council

Q102 The Chairman: A warm welcome to Adrian Greer and Sophie Chalk. Thank you very much for joining us for the second half of our evidence session this afternoon. As you know, we are looking at the public purposes, scale, scope and finance of the BBC and charter renewal. You will be on the record—we are being broadcast—and would you like to start by introducing yourselves? Sophie, if you would go first: tell us about yourself and where you are coming from.

Ms Chalk: I am Sophie Chalk. I am director of campaigns for IBT, the International Broadcasting Trust. We are primarily concerned about the UK population having access to high-quality content which tells them about the wider world. I have been working with IBT for 10 years now. Previously, I was a producer/director in television and radio, so I had my hands dirty, producing mostly international content. It is something I feel very passionately about. I am here with my international broadcasting hat on.

Mr Greer: I am Adrian Greer, the chief operating officer of the British Council. May I make a couple of remarks about the context?

The Chairman: Please.

Mr Greer: It might be useful to say a bit about the mission of the British Council, which is context for our interest in the BBC and the BBC World Service. The mission of the British Council is the same as when we received our Royal Charter in 1940, which is to create a friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and the wider world.

Our belief is, for that to be effective, it needs two preconditions: one is our ability to make a positive contribution to the countries in which we operate, but also, equally, our ability to create value for the UK's security, prosperity and influence. Lords committees before have talked about soft power, and Joseph Nye calls it that, and the principles that underpin soft power are very relevant to the discussion of the BBC and its future funding. The BBC is not the only player but it is one of the important players in creating the UK's soft power all round the world.

The Chairman: Thank you both very much. We begin with Lord Hart.

Q103 Lord Hart of Chilton: We know that purpose 5 is bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK. Can I start this session by asking you how important a role does the BBC play in global culture and education? Do you think the BBC should be playing what is essentially a diplomatic role in fulfilling that purpose?

Mr Greer: First of all, it is very important that it is a two-way street. My opening remarks indicated that I feel you have to create a value for the UK but, equally, you have to create value for the countries in which you are operating. I want to quote from a document that the British Council printed, a piece of research by YouGov and Ipsos MORI, *Influence and Attraction*. One of the things it recommends is that you need to “pay equal attention to”—I am quoting here—“inward and outward facing cultural relations because that will help develop a culturally literate and globally aware population”. Some of the images we have seen recently on our TV screens of international events, thinking of Tunisia and the child on the beach in Greece, have had huge impact on public opinion. If we are true to our principles that we feel we can influence the world through media in our projection then it is equally important to be coherent and consistent, that we also believe we should be bringing the world to our screens as well. On diplomacy, if you mean diplomacy as in the projection of diplomatic relations, I do not think that is the sphere of the BBC at all, but I think it is an important mechanism for creating conditions within which effective diplomatic relations can be effected around the world. From that perspective, I think it has a role to play, but it is not a transactional role, it is not something you deploy; it is something you do through effective use of media in a transparent and professional way.

Ms Chalk: I tend to agree that it should be two-way. As this purpose is bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK, we are looking at bringing the UK to the world, if we are looking at the global role the BBC plays. IBT's members are international NGOs; many of those agencies work in developing countries and in crises, so the World Service plays a hugely important role, as well as the other services within BBC global news. The BBC world news can be picked up all over the world. Primarily, the most important aspect of delivery is the impartial and accurate news service it provides. You have to remember that only one in six people in the world live in societies where there is a free media, which is a startling figure. In that instance, the BBC provides a hugely important service. Quality media contributes to well-informed populations generally, which strengthens accountability and strengthens democracy. Global poverty has been falling in the last 15 years, and education has been a really important aspect and driver in that and the World Service plays a very important role there as well as the lifeline programming. When you have an earthquake in Nepal, or, yesterday, in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the BBC will be active there in providing a hugely important service. Kofi Annan described the World Service as Britain's greatest gift to

the world, and I think so many of us are hugely proud of that and would not want to see that undermined in this current charter review process.

Mr Greer: If I could add one comment—I am doing a promotion for British Council documents here—in another document, *Trust Pays*, one of the areas looked at was the conditions under which greater trust was created around the world, and knowledge of the BBC World Service was one of those areas. Someone who had knowledge of or had listened to the BBC World Service was 27% more likely to trust the UK than people who had not. Whether there is a causal link they do not say, but clearly there is that connection.

Ms Chalk: Talking about the diplomatic role the BBC could be forced to play, I would not suggest that is a good thing. Having spoken to people in the past who work within the World Service, if you are broadcasting in a country where the Government is hostile to the BBC because they do not like its coverage, it is very, very easy for that Government to say: “The BBC World Service is obviously just an arm of the UK Government”. The more removed the World Service and the BBC is from being an arm of Government the better, in my opinion, otherwise integrity and trust in the BBC will be undermined.

Mr Greer: I would very strongly agree with that view. We can see around the world that other countries are heavily investing in alternative media channels. I am thinking particularly of China and Russia but also Iran and right across the Arab world. With the exception of Al Jazeera, there is not a great deal of trust in some of those media outlets precisely because they are seen as Government controlled and Government owned.

The Chairman: Do we have an idea of the order of magnitude of Russia Today’s spend compared with ours?

Ms Chalk: According to the figures I could find, CCTV is \$2.6 billion a year and RT, Russia Today, is \$362 million, which is tiny in comparison. CCTV is a far bigger operation.

The Chairman: China.

Mr Greer: The last figure I heard was that total investment in CCTV was \$4 billion up to about 2012.

Lord Hart of Chilton: Understandably, you have been promoting the British Council, but can you distinguish the role that you and the BBC play? I assume you are quite separate, and although you use the BBC material as part of your mission, you are not wedded at the hip, as it were.

Mr Greer: Far from it. We see ourselves as quite independent of the BBC. We have three or four examples of areas where we have collaborated which I might give later, if the appropriate moment arises, but we are certainly not joined at the hip; we are very separate organisations. If you mean BBC Worldwide there are all sorts of restrictions on our ability to use those materials; for licence purposes the BBC World Service is complementary to us but we are not integrated in any way.

Lord Hart of Chilton: Do you not only use the BBC for your own purposes but also criticise them and give them feedback on what you think they are doing wrong?

Mr Greer: We used to have a grouping called the Public Diplomacy Board where we would sit together and talk about areas of mutual interest. At the moment, that only tends to be done at chief executive level; it is not a systematic process. We were fairly concerned when

the BBC World Service cut back on some of its language programmes around the world; that would probably be the best example I could give.

Q104 Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: I agree that the BBC does a pretty good job in bringing the UK to the world and bringing the world to the UK. How could it do it even better than it is now? I know, in terms of money, it could always do more but are there things that it could do, if it had the resources, which it is not doing now, or is it so good that whatever they do is actually as good as it gets?

Mr Greer: The figures are good. The figures I have here from the BBC are that the World Service reaches 210 million, which still makes it the largest broadcaster in the world, but only just, because Al Jazeera is very close behind. The one area I would highlight where it could do more is the one I have already referred to: more language programmes in other languages.

Ms Chalk: My expertise is mostly in UK output. I am a very keen supporter of the World Service. In terms of UK output, I think the delivery of the global purpose—bringing the world to the UK—is done through two areas: one is news and current affairs, and the other is through other forms of programming. Currently, the purpose remit demands that the BBC should fulfil this through both news and all other genre—drama, entertainment, children’s, all very important. I think, within the BBC, this responsibility is sometimes viewed as a responsibility for the World Service and it is pushed on to the World Service, but it is very much seen as a news and current affairs area of content. There is a limitation to that, because if you only watch news and current affairs, you would never leave your front door let alone travel outside the UK. I think there should be more content in popular genres. The “Ten O’Clock News” and the “Six O’Clock News” get 4.8 million viewers, or thereabouts, but “The Great British Bake Off” had 13 million viewers live. Would it not be great if we could find some more entertaining mainstream programmes that would engage people with the wider world? Attenborough does that, for example. Natural history should continue; programmes that effectively bring the wider world to us which are very engaging, and which the whole family can watch together. There could be more children’s content, to be honest; we are so reliant on “Newsround” and “Blue Peter”, which are both fabulous. It is difficult to know how to produce children’s content for pre-schoolers that tells them about the wider world, and the BBC has tried to do that and has improved its output in the last five years. We want the next generation to grow up multicultural and to understand the culture they are living in both within the UK and the wider world.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: You would want more programmes outside news and current affairs, to bring the world to the UK, and which have popular appeal?

Ms Chalk: Yes.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: Have you any ideas in particular?

Ms Chalk: I have many. As a producer I used to make these types of programmes so I feel very passionately about this. I think BBC Two has been doing a fabulous job in the last five years; it has really improved its output. Quite frankly, I love anything that Simon Reeve presents. “From Venice to Istanbul” recently was a fabulous food programme, where you really got into the lives of the people on that route in Greece and in Turkey. It was great; it was really good viewing and I know so many people across different age groups who watched it, so I think it appeals across the board. You have the more serious documentaries;

you have Hans Rosling. Which other broadcaster would put out a programme—which I would encourage you all to watch—about whether population growth is a problem? It is completely gripping when you start watching it, but it is very counterintuitive; you would not expect to be engaged by that but it is an absolutely fascinating discussion. I think the BBC does a huge amount; 50% of our non-news international content has been consistently provided by the BBC in the last 10 years, which is significant, and should not be underestimated. However, I think the BBC could always try to be more distinctive. We want to be surprised, and one of the difficulties with content about the wider world is the stereotypes we have in our minds. For instance, if you ask somebody, “What is the first thing that pops into your mind when you say ‘Brazil’? Is it football?”, you will see that we all have stereotypes about other countries, possibly many of which we have never visited. I think the BBC should constantly try to break those stereotypes and broaden our horizons. That has to be the role of the BBC.

Mr Greer: With regard to outward projection, the area where the BBC World Service could do more is on English language programmes. We collaborate with them on “Word on the Street” which now goes to 50 countries and, we think, has reached around 50 million people. That is a once-a-week, half-hour programme. We now estimate the English language is going to be spoken by 2 billion people by 2020; it is far and away our greatest asset as a country, and the ability to use a trusted media outlet like the BBC to project that further is very powerful.

Q105 Baroness Jay of Paddington: On the basis of what you have said in response to Lord Sherbourne I think I can guess your immediate response to my question. How do you react to the fact that the trust is suggesting that purpose 5 be amended to say—let me quote it exactly—“To reflect the UK to the world”, which is not the two-way street you have been discussing? If one were to be cynical about this, you could say that was simply window dressing for cutting back on news bureaux overseas; that is always an area where there is huge retrenchment and huge concern by BBC staff, so that you do not get that reflection inwards because you do not get the news directed from wherever it may be. What do you think is the purpose behind this proposal to change the remit?

Ms Chalk: This proposal is slightly puzzling. We welcome the current global purpose being split into two, because whenever I talk to anybody, whether it is somebody at the BBC or elsewhere, you say: “Bring the world to the UK and the UK to the world”, and they always think you are talking about the World Service. From our point of view, to be really clear about the BBC’s mission it is better to split the two. They are also two completely different commissioning teams within the BBC.

Baroness Jay of Paddington: This is apparently leaving one out.

Ms Chalk: No, because the new proposed purpose 1 is to provide news and information which help everyone understand the world around them.

Baroness Jay of Paddington: It is not quite the same.

Ms Chalk: Exactly. It has weakened it. We are pleased they have split them. I would not suggest the new wording is good. For example, it limits the World Service to “provide high-quality news coverage”. The World Service does so much more than that. If you look at the schedule for today—I looked at it this morning because I thought I had better be sure of

myself—oh my goodness, there are loads of half-hour documentaries, discussion programmes and analysis.

Baroness Jay of Paddington: It is not just the World Service; it is mainstream, as you say.

Ms Chalk: It is not news.

Baroness Jay of Paddington: It is the “Ten O’Clock News” and the “Six O’Clock News”, with correspondents who are working for the BBC, reflecting inwards not outwards.

Ms Chalk: The purpose the trust is proposing—the UK aspect of the global purpose—is now their proposed revised first purpose. We had some discussion with them about that because they originally proposed that it should just say news and current affairs, and now they have included factual programmes. We pointed out that if you only have news and current affairs, we are all going to be terrified of the wider world. You need other programmes, as I have just suggested. We are quite happy with that, but I think “factual programmes” has to include children’s; it has to include more popular factual; it has to include the wider world, in general terms, and we do not want this commitment to present the world to UK audiences to be watered down.

Baroness Jay of Paddington: I understand your point about it being split in two, but you are not concerned about the one which will now say: “To reflect the UK to the world”?

Ms Chalk: Yes; I would propose the wording for that should be “providing content for international audiences”, because I think that is the gift to the world. The BBC should not be a marketing tool for the UK globally. I do not believe that. As a secondary benefit there is the soft power that the BBC brings to the UK, but that should be a secondary benefit; the primary benefit should be that it is broadcasting content to the world.

Mr Greer: Within the British Council we would be very concerned if there were any watering down of that purpose, of bringing the world into the UK. There are two things here: one is the atmospherics of it, of being seen to become more insular and not actually caring and not having a purpose which reflects that; the second is the feeling that, unless there is a greater understanding of the world, then the biggest barrier to our creating effective relations around the world is the attitude of people in the UK. If the UK does not want to engage, if it does not know or is not aware of what is going on around the world, it is simply not going to be an effective two-way engagement. The BBC is a very important part of that.

Q106 Baroness Benjamin: I would like to ask a question about the measurement of performance against purpose and service licence. Are you happy with the way the BBC’s performance is measured and evaluated through the purpose system, especially its performance in terms of bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK?

Mr Greer: I am not a specialist in the BBC’s performance measures but I think the British Council is, in many ways, in a similar situation because we also have a Royal Charter; we also have purposes and measure ourselves, both quantitatively and qualitatively. That is a model which works very effectively because the quantitative gives you an idea of scale, and the BBC does that very well. The qualitative that is reflected through the purpose is critically important too, because if you are only driven by numbers and by income, you begin to distort the purpose very quickly. It is a model that, on the face of it, works well for us and for the BBC, but I am not a specialist.

Ms Chalk: I have been involved in many of the service reviews that the BBC Trust has conducted since it began in 2007. I am going to say we found the trust very responsive and we think this system is quite effective; we believe it is much more effective than the previous system. However, there are limitations. I know you had representatives from the trust before the Committee last week and they were talking about the new framework they are looking at to measure impact. I welcome that, because I think currently the trust measures success in the delivery of the mission of the BBC through perceptions, as does Ofcom. They ask: how important is this purpose and how well is the BBC delivering it? This is what Ofcom does in its PSB reviews. That is a qualitative judgement; that is not quantitative. One improvement the BBC could make, I think, is in quantitative measurement of delivery of the mission. IBT, since 1989, has been carrying out a piece of quantitative research, adding up the number of hours of original non-news international content that is broadcast. It is a very blunt tool but it provides one measure of delivery. If you look at the number of hours BBC2 delivered in 2010 and the number of hours it delivered last year, it has risen significantly; it dropped down in 2010. It is useful to see how many hours are being broadcast of, let us say, bringing the world to the UK, outside news. How many international programmes were there, breaking it down? Nobody has that research. Channel 4 carries out that research; it is the only PSB that does since the introduction of the Digital Economy Act in 2010. Channel 4 does a quantitative analysis of the number of hours it produces of international content, and we think the BBC should do that as well. It should not really be down to a small charity like ours to carry out that analysis in order to go to the BBC and say: “Do you realise you did 100 hours less programming last year than you did the four years before?” They may say: “No, we did not actually know”, because they do not count it. That is one area they could improve.

Baroness Benjamin: Some people who come from abroad and now live in this country often feel that the kinds of imagery they see of their homelands are mostly negative ones rather than positive ones. Do you think that is something which should be looked at, as far as the way the outside world is reflected in our world?

Ms Chalk: Absolutely. This is one of the difficulties around examining purely news and current affairs; it tends to present disasters, famine, death and corruption—there is not much that appears in current affairs or news that does not fall into those categories. It is easy to stereotype as well. There has been much research since Live Aid, which is now decades ago, I know. There was a good piece of research done early in the 2000s called *The Live Aid Legacy*, and people still perceived Africa as being poor, corrupt and bereft. Those images of Africa remained long after the event, partly because of the success of Live Aid, and many programmes reinforce those images. It is very easy to do and we need to guard against it. “The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency” was a series on the BBC—it has not done very much drama in recent years, which we complain about endlessly; the poor BBC, we are always complaining—which was fabulous, and that was set in Botswana. We did some focus group research, qualitative research, and the response amongst our focus group participants was: “That is not really what Botswana is like.” We said: “Actually, it is what Botswana is like. It was filmed there; it was made there; the actors were local.” “But it cannot be like that. That is not Africa. That looks unreal”. Absolutely, we would support more of that type of programming.

Mr Greer: News media, by its nature, is always going to focus on the negative. Every country I have lived in has complained that UK news reflected back into the country is relentlessly

negative and has about half a dozen negative stereotypes which they trot out time and time again. I do not think it is the role of anyone to use the BBC as propaganda; we would want to avoid that at all costs, but what I think people cry out for is a little bit of honesty and intelligent analysis of real issues in those countries and reflecting the truth of the situation. I think that would be extremely powerful.

Q107 Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill: I take what you say, that it should not be propaganda, but the Government's Green Paper states: "Whether the present scale and scope is right for the current and future media environment, and delivers services that audiences want and are willing to pay for, are key questions for this Charter Review". I am interested in whether a reduction in the BBC's scope would have an impact on its global purpose and presence? Why would this matter?

Mr Greer: I think it is important to distinguish between BBC Worldwide and the BBC World Service. Certainly within BBC Worldwide it would be a commercial concern and it would probably make its own way in the world. All our research shows that culture, arts and heritage are the most important aspects that people look at when judging the soft power attractiveness of a country. Any reduction in our reflection of that overseas and that honest reflection of the UK would have an impact. More specifically in terms of the BBC World Service, we would be very concerned if the reach that I spoke about earlier was diminished in any way. The word I have not used yet, I think, is "trust". There is extraordinary trust in the BBC World Service around the world. What is fascinating, over the last year or so, is the growth in figures in Russia; a tripling of the numbers in Ukraine in the last year and growth to 11.4 million of audiences in Iran. These are countries you do not associate with huge amounts of trust in the UK or its institutions. I have lived and worked in Russia and take a very strong interest in it, and there is a huge amount of activity going on there that is, let us say, muddying the waters in this environment. The BBC World Service is a crucial mechanism for keeping a straight record out there, and I would be very concerned indeed by anything that damaged our ability to send an open message.

Ms Chalk: There are two areas in UK content: news and other content. If the scope of the BBC is reduced, by that I mean the range and diversity of programming, and size is related to funding, I think you will end up with news where the key stories dominate. There will be key stories of the day and you will have a smaller range of stories. Non-news international content is more expensive to produce than domestic, so that is likely to go as well. Current affairs, which has already been mentioned today and which is a genre at risk, has reduced as a percentage of non-news content from 6% in 2007 down to 3%. It has halved. We will have less current affairs, we will have less kids and less international, if the scope is reduced, and we are therefore really concerned about the cuts and the suggestion that the BBC should reduce its scope.

Mr Greer: One more thing I would like to say in relation to that is the sheer volume of media activity around the world now and the speed at which events move; most recently, obviously, the Arab Spring and its aftermath illustrate that if you are not there on the ground, if you are not getting that story out very quickly, then others are going to fill that space.

Ms Chalk: Increasingly, agencies are being used, so you end up with a homogenisation of news. The research we have done shows that you literally end up with the same pictures of an event—a bomb blast, let us say, occurring in the Middle East—and those same pictures

are put out on all broadcasters, and they are voiced over back here in the UK, quite often from agency copy. You end up not with real journalism, in my mind; you do not have the local expertise the BBC provides at the moment. It has reduced its presence abroad significantly in recent years, its number of bureaux and staff, but nonetheless they have a local understanding and an expertise that is unparalleled. The other thing is you do not end up with the off-agenda stories. We did some interesting research in 2010. We looked at which countries were covered, in the run-up to the Arab Spring. There was a one-and-a-half-hour programme on mainstream TV—I think it was Jamie Oliver doing a cookery programme in Morocco—but apart from that there was nothing on any of the countries that featured in the Arab Spring. There was nothing on any of the main broadcasters in that year in the run-up to the Arab Spring. There were no documentaries on Egypt; there was nothing on Tunisia. That is just spectacular, and I would suggest that is partly as a result of a reduction in the number of staff locally.

Mr Greer: It is only fairly recently that we developed the Arabic Service, and any reduction in the ability to communicate 24 hours a day through the Arabic Service would, I think, be very short-sighted at the moment.

Q108 Baroness Kidron: My question is specifically to you, Adrian, in that I would love you to give the Committee a couple of words about the British Council's own remit about English language around the world, and then explain to us the role, formally or informally, that BBC content plays in delivering that role. Of particular interest to me is the type of content; is it beyond the World Service that we have referred to so many times, into drama, into children's and so on?

Mr Greer: We have a very specific remit in the British Council to promote the English language abroad. That is part of our purpose, and we do that in a number of ways: by teaching English directly; by working with ministries of education around the world; by developing online materials and by working with a range of partners. One of the things that has been fascinating in the last five years or so is the huge explosion of interest in teaching English to school-age children as early as Year 1. It is a revolution going around the world; almost every country that does not have English as its first language is adopting earlier and earlier teaching of English. We are trying to respond to that as quickly and effectively as we can. The BBC World Service—I mentioned "Word on the Street"—has also developed a number of free-to-air activities. I think it can do an awful lot more. BBC Worldwide is, I understand, developing some materials which will support the development of an English curriculum in China, but there is a great deal more it could be doing either through its free-to-air remit with us or through commercial means as well.

Baroness Kidron: Would you tell us the scale of the English language teaching that you are involved in, briefly? It is quite phenomenal, is it not?

Mr Greer: We have around—I will have to correct this afterwards—60 teaching centres around the world. We teach English in at least 50 countries of the world directly, but the work we are doing with English ministries around the world is probably even bigger than that.

Baroness Kidron: I understand you are saying the BBC could do more, but I think it would be of interest to us to know the scale of its contribution to that.

Mr Greer: Their contribution is a relatively small one. We see ourselves as the main deliverer of that purpose of promoting the English language abroad. The BBC is a very valued partner in parts of that but it is relatively small.

Baroness Kidron: You use its material?

Mr Greer: Yes. "Word on the Street", a number of those apps, and some of the commercial materials would be the main ones. We also work with the BBC on a number of specific projects. For example, last year in the run-up to the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow we had a programme, Commonwealth Class, which involved some online learning materials. We reached 100,000 schools around the world and provided materials for teachers and students, including the learning of English.

Q109 Lord Goodlad: You have talked a lot about radio overseas. Do you think there is a move from the audience listening to radio broadcasts to television and the internet? If the answer to that question is yes, what are the implications?

Ms Chalk: I will start on this. My expertise is mostly in the UK but I am aware of the World Service. Without ignoring the huge radio presence, there has been a shift in recent years away from radio to other platforms. For example, it has been surprisingly successful in the Middle East. It has the Arabic and Persian Services with audiences of 32 million and 14 million respectively. They are the main BBC platforms in the Middle East. You have to look at specific countries in terms of output. Across Africa radio is still hugely important. Africa accounts for half of World Service listeners, and in rural areas of Africa radio is still hugely important. We are keen that those users of the BBC should not be neglected in the rush for everyone to go online. Obviously, mobile technology is huge. The World Service is doing a good job of creating new content. Is the content changing? Yes. It now has "BBC Minute" which goes out over radio stations and online, which is a one-minute news bulletin aimed at younger audiences. It is trying to engage younger audiences; its reach is improving via its online and television presence. It is good to see it innovating, which is very positive, but I do not think we should neglect those rural communities where having a radio means you can listen to content free at the point of use. You do not have to have a mobile phone, which has to be charged up where there may not be electricity or you may have to take it to a charging shop where you pay to charge it up, and you have to pay for air time. I do not think that is a great way forward.

Mr Greer: They could use our wind-up radios that we have provided across Africa.

Ms Chalk: Yes.

Mr Greer: A couple of things to add to that, if I may. TV has overtaken radio for the first time, as I understand it. The figures I have in front of me are 148 million watching TV, 133 million listening to radio, and internet users up to 55 million. I think it is not either/or; this is reflecting the way in which audiences consume output rather than the importance of those different channels. Things put out originally on TV will then appear later on YouTube; similarly, things on radio. I would very much agree with Sophie that radio still has a really crucial role to play, particularly in rural areas. Just a reflection of that from our own work: we have a radio programme that we developed 13 to 14 years ago called "The Selector", which presents the best of popular music. It is a programme which takes the best of popular music and DJs into a 90-minute programme, and that has grown and grown over that period. We saw it as a very small project and we thought it would be a niche thing; we are finding

we are already reaching 3 million listeners, and it is going up and up. I think it is not quite as simple as saying radio will decline and then it will be replaced by something else.

Q110 Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: We heard evidence earlier on from Dr Suárez Candel, of the European Broadcasting Union. He spoke to us about the role of the BBC in the global public service system. I want to quote something he said. He said: “The BBC sets the standard. It is regarded by most of our members as a setter of trends and a setter of best practice”. What assessment have you made of the role of the BBC in this regard in its promotion of PSB?

Mr Greer: We have not made a specific assessment of that. I would agree with the sentiment; that sounds right to me. I think the BBC has shown it has the ability to innovate, develop and be a model for public sector broadcasting around the world in the years to come, and the trust and the values of the UK which that reflects are very beneficial to us. In a number of areas, the UK’s institutions are still seen as world leaders, whether it is our museums and galleries, the BBC—indeed the British Council, I would like to say—and our legal and governance institutions as well. I would be very concerned if we lost that ability to influence standards in public sector broadcasting around the world. I would agree with the sentiment.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: I know it is not something we are seeing a great deal of at the moment, but as new democracies emerge, in your role at the British Council, have you seen countries gravitating towards a BBC-type system?

Mr Greer: To be honest, usually at that stage of development the people who are governing those countries are a bit nervous about models which are completely independent of government control. My honest answer would be not hugely, in fact.

Ms Chalk: From my research, in many developing countries the former state broadcasters are currently in a transitional period. They are not fully independent. Quite often they are funded by the Government. As you say, Governments are not very keen on having fully independent broadcasters, possibly sometimes even including our own. I think the BBC acts as a benchmark. It provides a system. We have radio, television and all these different outputs. That is one model that could be followed. It is accountable. It is transparent. Impartiality and accuracy are very important values, and these are all held in high esteem. If you travel anywhere outside the UK you do not have to go very far to realise how lucky we are. If you speak to anybody abroad about the current situation with the Charter Review they think: “Why are you reviewing the charter? What on earth are you up to? Why review it? You are so lucky.”. It is not just the BBC; it is our whole broadcasting ecology, where we have this mixed ecology with competition. That is where the BBC can be quite beneficial, I would say, in a global PSB system; it makes markets more dynamic. If you have the BBC there, other news organisations have to be sharper. You cannot have a camera that is not focused properly in the newsroom, which is quite often the case in some places. You need to get your standards up or no one is going to watch you. In any market where the BBC is present, it will instil a really basic level of production quality. It has a huge impact, and yes, we should be grateful for what we have.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: I suppose I should not have said “Government”; I should have said “citizens” and how it affects the industries which are emerging.

Mr Greer: Yes, and more broadly we do see that around the world; we do see citizen groups, private radio programmes absolutely trying to emulate that independence. Many governments do too, but they seldom have the confidence to pay the full price of that genuine independence; when push comes to shove they tend to prefer control.

Q111 The Chairman: We have been asking everybody, usually as the final question, what they feel about the licence fee, the settlement in July, and what any potential cuts might do to the particular aspects of the BBC that each of our witnesses is concerned with. I ask you that same question.

Mr Greer: I suppose my concern would be the one I have already reflected: the loss of a reliable, trustworthy and trusted institution presenting news 24 hours a day in a crowded space where people will still go and seek it out. That would be a huge concern to me.

Ms Chalk: For me it was the process of the licence fee settlement in July this year, and that of 2010 as well, which was particularly worrying because I think the BBC has been seen as, effectively, an arm of government. When the Government was looking to reduce its deficit it has looked to the BBC to see if the BBC can help fund that. The BBC is not a department of state, and I think we need to be very cautious about its status in future. Its independence needs to be protected. I recognise it is not the BBC licence fee but a lot of people in the street think it is. You pay your licence fee and you think that means not only do you get access to the BBC but you get access to all the other channels on Freeview through your aerial. It is not just the BBC it pays for but the BBC as the driver of public service broadcasting in the UK, and that is funded by the licence fee. If you use the licence fee to fund broadband rollout, which may be a great benefit to the whole country, nonetheless it undermines that direct link. I am concerned about that. If the licence fee is set at its current level, £145.50, 10% to 20% cuts are predicted, but the Secretary of State last night made it quite clear on a BBC programme that actually the licence fee has not yet been set, so that remains to be seen. We would not want to see any more top-slicing of the licence fee in this current charter review process, and the cuts will have an impact on international news; they will have an impact on the UK's democracy and they will have an impact on our insularity. The tendency in economic crises, in times of difficulty, is to batten down the hatches and hide, and I think we need as much engagement with the wider world as possible: a proper engagement emotionally with the current refugee crisis, for example. We have global problems and they need global solutions, and the UK needs to co-operate with other countries and work with other countries. We are not going to be able to do that if we do not understand the cultures and traditions of those other countries. I fear that a scaling down of the BBC and its current licence fee settlement is going to be very detrimental to British society as a whole.

Mr Greer: We noted Lord Hall's comment, which we welcome very strongly, that the BBC World Service would be protected and possibly even expanded. If that happens we would be delighted. The other thing we often underestimate when we are sitting in the UK, but it really hits you very strongly when you are sitting in other countries, is the extent to which other countries scrutinise what we do and make judgments on the basis of that. They really do notice if you cut back on the way in which you project yourself overseas, and then you are left to the happenstance of whatever is picked up by the local press, which is usually going to be a negative story about that country.

The Chairman: Thank you both very much for answering all our questions. Is there anything you have left unsaid which should be said?

Mr Greer: The only thing I would add is that international influence is not the preserve of any one institution; it is a whole tapestry of different things that go to make up relationships and perceptions of the UK. My view, having lived and worked overseas for over 30 years, is that the BBC is a really crucial element in that mix for us and we would tamper with it at our peril.

Ms Chalk: Yes, I agree.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, both of you; this was really helpful.