

Written evidence submitted by John Perry

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The country is in the midst of a public health pandemic and facing significant economic challenges - in this context it seems a strange time to be reviewing public service broadcasting - I trust that this timing is not an attempt to restrict debate - I would urge the committee to reflect on this in its recommendations and ensure government in making future decisions allows for inclusive, far reaching and open country wide discussion

High value independent, open and accessible public service broadcasting, radio, television and on-line, remains central to democracy and a cornerstone of cultural life - uniting not fragmenting the country and celebrating diversity; both differences and similarities

High value public service broadcasting provides an honest and reliable insight into the world and counters the mis-information and skewed opinion provided through much of on-line digital media - somewhat counter-intuitively broadly retaining the current model of public service broadcasting in this country seems even more important in the coming decades

High value public broadcasting informs and educates and help ensure all individuals and groups are included - this enriches individuals and supports active democracy

Public service broadcasting through the BBC and Channel 4, and Welsh and Scottish language provision etc., is a core asset to the country
The BBC in particular is an institution which we can be hugely proud of - its range and diversity is a societal building block - it would be unusual if everyone found all BBC content to their tastes, Radio 1 is not Radio 4 and not everyone will want to watch MasterChef; nevertheless it is its breadth which contributes to its success, and helps cement this country, and which needs protecting and supporting

It is notable that government appears increasingly wary of independent media scrutiny, frequently declining to take part in open discussion with broadcasters and looking to manage press conferences whilst using friendly print media or on-line leaks to push a 'news angle' - this is a threat to democracy and public engagement - a robust public service broadcasting offer is an important aspect of democratic protection, for us all

The committee will have seen the risks to democracy in other countries where those in power can dis-invite journalists from press conferences and talk only to friendly media organisations - strong public service broadcasting helps protect us all ... sometimes those in power should be careful what they wish for

I would suggest that broadly the committee should support the current model of public service broadcasting maintaining and further enhancing fair and sustainable provision - there is no place for market forces

Retain the TV licence fee as a means of ensuring free from government funding - I would suggest that government should again take responsibility for funding any senior citizen reductions etc.; to suggest that this public policy decision is a BBC responsibility is disingenuous - subscription approaches are not inclusive - it may be that rebranding the licence fee along the lines of a household utility retains the principle of a licence fee but updates this - with a household utility approach on-line platforms could be also freely accessible as part of the 'offer' alongside TV and radio access etc. updating the public service remit

Use the review opportunity to ensure that the BBC management structure has an openly diverse make-up and includes public representation - similar structures should be built for Channel 4 etc. - this would help ensure diversity and an independent voice etc., and reassures those who see establishment bias etc.

Retain the BBC website - it is a beacon of on-line responsibility and a valuable education tool etc. - the provision of both information and cultural 'services' should be free from market forces - this does not prevent other service providers from operating but rather helps ensure that impartiality remains a building block of on-line digital provision

Ensure all public service broadcasting has a diversity of programming and presentation - this would help ensure inclusivity and connectivity between all areas of the country and 'national public service broadcasting - this in turn supports a strong democracy which helps us all

Happy to discuss further

John Perry