

BBC Trust 2015-16 work plan

The BBC Trust is the governing body of the BBC. Our job is to get the best out of the BBC for licence fee payers and to protect its independence.

We set the overall strategic direction for the BBC and make sure it fulfils its public purposes. We issue a service licence to every BBC service stating what we expect it to deliver and how much it can spend. We set the BBC's editorial guidelines and protect the BBC's independence. We monitor performance to ensure that the BBC provides value for money while staying true to its public purposes.

Every year the Trust publishes a work plan to provide an overview of our main projects.

This year's plan sets out the work that the Trust will lead in 2015-16. We will also separately publish the objectives that we have agreed with the BBC Executive for the coming year, and in our Annual Report in July we will assess BBC performance in 2014-15.¹

This work plan cannot include all the work the Trust does in any given year to consider any new proposals or initiatives from the BBC management, or to address complaints from members of the public and the wider media industry. However, details of all such work will be published at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/>

Charter Review

The process of BBC Charter Review is expected to begin after the general election. This is a major process that will lead to significant decisions about the future of the BBC beyond 2016.

The Government will ultimately make those decisions, but the Trust expects to play a material role in determining the BBC's future mission, scope and funding and governance. The BBC needs a strategy that will sustain it for the next ten years, and that makes it more responsive and more closely connected to its audience. We will help to develop that, in part by responding to whatever work and timetable the Government sets in train. But we will also look to ensure that the interests of licence fee payers are reflected in the outcome, by:

- Promoting the widest possible public debate about the BBC and its future. Running a major consultation exercise to allow the public and the industry to respond to the BBC management's plans and proposals for the future of the BBC; arranging public events to talk through the issues; instigating a major programme of qualitative and quantitative audience research.
- Testing the BBC's cost projections and savings plans to provide some objective input to any Government decision-making on the BBC's future funding.

¹ The BBC Executive will publish its own work plan separately, including a summary of the 2015-16 budget and the outline plans for each service (or 'statements of programme policy') that have been approved by the Trust.

Service Reviews

The Trust is required to review the performance of every BBC service at least once every five years. In the course of spring and summer 2015 we will complete and publish our current service reviews of:

- Music radio services: Radio 1, 1Xtra, Radio 2, 6Music, Radio 3 and Asian Network
- Speech radio services: Radio 4, 4Extra, 5live and 5live Sports Extra

We will complete the cycle of service reviews required under the current Charter through two final reviews, of:

- news and radio services for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: including Radio Scotland, Radio nan Gaidheal, Radio Wales, Radio Cymru and Radio Ulster/Foyle, as well as other news output made for and shown in those nations on TV or available online
- local radio and news services in England (including regional TV news and current affairs and local online news)

Editorial standards work

Ensuring the impartiality of the BBC is a key priority for the Trust; it is essential to its independence that the BBC retains the public's trust as an impartial purveyor of news and programming.

The BBC is required to deliver duly impartial news by the Royal Charter and Agreement and to treat controversial subjects with due impartiality. The Trust is committed to making sure that the BBC fulfils this obligation, partly by commissioning reviews of specific subject areas. The Trust will conduct a further impartiality review during 2015/16 and expects to announce the subject of this review in the next few months.

We will postpone our scheduled review of the BBC's editorial guidelines until after Charter Review is complete, in order to focus our resources on other work.

Value for Money work

It is the Trust's responsibility to ensure that every pound of the licence fee works as hard as possible. We do that in a number of ways, in particular by scrutinising major projects and investments; by commissioning our own independent reviews of value for money; and by acting on the reports that the National Audit Office produce.

The Trust's major focus on value for money in 2015-16 will be to test the BBC's future costs and savings plans through the Charter Review process.

In addition to the regular assurance work submitted to the Trust by the BBC Executive (for example on risks and major project delivery) the Trust will also fulfil existing commitments to:

- Complete a value for money review of how the BBC identifies and manages major risks.
- Check that the NAO's 2013 recommendations on severance payments have been fully implemented

NAO examinations of value for money at the BBC

The National Audit Office (NAO) have decided to conduct two value for money examinations at the BBC in 2015:

- Assuring major BBC programmes and projects: This study will assess the effectiveness of the revised assurance regime for BBC projects and programmes that the BBC introduced following its review of internal governance in 2013. It will assess the overall assurance regime and examine case studies of individual projects, including risk management, reporting processes and performance against time, cost and quality.
- BBC World Service: This review will examine the governance and accountabilities under the new funding arrangements; the financial management of the World Service (including progress in making efficiencies and sharing resources with BBC public service broadcasting) and the impact on performance of operational changes that the BBC has made to the World Service following the change in funding arrangements.

In each case, the NAO will provide reports to the Trust. The Trust will arrange for them to be published and put before Parliament, and will also consider what further work is required in response.

Public Value Test

In December 2014, the BBC Executive put proposals to the Trust to close BBC Three as a broadcast TV channel in autumn 2015. The Trust has begun a public value test for this proposal, along with associated changes to iPlayer, proposals for a BBC One +1 channel and for extending the hours of CBBC. That process will be completed in the first half of this year.

Distribution framework

The Trust will produce a new framework document that establishes the principles to govern the way it distributes its content on a range of new and existing platforms. Following the same approach that the Trust took to its recently-published commercial framework, this document will be issued in draft form for public consultation before it is finalised later in the year.

Separation between the BBC's public services and its commercial activities

The Trust has received a number of industry representations about a lack of transparency in the pricing arrangements that operate between the BBC's commercial businesses and the BBC public service. In 2015-16 we will therefore commission an independent review to test whether there is an appropriate degree of separation and rigour in the BBC's approach to transfer pricing, and we will publish its findings.

Content supply

The Trust is currently reviewing the arrangements for the supply of television and radio content and online services. The review will generate conclusions about how effectively existing regulatory arrangements are working (including the Windows of Creative Competition for television and radio) and will help to set key principles for any future change to those regulatory structures. In due course the Trust expects to put formal proposals to Government, as part of the Charter Review, about the best model for the next 10 years.

Dame Janet Smith Review

The Trust expects to publish Dame Janet Smith's review of the culture and practices of the BBC during the years that Jimmy Savile worked there.² It will also publish the BBC's response. The exact timing is a matter for the Review itself, which is independent of both the Trust and the BBC

² For more information about the review, see www.damejanetsmithreview.com/