

BBC Trust 2016 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 for 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 major pieces of work we will carry out in 2016. In the Annual Report and Accounts, published in July, we will assess the BBC performance in 2015-16.

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. Details of such work will be published at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/>

Charter Review

The process of BBC Charter Review is well under way. This is led by the UK Government, but we will continue to play a significant role in determining the BBC's future mission, scope and funding. Last year, following the publication of the Government's Green Paper, we ran a two-phase consultation to encourage the public give their view on the questions in that Green Paper and on the BBC's own plans for the future. We have also conducted an extensive programme of quantitative and qualitative research, as well as a number of public seminars across the UK, to ensure that the interests of licence fee payers are understood and represented during the Charter debate. We have published the results of our consultations and research.

During 2016 we will continue to carry out research, and engage with audiences to make sure that we can accurately represent their views to the Government. We will look to respond and engage with the Government's forthcoming White Paper constructively, and play an active role in the development of the new Charter and Agreement for BBC, which will need to replace the current one that ends on 31 December of this year.

Service reviews

The Trust is required to review the performance of every BBC service at least once every five years. In 2016 we will complete and publish our service 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)

This will complete the cycle of service reviews required under the current Charter.

We will continue to assess the performance of the BBC in delivering its services and will publish this assessment in the Annual Report and Accounts.

Editorial standards

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.

In 2016 we will publish the findings from our review of the BBC's reporting of statistics in its news and current affairs programming. This will include a report from the independent panel led by former UK National Statistician Dame Jil Matheson.

We will also publish the results of a follow-up project to our 2008 impartiality review into BBC network news and current affairs coverage of the four UK nations. This will be centred around content analysis carried out by Cardiff School of Journalism.

The scheduled review of the BBC's editorial guidelines will be postponed until the new Charter arrangements are in place.

Value for money

It is the Trust's responsibility to ensure that the BBC provides value for money for those who pay for the BBC. 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 produces.

We will publish the National Audit Office (NAO) reports into ***Assuring major BBC programmes and projects*** and ***BBC World Service***.

The NAO has decided to conduct two further value for money examinations at the BBC in 2016. The first review will examine whether the BBC displays strong financial and operational management of its workforce including freelancers and contractors. The second will examine the cost-effectiveness of licence fee collection.

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

Future arrangements for the supply of television and radio content and online services

Following our review last year of the arrangements for the supply of television and radio content and online services focussing on how effectively existing regulatory arrangements are working, we will submit advice to Government on the options set out in their paper on Charter review and will review more specific plans from the BBC Executive in relation to future supply arrangements for TV, radio and online content. If the Government were to agree in principle to allow for the BBC's proposal to establish BBC Studios as a new commercial venture in any new Charter, we would then begin a formal, detailed regulatory assessment of this proposal.

Review of transfer pricing

We will publish the findings from an independent review carried out for us by Ernst & Young (EY) which is examining the separation arrangements between the BBC's public and commercially funded services including in particular the approach to transfer pricing between the BBC's commercial business and the BBC public service.