

**B B C Trust**

**2012-13 work plan**

# About the BBC Trust

## Who are we?

The BBC Trust is the governing body of the BBC and consists of 12 Trustees. As Trustees, we are the guardians of the licence fee revenue and of the public interest in the BBC. We are supported by the Trust Unit, a team of professional BBC staff who report directly to us.

Within the BBC, the Trust is separate from the Executive Board which is led by the Director-General. The Executive Board is responsible for the operational delivery of the BBC's services and the direction of the BBC's editorial and creative output in line with the framework set by the Trust.

## What is our job?

Our job is to get the best out of the BBC for licence fee payers. We set the strategic objectives for the BBC and 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. This work plan describes our work in relation to these three key areas of responsibility.

It is also our responsibility as Trustees to appoint the BBC's Director-General and we will be running a recruitment process during the course of this year to find the BBC's next Director-General.

## How is the Trust accountable to licence fee payers?

The BBC Trust is directly accountable to licence fee payers; this is essential to maintaining the BBC's independence. We consult licence fee payers on important decisions, we conduct audience research and we use our network of Audience Councils in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to help keep us informed on the views of licence fee payers across the United Kingdom.

We aim to operate as transparently as possible because it is our duty to ensure that the BBC observes high standards of openness and transparency. The Trust publishes the evidence and research on which our decisions are based, the findings of all editorial appeal decisions, the outcomes of value for money and service licence reviews and the minutes of our monthly Trust meetings. The BBC's Annual Report and Accounts is laid before the UK Parliament.

## Why publish a work plan?

The main purpose of this work plan is to provide an overview of our work in the coming year for licence fee payers and the wider media industry. This work plan includes the work that we can plan for in advance. However, we also consider proposals from the Executive and handle appeals as they arise so it does not include every piece of work the Trust will undertake in 2012-13. For the latest information see our website [bbc.co.uk/bbctrust](http://bbc.co.uk/bbctrust)

The BBC Executive will publish its priorities and summary work plan in May 2012 after the budget has been considered by the Trust. That plan will include a summary of the BBC's budget, outline forward plans for each BBC service ('statements of programme policy'), and explain the work the BBC Executive will be doing to deliver its strategic priorities in 2012-13.

# Pursuing the BBC's strategic objectives

## **Our role**

*We set the strategy for the BBC and ensure that the BBC strives to meet all of its strategic objectives.*

The BBC's mission, as defined by its Royal Charter is to inform, educate and entertain and to deliver its six public purposes.

In 2010 the Trust set four strategic priorities to ensure the BBC remains focused on delivery of its mission and purposes between now and the end of the current Charter period in 2017. These objectives are to:

- Increase the distinctiveness and quality of BBC output
- Improve the value for money the BBC provides to licence fee payers
- Set new standards of openness and transparency
- Do more to serve all audiences

In 2012-13 the Trust's priority is to keep the BBC focused on delivering these objectives. Our plans in relation to each of the four strategic objectives are set out below.

## **Increase the distinctiveness and quality of BBC output**

The licence fee means the BBC needs to do more than any other broadcaster to make its output innovative and different from what is available elsewhere. Every BBC programme (or piece of online content) should have a distinctive BBC quality, displaying at least one of the following: high editorial standards, creative and editorial ambition and innovation, range and depth, UK-focused content and talent.

### **Audience research**

As part of our regular performance monitoring work we will undertake audience research to track both audience perceptions of 'creative and editorial ambition' and also quality measures for BBC services (for example Appreciation Index scores). We will publish our assessment of BBC performance in the Annual Report and on our website.

### **Service reviews**

Service reviews are a major programme of work by which we assess the performance of each BBC service against its remit and against our strategic priorities for the BBC.

Our service reviews of BBC Local Radio and the Asian Network will be completed this spring. We will be seeking to ensure that the future strategy for each service ensures that it offers value to audiences and plays a distinctive role in the BBC portfolio. Once completed, we will have formally reviewed each of the BBC's services.

In line with our Charter and Agreement duty, we will begin to review BBC services for the second time this Charter period. We will review BBC Online again in autumn 2012 and the BBC's output for children (CBBC and CBeebies) in early 2013.

Before beginning this second round of reviews we will be checking the service licence framework to ensure it is as simple and focussed as possible, as we promised. We will consult publicly on any changes we plan to make to the nature of service licences.

We will continue to follow up our past service licence reviews to ensure progress is made against agreed action points. As we aim to increase openness and transparency in our work, we will supplement our commentary on this monitoring in the Annual Report with more regular public reporting.

### **Window of Creative Competition**

The Window of Creative Competition (the WoCC) was introduced in 2007 to ensure that the best ideas are commissioned for audiences irrespective of who makes the programmes. The WoCC ensures a level playing field between the BBC and independent producers by setting aside a proportion of BBC commissions for independent producers. Under the BBC Agreement it is the Trust's responsibility to assess the WoCC biannually to ensure it is delivering a commissioning level playing-field. The Trust will undertake its third biannual review of the WoCC in autumn 2012.

## **Improve the value for money the BBC provides to licence fee payers**

The Trust has set a target for the BBC Executive to generate annual efficiency savings of 11 per cent by 2016-17 and our main focus this year will be to oversee the delivery of this target. An important aspect of our work will be monitoring performance alongside savings to ensure that the programme does not jeopardise the BBC delivering distinctive, high quality output for licence fee payers.

### **Our value for money work**

Our work this year includes:

- ensuring that the Executive has put in place the necessary financial control and monitoring procedures to manage the next stages of the savings programme;
- using the rolling programme of service reviews to assess value for money at a service level;
- ensuring the Executive delivers on our commitment to reduce further the number of senior managers at the BBC; and
- ensuring that BBC Worldwide operates in line with the commercial strategy set by the Trust.

### **National Audit Office value for money reviews**

Following the amendments made to the BBC Agreement in 2011, the National Audit Office (NAO) will select the areas of the BBC it wishes to investigate. This year the NAO intends to conduct two reviews. It plans to report to the Trust on the effectiveness of the BBC's financial management systems and on the BBC's move of a number of departments to Media City in Salford, including a review of progress against timetable and budget. The reports will be published in autumn and winter 2012 respectively.

## Set new standards of openness and transparency

One of the Trust's duties is to ensure that the BBC observes the highest standards of openness and transparency. This means not only being as open and transparent an organisation as we can, but also engaging in more direct communications with the rest of the industry.

Our work this year includes:

- meeting with media industry representatives in autumn 2012 as part of our commitment to involve the industry directly in the process of scrutinising and reporting on BBC performance;
- improving the Trust's website so that information is easier to find and the evidence on which we base our decisions is more clearly signposted;
- ensuring that the Executive publishes a budget and summary work plan in May 2012. The work plan will explain how money is spent on each service and the amount spent in particular areas of public interest; and
- continuing to encourage the Executive to be open and transparent in line with the BBC's objectives in this area.

## Do more to serve all audiences

The universal nature of the licence fee brings with it an obligation to try to deliver all the BBC's services and the same quality of service, to all parts of the audience. It also means improving the extent to which BBC services resonate with all the UK's nations, regions and communities and reflecting the devolved nature of the UK and the distinctive character of its constituent parts. Our audience advisory bodies throughout the UK (the Audience Councils) continue to press us to do more in both these areas.

This spring, alongside our conclusions on *Delivering Quality First* we will publish four statements, commissioned from the Executive, which will explain the BBC's strategy for each nation of the UK.

### Performance amongst different audience groups

We are very aware of the changes taking place within the UK population and the challenges this can raise for the BBC. Together with the Executive, we regularly consider the BBC's performance amongst different audience groups and consider ways in which the BBC's services need to evolve to serve diverse audiences better. We report on key outcomes of this work each year in the Annual Report.

### Distribution

We will continue to monitor access to BBC services through analogue and digital broadcast as well and via the internet with a view to ensuring the widest possible access and the most efficient use of radio spectrum. We will ensure that the conditions of approval set by the Trust for BBC participation in YouView are met when the venture launches this year.

### Equality and diversity

We will monitor delivery of the BBC's Diversity Strategy and report on the Executive's arrangements for promoting equality and diversity in the BBC's work force. We also have equality and diversity responsibilities in our own work. We will report on our work in this area alongside the Annual Report.

# Maintaining editorial standards

## Our role

*We aim to ensure the BBC has the highest editorial standards for its content and that its programmes live up to those standards. These are set out in the BBC's Editorial Guidelines which apply to everyone making programmes and other content for the BBC.*

## Impartiality

### Reviews

The Trust carries out regular reviews of the impartiality of BBC output. We previously reviewed the BBC's coverage of business issues (2007), the BBC's network news and current affairs coverage of the UK nations (2008) and the BBC's science output (2011).

In summer 2012 we are planning to publish the findings from our review of the BBC's coverage of the Arab Spring. The review will include a report by an independent author, content analysis, interviews with interested parties, and audience research.

We are also planning another impartiality review for 2012-13. Further details will be announced in the coming months.

### Seminars

One of the conclusions arising from our 2011 review of BBC governance was that the Trust should lead a series of seminars focused on impartiality to enable the Trustees to discuss current and emerging issues in parallel with the impartiality reviews of specific areas of BBC output. We will invite both BBC and external participants and will publish a summary.

We are planning a seminar on the BBC's economic reporting in summer 2012. It will include BBC's coverage of issues such as public spending, unemployment and growth. The objective of the seminar is to enable discussion of potential dilemmas and suggest some principles as to how the BBC can ensure news' coverage reflects the full range of views and voices and avoids giving undue weight to specific institutional perspectives. Further information will be published on our website when available.

## Complaints

This year will see the implementation of the revised Complaints Framework which we have been working towards in the past 12 months. The new framework will follow through the recommendation from the review of BBC governance that the complaints process should be faster, simpler and easier to understand. Within this new framework, the Trust expects complaints procedures to be clear, fair, efficient and timely. We will report on the implementation of the new framework in the Annual Report.

# Stewardship of the licence fee

## Our role

*The Trust is the guardian of licence fee revenue and the public interest in the BBC. We will oversee implementation of the new financial settlement and ensure that the governance and funding arrangements for the BBC's new obligations are in the best interests of licence fee payers.*

In October 2010 the BBC and the UK Government agreed a licence fee settlement. The licence fee will be frozen at £145.50 until 2017 and the BBC will take on five new funding obligations starting in 2013.

Last year we consulted licence fee payers on the BBC's proposed approach to meeting the constrained funding of the licence fee settlement. We published our interim findings and supporting evidence in January and will publish our final conclusions on *Delivering Quality First* proposals this spring.

This year the Trust will oversee the implementation of the new financial settlement and work to ensure that the governance and funding arrangements for the BBC's new obligations are in the best interests of licence fee payers.

Our work will include:

- BBC World Service: working on new governance arrangements for the oversight of the World Service once it is funded by the licence fee from 1 April 2014.
- BBC Monitoring: finalising arrangements with BBC Monitoring stakeholders to define the governance arrangements for once it is funded by the licence fee from 1 April 2013.
- S4C Partnership: finalising governance arrangements for the partnership with S4C which will be funded by the licence fee from 1 April 2013. We will also consult publicly this year on the BBC's proposed operating agreement for S4C.
- Local Television: finalising detailed arrangements with the Secretary of State covering the BBC's support for local television once it is funded by the licence fee from 1 April 2013.
- Broadband: finalising terms and conditions for the use of licence fee funding for broadband infrastructure and services once they are funded by the licence fee from 1 April 2013. These will be agreed with the Secretary of State before 31 December 2012.

More information about the licence fee settlement including about the governance and funding arrangements is available on our website [bbc.co.uk/bbctrust](http://bbc.co.uk/bbctrust)

# Involving licence fee payers and stakeholders

## Our role

*Our role is to get the best out of the BBC for licence fee payers. To inform our decision making we undertake audience research and seek the views of licence fee payers and stakeholders through public consultations, stakeholder engagements and the work of our Audience Councils.*

## Public consultations

We run consultations to make better informed decisions and ensure your views are heard. These views help shape the decisions we take about the BBC's services and the priorities we set BBC management. For the most up-to-date information on our consultations please visit our website [bbc.co.uk/bbctrust](http://bbc.co.uk/bbctrust)

## Stakeholder engagement

As part of our programme of work we seek the views of relevant industry and professional stakeholders to ensure that the Trust understands the interests of the wider media industry and the potential impact of our decisions.

## Audience Councils

The Audience Councils are established by the Charter as the Trust's advisory bodies. They provide a direct link between the Trust and audiences across the UK.

There is an Audience Council for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, each chaired by their respective National Trustee and consisting of audience members drawn from the diverse communities that make up each nation. At the beginning of each year the Audience Councils consider jointly the BBC's priorities for the coming year. Their 2012-13 priorities are published in this work plan.

## Get in touch

If you want to contact us about any aspect of our work then please get in touch. We welcome your feedback on whether this plan is useful and what else should be included.

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[bbc.co.uk/bbctrust](http://bbc.co.uk/bbctrust)

If you want to make a complaint, have a query about your TV licence, or want to comment on BBC output or find out more about the BBC's services we suggest that in the first instance you contact the BBC Executive rather than the Trust. All the different ways you can contact the BBC are listed at [bbc.co.uk/feedback](http://bbc.co.uk/feedback)



# Audience Councils: Priorities for 2012-13

## **Our role**

*The Trust supports an Audience Council in each of the nations of the UK. The Councils are advisory bodies that give us a view on how the BBC is performing in different parts of the country, from the perspective of licence fee payers. The priorities listed here are issues of particular concern to the Audience Councils. We will work to ensure that these issues are addressed throughout our work this year.*

## **Maintaining a focus on quality journalism**

All four of the Audience Councils have welcomed the Trust's commitment to high quality journalism, and the fact that it is one of the five editorial priorities in *Putting Quality First*. Councils tell us that audiences appreciate the improvements that BBC News have made to label more accurately the relevance of stories to the constituent nations of the UK. However, Councils believe that there is still room for more comparative stories highlighting different approaches to public policy across the UK. Councils would like the Trust to ensure that news coverage continues to meet the changing needs of audiences in the nations and English regions. This will be an issue we continue to explore with the Director-General.

## **Continuing to focus on serving all audiences**

The Audience Councils have placed a particular priority on ensuring that the BBC is able to serve all licence fee payers with programmes and services relevant to them. The Councils reminded the Trust that even in difficult financial times the BBC should aim to ensure that the needs of diverse audiences can still be met, and quality maintained. As we monitor the implementation of the BBC's strategy we will pay particular regard to this point.

## **Accessing the BBC's services in the nations**

The Councils have told us about their concerns regarding the future of nations specific programming on BBC Two HD. The Executive's proposal (should it be approved) is that the HD versions of BBC Two would not be provided with nations variants. We are aware of the concerns here and will need to consider the proposal carefully when it is formally presented by the Executive. We are also considering the issues raised by BBC One HD, particularly availability of BBC One content for the English regions.

Councils also stress the importance of making existing services – such as the nations and regions radio stations – available to all licence fee payers. We understand some of the issues with distributing the BBC's services, particularly for DAB radio in some parts of the UK. We will continue to work with the Executive to improve access to BBC services, where this is cost effective.

## **Portrayal of diverse communities across the United Kingdom**

The Councils told us that they welcome the proposal that a higher proportion of material originated in the nations should be broadcast to audiences throughout the UK; they consider that this could contribute significantly to better reflecting the UK, its nations, regions and communities. The Councils have asked us to reassure ourselves that this development does not dilute the distinctiveness and cultural specificity of content for the nations and regions. We will follow this up with the Executive, and monitor implementation.