

# Foreword

This is an important time for public service broadcasting (PSB) in the UK. The boundaries between the traditionally separate worlds of television, radio and online are disappearing. Digital switchover is already a reality for the residents of Whitehaven in Cumbria and will be for viewers in the Border region by the time Ofcom has completed its review. Broadband penetration is increasing rapidly and the successes of the BBC's iPlayer, ITV.com and 4oD have demonstrated the public appetite for on-demand content.

Competition for UK audiences is becoming more global, with players like Google and Microsoft presenting a new challenge to traditional broadcasters. Audiences are able to access more content than ever before, with the popularity of high-quality US imports showing no sign of waning. This competition is placing increasing pressure on the level of UK production by commercial broadcasters and the PSB system itself.

Audiences are changing, too. Traditional family and social structures are fragmenting; the demographic profile of the UK is changing; there is burgeoning diversity among the audiences which the BBC exists to serve. The changing face of life in the UK has created a complex web of 'belonging' for its citizens and much debate around the notion of 'Britishness'.

In response to this rapidly changing world, I welcome Ofcom's decision to bring forward its second review of public service broadcasting. From both Ofcom's research and our own, it is clear that audiences continue to value PSB highly, both for themselves as consumers, and for society as a whole. The role of PSB may even need to be enhanced in a society which is increasingly diverse and fragmented. The question is therefore how PSB – and the BBC as a cornerstone of it – can rise to the challenge and best serve the needs of audiences in the future.

I have previously called for an open and wide-ranging debate, focused on the interests of audiences. What follows is our initial contribution to this debate; a joint response to Ofcom from the BBC Trust and BBC Executive. In a debate about the future of PSB we felt it important that the BBC put forward a shared vision. The BBC is already changing in response to the changing world in which it operates. This response to Ofcom explores some of those changes, and what they mean for audiences. It reflects the six year strategy for the BBC agreed by the Trust towards the end of last year; and beyond that timeframe it reflects shared discussion between both sides of the BBC and our initial conclusions on the challenges ahead and possible solutions.

Our vision is focused not on narrow institutional needs but on how best to serve audiences in a complex and changing world. As we move into the second phase of Ofcom's review, we will seek the views of licence fee payers, policy makers and the broadcasting industry on the ideas that we have put forward.



*Sir Michael Lyons, Chairman*