BBC Complaints Framework - Consultation [sent by email]

The NFBUK would like to add the following comments to the BBC Complaints Framework Consultation. Our comments may not be aligned to what you are asking however we would like our comments to be part of this consultation and require urgent action by the BBC Director General and the Board on the BBC Complaints Procedure / Framework. The NFBUK believes that the current Complaints Procedure is not fit for purpose, the outsourcing of the complaints to a private company has completely failed and there needs to be a complete overhaul and reform of the complaints process please.

The NFBUK has made this conclusion after the imminent closure of the BBC Red Button Teletext Service was paused after an emergency petition by our charity supported then by over 165 organisations across the UK was handed into the BBC Broadcasting House and to the Prime Minister on 27th January 2020. This petition now has over 500 organisations supporting it from across the UK. If the BBC Complaints Procedure had worked, the BBC Red Button Teletext Service would have been protected and the threat of closure would have been withdrawn without the need for the NFBUK petition.

It is understood that the BBC has received a significant number of complaints regarding the decision to switch off the BBC Red Button Teletext Service. If the complaints had been taken seriously then the service would not have been earmarked for closure on 30th January 2020. Examples of these complaints are given below:

- The NFBUK received this from Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru / Older People’s Commissioner for Wales, who did not sign the petition as she had already lodged the complaint with the BBC: ‘The Older People’s Commissioner wrote to the BBC in December 2019 to raise her objection to the proposal and asking for the decision to be reversed. We believe that the decision will have a disproportionate impact on older viewers who are not online and do not have access to the technology required that will allow them to access services provided by the BBC other than through the teletext red button service’. Can you please explain how a complaints procedure ignored such powerful evidence from a person responsible for the health and wellbeing of all the older people in Wales?

- Complaint from a disabled person to the BBC is given below in Appendix A and the standard response letter the person that this person received. It is clear that the evidence given was not understood by the person responding from the BBC.

- The letter from the BBC Director General (Appendix B) clearly states that he had heard from MPs, the public and from organisations that were concerned about the impact on elderly and disabled people. These concerns and complaints must have been received before the NFBUK’s petition and it clearly shows the inability of the complaints procedure to influence the BBC’s decision to withdraw the BBC Red Button Teletext Service.

- When the petition was handed into the BBC by my colleague, the gentleman who it was handed into, made a comment that we should have gone through the official complaints procedure as we would have had an official receipt of the complaint. I honestly thought this was a joke, given that the BBC Red Button Teletext Service was to be closed down on 30th January 2020 and it was clear that the BBC had ignored all the complaints received to date on this issue. It is clear indication that the management of the BBC clearly believe their complaints procedure is working but in reality it has fundamentally failed the public by not being able to protect such a vital service as the BBC Red Button Teletext.

The NFBUK did ask for copies of all complaints about the proposed withdrawal of the BBC Red Button Teletext Service but we have not yet received this information and we still require it please. The NFBUK would also like to ask how the complaints procedure handled the many hand-written complaints they would have received on this decision and how was this feedback was given to the managers making the decisions on the fate of the BBC Red Button Teletext Service please.

I would also like to highlight the problems facing blind and partially sighted people with regards to being informed of ongoing BBC consultations and how to participate in them. Just three examples of these problems are given in Appendix C. Also, if it was not through communication with yourself, the NFBUK would not have been aware of this consultation. The process of consultations need to be reformed too and we are more than willing to assist you in how you could disseminate information to blind and partially sighted people to ensure all voices are heard.

It is clear that the complaints procedure in its current format is not fit for purpose and the whole process needs a complete overhaul and reform. Can you please let the NFBUK how the BBC will address the concerns raised in this email.

Kindest regards,

Sarah

Sarah Gayton BSc (Hons), MSc, PG Cert.
Appendix A

From: Sir John Wilson House, 215 Kirkgate, WAKEFIELD, West Yorkshire, WF1 1JG
To: admin@nfbuk.org
Sent: Sunday, January 05, 2020 2:39 AM
Subject: my complaint to BBC re red button closure

I have been asked to write to you on behalf of MANY people who are elderly, live alone and suffer loneliness, and/or suffer with a wide variety of disabilities. They have all expressed their concerns to me about how absolutely devastated they are feeling with regards to the decision by the BBC to stop the Red Button Text on 30th January because they have no computer and have no ipads or smart phones. They depend on being able to read through the content of the Red Button Text during the night as a means of comfort when they are not able to sleep and also during the day when they are alone. Putting a radio on instead (during the night), as has been suggested by the BBC, is NOT a suitable alternative for many people!...They are of the opinion that no consideration has been given by the decision makers within the BBC to the several millions of people who will be severely affected by not having the Red Button Text - and this also includes me!...I read through it every night during the night because I am disabled and frequently cannot sleep due to extreme pain!!!...Therefore, "WE all" urge you to seriously consider NOT doing away with it completely.....Surely the content can simply be trimmed down!......."WE" request that you keep some key features of it functioning e.g. "Local News", "UK News", "Travel", "Science" and "Health".......And by doing so the BBC could then proudly say that they have made every effort to cater for ALL of their viewers needs!!!...Please Please consider these points that I have raised on behalf of many......I would like to know if the decision makers within the BBC have any idea of the amount of people who use the Red Button Text regularly - has a survey ever been done?

----- Original Message ----- 

From: BBC Complaints
To: 
Sent: Thursday, January 09, 2020 3:32 PM
Subject: BBC Complaints - Case number 

Dear

Thanks for contacting us with your feedback on the with changes to Red Button services following the launch of Red Button+ on Sky Q platforms.

From Monday 11 November, alongside launching the BBC iPlayer app for Sky Q, we've updated the Red Button Service on Sky Q to our Red Button+ service where you can quickly find links to BBC programmes in BBC iPlayer. Some features that were available in the previous version of Red Button are not available in the Red Button+ service, including the Red Button text service.

There are lots of ways you can still access the information you previously found on the Red Button digital text service.

The BBC News channel has up-to-the minute news headlines and analysis on all the main news stories of the day – as well as regular sport, business and market bulletins.

BBC Radio 5 Live and Radio 4 both also provide news headlines and analysis throughout the day and BBC Local Radio stations offer local news, weather and travel updates.

If you have an internet connected TV you can go to BBC iPlayer which has comprehensive news and sport sections, updated daily.

If you have an internet connection on your laptop, tablet or mobile then head to the BBC website for the latest news, sport, business and weather headlines. These links on the BBC website should help you get started:

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/localnews
Or you can download the BBC News and BBC Sport apps onto your tablet and mobile for free.

The BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds apps are also available for free on your tablet and mobile.

We appreciate you contacting us with your thoughts and please be assured your feedback has been shared with relevant BBC teams via our audience feedback report.

Thanks again for taking the time to contact us.

Kind regards,

BBC Complaints Team

Appendix B

BBC Director General Letter to Damian Collins MP, dated 29 January 2020.

Dear Damian,

Thank you for your letter of 27 January regarding our Red Button test service.

We took the decision last year to close this function in order to re-direct resources towards new and better ways for audiences to experience BBC content across all our platforms.

However, like you, we have since heard from organisations, including the National Federation of the Blind UK and the British Deaf Association. This issue has also been raised with us by MPs reflecting the concerns of their constituents, and we’ve also heard from members of the public. In particular, people have expressed their concern that the closure of Red Button text service could negatively affect elderly people and people with disabilities.

These are issues which I feel deserve to be explored in more depth before we again considering whether to close the service, and so we have decided to suspend its closure pending further work in that area. We will keep the Red Button text service going as close as possible to its current state for the time being.

Our plan is now to listen carefully and with an open mind to the views that have been expressed and to understand more about the possible impact of closure, especially on the elderly and people with disabilities. As part of this, we will talk to representative organisations to gather more information about how closure would impact upon those communities. We will then look at all this, and other evidence, and make a fresh decision in the Spring.

As you suggest, it would be helpful to meet soon - to discuss this, and other issues - and my office will be in touch with yours to arrange a time.

Best wishes,

Tony Hall
Director-General
From the Director-General
29 January 2020
Damian Collins MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

By email only

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We took the decision last year to close this function in order to redirect resources towards new and better ways for audiences to experience BBC content across all our platforms.

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As you suggest, it would be helpful to meet soon-to discuss this, and other issues-and my office will be in touch with yours to arrange a time.

Best wishes

Tony Hall
Director-General

Please note: this email is sent from an unmonitored address so please don’t reply. If necessary please contact us through our webform (please include your case reference number).

Appendix C

With regards to the complaints procedure, these are three examples of problems that blind and partially sighted people experienced trying to find about this consultation.

- Victor Jackson from Leeds phoned to ask about the consultation but was told he would be contacted within 10 days as Victor is a blind / visually impaired person who would take part in the consultation who did not have a computer. Your colleague contacted him on the 31 January 2020, which was close to the original closure date of the consultation. We do understand that the Coronavirus Outbreak in the UK may have influenced this timescale.

- Executive Council Member from Scotland who is totally blind-'I called the BBC in Glasgow and was given the following number to call: 03700 100 222 which I was told was in Belfast. I dialled this and was given various options, which I can't recall, but I chose what I thought was an appropriate one, however I held on for some time without a response as the message said that the operators were busy'.
- Member from Leicestershire who is visually impaired did find it but had problems, because the voice over did not work when trying to search for it online.