

Appendix 2

BBC Trust review of Purpose Remits

Final conclusions, March 2013

Introduction: The BBC's public purposes, purpose remits and the reasons for this review

The BBC Trust has carried out a review of its purpose remits – these are documents that explain what the BBC needs to do to fulfil each of its public purposes. This document explains the conclusions of the review. It is being published alongside the amended purpose remits and the amended Protocol A1: BBC Public Purposes.

The BBC Trust is the governing body of the BBC, independent from the BBC's executive which it must hold to account. The Trust aims to provide licence payers with the level of transparency and accountability that they now expect from major public organisations.

Under the Royal Charter the BBC Trust has ultimate responsibility for how the licence fee is spent. It represents the public interest in the BBC and aims to ensure that the BBC delivers the best possible programming and content to fulfil its six Public Purposes. The Charter established the BBC's main objective to be the promotion of its six public purposes.

These are:

- Sustaining citizenship and civil society
- Promoting education and learning
- Stimulating creativity and cultural excellence
- Representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities
- Bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK
- In promoting its other purposes, helping to deliver to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services

The 2006 Agreement between the Trust and the Government required the Trust to set a Purpose Remit for each of these purposes, with a list of priorities setting out what the BBC needs to do to promote that purpose. Those remits were developed in consultation with the BBC's Executive Board and were the subject of an initial public consultation before being set in 2007. Since then, the BBC's performance against the priorities set out in the purpose remits has been assessed by the Trust on an annual basis through quantitative audience research. We use this research as a measure of the impact that the BBC is having (alongside other measures of quality, reach and value for money).

The Agreement also requires the Trust to keep purpose remits under review, and the Trust itself has committed to conducting a full review during this Charter period (2006-2016) – to ensure that the priorities continue to be relevant.

Current purpose remits

The current structure for each of the purpose remits is as follows:

- A one/two page statement of priorities
- Annex 1, setting out the Trust’s methodology for measuring performance
- Annex 2, explaining the remit in more detail under three headings:
 - i. Scope – a brief description of the key requirements as set out in the Charter and Agreement.
 - ii. Market Context and BBC Role - the nature of the media landscape in which the BBC will be required to deliver the purpose and the particular role that flows from this
 - iii. Priorities - what the Trust thinks BBC Management needs to focus on in order to deliver the Purposes over the Charter period, and how the Trust intends to measure performance.

In 2006/2007 the Purposes were subject to extensive consultation and qualitative research was carried out amongst licence fee payers to ensure the meaning of each priority was as clear as possible. The wording of the priorities was informed by this research.

Qualitative research was also used in the development of the measurement system to ensure that licence fee payers understood each of the priorities and the questions that would be asked about performance.

The measurement system itself uses quantitative audience surveys to test public perceptions of how well the BBC is delivering its purposes and priorities. This assessment has formed a key part of the Trust’s annual assessment of BBC performance, and was the basis on which the Trust set the BBC new objectives to improve the quality and distinctiveness of its output and to do more to serve all audiences across the UK.

Scope of this review

Our intention in this review was not to repeat the extensive research and consultation that took place in 2007. Overall, we think the purpose remits remain a comprehensive summary of what the BBC is trying to do. Since the BBC’s public purposes remain consistent through to 2016 we do not see a case for major change to the remits.

Nonetheless, we wanted to consider whether some amendment might be appropriate for three reasons:

- the past five years have seen some significant technological and market changes, and we wanted to consider how far those might require some adaptation of the purpose remits
- the Trust now has five years of data from quantitative surveys, performance analysis and qualitative research that might allow some re-evaluation of audience priorities

- the Trust has tried to simplify and streamline its governance systems more generally and we wanted to look again at the structure and presentation of purpose remits to see whether they could be made more focused and easier to understand

Planned changes to the purpose remits

The review process

The Trust Unit considered each purpose remit and priorities together with an overall measurement statement and held detailed discussions with the BBC Executive that informed the review.

Audience Council members were also invited to review previous audience feedback on this topic and then consider each of the remit documents in turn during two workshop sessions at Joint Audience Councils Conference. The conference was attended by representatives of all four Councils across the UK.

We found that overall the purpose remits remain fit for purpose but we identified some small-scale changes to the priorities that we believe made them more focused and more relevant to audience concerns.

Proposed changes to the purpose remits were drafted and put out for wider consideration via a consultation. These changes sought to simplify and shorten the remits and make them more easily understood. Robust measurement of the BBC's performance through the annual Purpose Remit Survey would continue, the results published alongside the Annual Report.

The consultation

The consultation ran from 13 September to 6 December 2012. A range of organisations who had responded to previous Trust consultations in this area were notified of this consultation. The consultation was also made available to the public on the BBC Trust website.

The following changes were put out to consultation:

1. To replace the current descriptive introductory text ('you can rely on the BBC to...') with a more straightforward factual summary of what the BBC Agreement requires the remit to do.
2. Incorporate all the purpose remits into one document, and remove Annex 1 replacing it with a single introduction that explains how we will measure performance across the purpose remits – the six existing measurement annexes are extremely repetitive and, we think, unnecessary. Our precise measurement methodology will continue to be included in our published research findings.
3. To remove the repetitive Annex 2 for each remit, to produce a single, clear explanation of what the priorities are for each of the purposes.

In addition, some changes to the text of individual priorities were also proposed.

Outcome of the consultation

We received 16 responses to the consultation. Nine responses were from members of the public and from the following organisations: Newspaper Society, Voice of the Viewer and

Listener, Welsh Refugee Council, International Broadcasting Trust, Radio Centre, Radio Independents Group and Teledwyr Annibynnol Cymru (Welsh Independent Producers) .

The responses were broadly supportive of the planned changes, with the following exceptions as outlined below.

Removal of Annex 2

Two organisations do not support the removal of Annex 2 in its entirety as it provides the necessary rationale behind each remit and explanation of the different priorities. While they agree the Introduction, Section 1 (Scope of the Public Purpose) and Section 3 (Priorities) of Annex 2 should be deleted. They believe Section 2, Market Context and the BBC should be retained and updated where necessary. They believe that without Annex 2, the Executive, commissioners, BBC producers and the public will fail to understand why the BBC should fulfil the six public purposes at all.

One of these organisations also outlines their own proposed wording to Annex 2 Section 2, which focuses on the provision of content about the “wider world”.

The Trust agrees that the purpose remits should retain a clear rationale and explanation of the priorities while fulfilling one of the objectives of the review to simplify the structure of the purpose remits. In doing so relevant text from Annex 2 including content from Section 2, which is taken directly from The Agreement, is now reflected in the scoping paragraphs and priorities rather than appended as a separate annex to each purpose remit. The BBC notes its obligation to fulfil the purposes. The market context will be reconsidered within the period leading up to the Charter Renewal. Further information can be found on the BBC website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howeare/publicpurposes/>

The Trust has also considered carefully the suggested revised wording for Annex 2, Section 2. We would like to highlight that these points are covered in on the BBC Trust website, under Public Purposes: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howeare/publicpurposes/world>.

Sustaining Citizenship and Civil Society: change to the title wording

Under this purpose, two responses from the public questioned the BBC’s commitment to impartiality and objectivity on the basis of their view of the BBC’s news coverage of particular issues.

As part of the Review of BBC Governance in 2011, The Trust pledged to continue and strengthen its impartiality work through committing to annual reviews of the impartiality of the BBC’s output. The Trust also introduced impartiality seminars, led by the Trust, to look at emerging and current topics. Previous Impartiality Reviews have focused on business, science, coverage of UK nations and the Arab spring. The next review will look at breadth of opinion, with a focus on stories on immigration, religion and the EU and its findings will be published in the summer of 2013.

Two organisations note the change to the title of priority 3 from 'Encourage conversation and debate about news, current affairs and topical issues' to 'Enable conversation and debate about news, current affairs and topical issues.' Both organisations request that the wording should remain 'encourage' rather than 'enable' as this is a more active entreaty.

The change in title wording from 'encourage' to 'enable' along with amendments to the priority's subsequent text, was intended to clarify the shift in emphasis in encouraging conversation via phone lines and online forums, to enabling discussion more widely for example among family and friends.

Having carefully considered the suggestion to change the title wording and in order to provide further clarity, the Trust will amend the title of priority 3 to:
'Encourage and enable conversation and debate about news, current affairs and topical issues', followed by the proposed new priority text.

Stimulating creativity and cultural excellence: minority interest music

One response from the public related to specialist content, specifically the BBC's remit to *"cover a wide range of cultural activities" while "representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities"*. This response questioned whether the BBC's treatment of specialist music currently meets this remit, and how well minority interest music as a genre will continue to be represented by the BBC.

The Trust do not intend the new wording to suggest less focus on minority interest music. We emphasise "creativity" and "distinctive content" across the range of cultural activities in the new scoping paragraph which we think will continue to encourage high quality specialist coverage as well as mainstream programming.

Representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities: impact of changes on local services and S4C

One organisation challenged the proposed changes to the the 'Representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities' purpose remit. They assert that the proposed changes to the scoping paragraph will have adverse impact on regional and local commercial media. They are particularly concerned with the proposed change in the scoping paragraph about the BBC *"reflecting and strengthening cultural identitiesat local, regional and national level"*.

They argue that this contradicts previous BBC assurances (e.g.: the 2010 Strategy Review Consultation) as to the reduction of "ultra-local services".

The proposed change in the scoping paragraph for the Representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities purpose is not new text, but taken directly from The Agreement.

As such it is not intended to suggest an increase in new BBC local services but features in the proposed changes as part of the wider process of simplifying the structure of the purpose remits.

Another organisation suggests adding the following wording to this public purpose, in relation to safeguarding broadcasting and production in the nations and regions:

“The BBC should ensure it is providing adequate and equitable funding for programming for all the UK nations.

The BBC Trust should ensure adequate funding is available for the provision of Welsh language content through a commitment to adequately fund S4C in the long term. It should also ensure it is working in partnership with, but not adversely affecting the independent functioning of S4C.”

The funding of S4C is addressed in the S4C Operating Agreement which was published on 30th January 2013:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/news/press_releases/2013/s4c_op_agreement.html

This sets out the relationship between the BBC and S4C once the majority of S4C’s funding comes from the licence fee from April 2013. As such, this information is beyond the scope of the purpose remits.

Bringing the UK to the World and the World to the UK: include genres other than news in the priorities

One organisation proposes the wording for priority 1b be changed to explicitly include other genres.

The new text for the scoping paragraph of this purpose which is taken directly from the Agreement, includes specific mention of these genres to emphasise the BBC’s commitment and ambition to provide high quality coverage of international issues. To ensure the purpose remits are not unduly repetitive we have not outlined these genres again in the priorities.

Emerging Communications: DAB radio ‘build out’

One organisation raised a question about the effectiveness of the system of Public Value Tests for significant changes to BBC services.

The undertaking of PVTs in relation to new technologies is beyond the scope of the purpose remits and as such they are not specifically included. The Trust would need to consider whether the proposals amounted to a “significant change” to the public services. If they did, the Trust would normally instigate a PVT.

Another organisation, while supporting the majority of proposed changes to the purpose remits, make some specific suggestions for amendment regarding the Emerging Communications purpose.

They suggest that specific reference be made to the existing Memorandum of Understanding which outlines an agreed process between Government, BBC, Ofcom and the Multiplex Operators, for 'build out' of Digital Audio Broadcasting towards a possible radio switchover.

The Trust accepts the request to reference the Memorandum of Understanding in the purpose remits and will amend the text for priority 3 to:

Increase coverage of Digital, Audio and Broadcasting (DAB)

The BBC should enhance its national DAB coverage and work with Government and industry to prepare for any potential radio switchover by putting together plans to build out infrastructure for local DAB in line with the joint Memorandum of Understanding.

References to the switchover to digital television will not be removed as this work will not be completed until 2014.

This same organisation raised a question about whether BBC radio underserves particular minority audiences including children.

Service licences make specific reference to quality and distinctiveness in BBC output. The Purpose Remits do retain reference to different cultures, provision of minority languages and encouraging learning for all ages. The wording gives sufficient prominence to our obligation to serving minority audiences and children and the Trust does not consider we need to be any more specific.

Further comments on the changes to the purpose remits

- **Commissioning new ideas**

While two organisations broadly support the Trust's objectives for reviewing the purpose remits they do not believe the revised version fulfils these objectives.

Two organisations argue for specific references in each of the purposes ensuring that the best ideas are commissioned from the BBC, regardless of source.

The Trust has separate policies on [commissioning](#) and production which address these concerns.

We therefore do not seek to include issues of commissioning within the purpose remits. However the Trust keeps these arrangements under [regular review](#).

- **Wording of the purpose remits**

Two members of the public complained that the proposed changes to the wording are not written in 'plain English', and therefore made response to the consultation challenging for licence fee payers.

The process of simplifying the structure of the purpose remits has required integration of content across a number of documents, including text from the Royal Charter and Agreement. Some of the language is technocratic, but we have tried as far as possible to make it clear.

6 Protocol A1: BBC Public Purposes

The Protocol A1: BBC Public Purposes will be amended to reflect the changes outlined in the final conclusions. The link to the [amended protocol is here](#).

Final conclusions of the review

Having reviewed the purpose remits internally, consulted on our proposed changes and considered the response to that consultation, we have made the following changes to BBC purpose remits:

1. We have replaced the current descriptive introductory text with a more straightforward factual summary of what the BBC Agreement requires the remit to do.
2. We have incorporated all the purpose remits into one document with a single introduction that explains how we will measure performance across the purpose remits in order to simplify this information, thereby removing Annex 1.
3. We have removed Annex 2 for each remit, to produce a single, clear explanation of what the priorities are for each of the purposes.
4. We have made changes to the wording of the purpose remits as proposed and set out in the consultation.
5. We have further amended the wording for priority 3 of the purpose 'Sustaining citizenship and Civil Society' in response to concerns raised in our consultation.
6. We have further amended the wording of priority 3 of the 'Emerging Communications' purpose following a suggestion put forward in our consultation.