

BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio 7 – BBC Trust Service Review Summary

The BBC Trust carries out regular in-depth reviews of each of the BBC's services. This time we have reviewed BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio 7. A brief summary of our key findings and conclusions are set out below. The full report can be found [here on the BBC Trust website](#).

The Trust sets out what it expects of each service in a published service licence (for more information about service licences please [visit our website](#)). Our review had three broad aims: firstly to assess how well Radio 3, Radio 4 and Radio 7 are performing against commitments set out in these licences, secondly to consider the stations' future direction and thirdly, to determine whether amendments to the licences are required.

We carried out a public consultation over the summer and received 16,795 responses from licence fee payers. In addition, we received a number of responses from the radio industry and other stakeholder organisations. These responses alongside our audience research, performance monitoring and financial analysis have given us a clear understanding of these stations' strengths and weaknesses.

Conclusions and findings:

Our review has found that Radio 3, Radio 4 and Radio 7 are performing very well overall. They have passionate and loyal audiences who greatly appreciate the high-quality and distinctive programming on offer, and value the different ways in which these stations contribute to the BBC's public purposes. The biggest challenge for all three stations is to gradually extend their core appeal to audiences without jeopardising their distinctiveness.

Radio 3

Radio 3 is greatly valued by a relatively small but loyal audience who appreciate its intelligent, thoughtful and passionate tone and content. Radio 3 contributes significantly to the BBC's public purposes through its focus on high-quality classical music and its breadth of output covering jazz, world music, arts and culture. Its continuing challenge is to develop a welcoming and accessible tone while maintaining its core commitment to high-quality and distinctive music and arts. We have set out a number of specific actions for BBC management which include:

- looking for ways to make the station more accessible and welcoming
- considering how the BBC can best deliver classical, jazz and world music to all licence fee payers
- considering how the station can help audiences best navigate the wide range of content on offer
- reviewing the levels of broadcast output from the performing groups

Radio 4

Radio 4 is considered by many of its listeners to be a 'national treasure' and to be at the heart of public service radio broadcasting. It is often the main point of contact with the BBC for its large and dedicated audience. Its scale and distinctive content ensures that it plays a major role in the BBC's overall delivery of the public purposes. Whilst Radio 4 is the most expensive BBC radio service, audiences felt that it represents excellent value for money overall. We endorse Radio 4's strategy of broadening its core appeal where possible and believe that the station should continue to evolve to replenish its audience. In addition:

- Radio 4 should aim to increase appeal amongst different demographic groups
- We have increased the minimum hours of original documentaries required in the Radio 4 service licence
- BBC management should consider Radio 4's role in sports coverage. This consideration should take into account Radio 4's role within BBC radio's overall sports coverage.
- Radio 4 should consider the balance of its international coverage and in particular, its coverage between Europe and the rest of the world, compared with America.

Radio 7

Radio 7 is highly regarded by a sizeable digital audience who value the light hearted and nostalgic output. Audiences appreciate the opportunity to hear the best examples of radio comedy and drama from the BBC archive. Radio 7 also plays an important role in promoting DAB. However, Radio 7 has very low awareness overall and its dedicated children's programming is not serving audiences well.

Key Strategic Initiatives

In the course of the review, BBC management has proposed a number of key strategic initiatives relating to these services which we have endorsed as we believe they will benefit licence fee payers. These are:

- The development of part of its public service archive proposition into what the BBC terms 'permanent collections' for Radio 3 and Radio 4. These proposals will increase the amount of archive programming made permanently available on the Radio 3 and Radio 4 programme sites.
- The repositioning of Radio 7 as Radio 4 Extra. However, we will protect the current elements of Radio 7 that audiences particularly value, including increasing the weekly minimum amount of drama and comedy and setting limits around the amount of Radio 4 catch-up programming.
- The development of the children's audio strategy including the refocus of dedicated children's programming on Radio 7 to appeal more to families. This will also include the creation of CBeebies pre-school audio available for download from the CBeebies website and the commercial release of children's radio archive programming for secondary broadcast by third parties.