



Dear Secretary of State

RE: Announcement of a public consultation on the future of the BBC

The Broadcasting, Entertainment and Arts Unions* welcome today's publication of the Terms of Reference and the Green Paper consultation for the BBC Charter Review. We believe that the Charter Renewal represents an invaluable opportunity to address issues relating to its funding, governance and editorial standards and to ensure that the BBC is free from political interference.

At the same time wider conversations can be had about what the public values in the BBC, where we would like to see its output strengthened, and how its future can best be secured for generations to come.

As unions representing the workforce that creates the BBC's value – either employed directly by the corporation, or by production companies contracted by the BBC – we want to reiterate some fundamental principles which should govern this process:

Universality

We strongly believe that the BBC should serve all communities across the UK and that BBC content should be available to all. There should be no introduction of additional subscription fees, or creation of a two-tier offer that would exclude people. Premium content must not be locked behind a paywall. We should bolster all services, including those that serve diverse communities. The BBC should reflect all nations, regions and local communities of the United Kingdom, and maintain its obligation to deliver dedicated locally-relevant content everywhere across the UK.

Accuracy and Impartiality

Our unions recognise that - especially in an AI environment suffused with fake news and disinformation online and via social media platforms - the BBC must strive to maintain its reputation as a reliable, accurate and impartial purveyor of news, factual and cultural programming, free from political interference of any kind. This requires an end to any appointments motivated by partisan political interests and ensuring that board members are chosen by an arms-length body.

Creativity and Innovation

The BBC is a major engine of the UK's creative economy, producing and commissioning content which is enjoyed and respected by a global audience. To maintain and enhance this unique creative asset, the BBC needs to be able to invest in programme-making at a level that allows it to compete with the streaming services and major US production companies. The BBC should not be compelled to commercialise because of funding restraints.

Properly Resourced

We regret that since 2010, the BBC's funding has been cut in real terms by around 30%, following freezes or below-inflation rises in the Licence Fee, or "top-slicing" such as the additional requirement to fund BBC World Service or over-75s TV Licences for pensioners on universal credit. Inevitably this has resulted in the loss of highly-skilled professional staff amidst a general hollowing-out of capacity. The BBC must be given the resources it needs to inform, educate and entertain.

Valuing its workforce

The BBC should be the gold standard on employment rights, driving up terms and conditions for its staff, freelancers and across the sector. Employment opportunities generated by the BBC should be spread fairly across the country and the BBC should lead the way in investing in under-represented areas. Workers should be engaged on terms and conditions that enable them to build lifelong careers wherever they live in the UK and whatever their background. The BBC should drive the market in procurement for ethical AI. Crucially the governance structure of the BBC, as a cherished public institution funded by the British public, should be independent, and reflect civic principles of democracy, fairness and worker voice.





We appreciate that you meet with individual unions, but we would also be very happy for you to address a meeting of the BEAU APPG in the new year on this issue and other key matters related to our sector. Please contact the Group's Secretariat via Kate.Dove@parliament.uk to liaise regarding suitable dates.

Affiliates to BEAU are BECTU, Equity, the Musicians Union, the National Union of Journalists, and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain.

Yours sincerely

Paul Fleming - Chair, BEAU and General Secretary, Equity

Philippa Childs - Head of BECTU

Laura Davison - General Secretary, NUJ

Ellie Peers - General Secretary, Writers' Guild of Great Britain

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