

Question 1: Do you agree that public service provision and funding beyond the BBC is an important part of any future system?:

It is crucially important to fund public service broadcasting beyond the BBC. A duality of supply increases competition, improves value for money and stimulates innovation and creativity.

The UK is a world leader in television NOW because of the funding from public service broadcasting in the past. We produce a very wide mix of programming which remains the envy of the world. There is ?tabloid? pressure to dumb down some content, but quality remains and this is crucial to help our society and culture have a clear identity around the world.

The way forward is balancing the gradual shift of power in PSB, from television to new digital media formats. We recognise the growing importance of a public service remit for new digital media, both mobile and web based. Television is already less important to younger people and this trend will accelerate over the coming years.

Although there is a wide range of public service content being delivered on-line, this is often of lower quality than the best that society has come to expect from entertainment shows, films and games. Strong public service funding for new digital media will ensure the UK retains its global lead by enabling innovation of content types and technologies for ?the public good?.

Early results from Channel 4?s 4IP initiative are already showing a new enthusiasm from companies for trying new things and exploring new approaches to public information and entertainment. News of this project has spread around the global media world and is enabling the best new thinking to come to the UK. BBC only funding would NOT have innovated anywhere near as effectively and thus duality must be maintained and strengthened going forwards.

Question 2: Which of the three refined models do you think is most appropriate?:

We strongly support the refined BBC/Channel 4 Model.

Channel 4 have shown clear leadership in launching their 4IP project which is creating innovative digital media projects. Early results from Channel 4?s 4IP initiative are already showing a new enthusiasm from companies for trying new things and exploring new approaches to public information and entertainment.

BBC only funding would NOT have innovated anywhere near as effectively and thus duality must be maintained and strengthened going forwards.

Wider funding of others as now, ITV, Five, etc., will spread the cake too thinly unless significant new funding can be found. There seems little point in a half-hearted public service remit, with for example 15 mins of regional programming commitment per week for ITV. It is better to fund two organisations properly.

We feel it is crucial that clear guidelines are set for regional, minority and out-of-

London Production. These to be based upon getting the best content created in as regionally balanced a way as possible. Currently, the West Midlands has 9% of license payers but less than 2% of production. Commissioners should encourage programming to come from the region, but this should not be under a prescribed % level, which would lead to standards dropping if applied too mathematically. Quality and innovation should always come first, followed by regional and cultural diversity.

Channel 4's regional commissioning commitments could be increased strongly, perhaps with a remit to run a national and regional news network, the latter with the potential to sub-contract to smaller regional providers.

To improve quality and remain fair we support the view that there should be competition for some funds, even in a BBC/Ch4 world. So flexibility would remain to commission some 'left field' bright ideas and new initiatives to be tried out on TV, web or mobile channels.

Channel 4 could be given 'lead' status in areas of digital media over the BBC, in recognition of their outstanding contribution to innovation in this area with 4IP. Ch4 have been more progressive, nimble, outward facing and tuned into market innovation than the BBC has demonstrated over recent months.

Question 3: Do you agree that in any future model Channel 4 should have an extended remit to innovate and provide distinctive UK content across platforms? If so, should it receive additional funding directly, or should it have to compete for funding?:

Channel 4 should be given an extended remit and extended funding. It has shown outstanding leadership in the area of innovation and clearly has been a content pace-setter over its history so far. The channel has consistently broken new ground and is set to do the same now in the on-line and mobile world with 4IP.

To be most effective Channel 4 needs the chance to make effective long-term plans. This can only be done through funding assurance with larger budgets.

It should not have to compete for funds, although could be free to bid into a 'flexibles' pot along with others.

Channel 4 should be given 'lead' status in areas of digital media in recognition of their outstanding contribution to innovation in this area with 4IP.

Question 4: Do you think ITV1, Five and Teletext should continue to have public service obligations after 2014? Where ITV1 has an ongoing role, do you agree that the Channel 3 licensing structure should be simplified, if so what form of licensing would be most appropriate?:

It seems to us that the contribution of ITV and FIVE are not especially distinctive, other than in the area of regional programming. Strengthening Channel 4's requirements for regional output as suggested in question 2, especially if they are free to commission regional providers, means that no public service commitments remain.

Teletext could be refocused on the increasingly small and isolated group of TV viewers who do not have web access. Whilst they remain, a public service remit for Teletext also remains.

The business environment is so adverse for ITV that all that can be done should be done to enable meaningful survival. The focus of any remaining public service remit could be on a commitment to UK produced content.

Question 5: What role should competition for funding play in future? In which areas of content? What comments do you have on our description of how this might work in practice?:

We support a better funded Channel 4, with a stronger regional remit, creating a duality of public service supply against the BBC.

We also support the idea of a 'flexibles' pot to allow interesting other projects to be developed. This 'flexibles' pot also supports the specific language needs of devolved authorities.

Question 6: Do you agree with our findings that nations and regions news continues to have an important role and that additional funding should be provided to sustain it?:

Regional news is important to an areas cultural identity. It is important that funding is increased to ensure balanced quality services. Reduced 'dumbed down' services can only focus on headline crimes, we need the scope to celebrate a regions great strengths too, its cultural diversity and what it has to offer the wider UK.

Question 7: Which of the three refined models do you think is most appropriate in the devolved nations?:

The BBC/Channel 4 model remains the strongest nationwide. It may be necessary to introduce a slightly larger 'flexibles' pot to cover particular language areas of certain communities of interest, such as the Welsh.

Question 8: Do you agree with our analysis of the future potential for local content services?:

Local content services have huge potential, an area like the West Midlands represents 9% of the population and has a need for a local voice. It is important to keep quality high on local services though, as too often services are started with good intentions but get reduced to skeleton operations.

Question 9: Do you agree with our assessment of each possible funding source, in terms of its scale, advantages and disadvantages?:

We support the BBC remaining the core supply with its funding remaining largely intact. However, we feel that some BBC funding could be moved across to Channel 4, Worldwide Assets being a part, also the digital switch-over allocation. Channel 4 does need more substantial core funding to be a strong force.

Question 10: What source or sources of funding do you think are most appropriate for the future provision of public service content beyond the BBC?:

Tax payers money, viewers and Levies on commissioned content are all effective routes to explore for future funding.

Question 11: Which of the potential approaches to funding for Channel 4 do you favour?:

Channel 4 should be funded through improved levy structures and transfer of funding from the BBC, including receiving some of BBC Worldwide's assets.

Question 12: Do you agree that our proposals for 'tier 2' quotas affecting ITV plc, stv, UTV, Channel TV, Channel 4, Five and Teletext are appropriate, in the light of our analysis of the growing pressure on funding and audiences? priorities? If not, how should we amend them, and what evidence can you provide to support your alternative?:

Insufficient understanding to comment.

Additional comments: