

Title:

Mr

Forename:

George

Surname:

Still

Representing:

Self

3i) Do you agree with Ofcom's assessment that television continues to have an essential role in delivering the purposes of public service broadcasting?:

Yes. I believe that TV offers a vital contribution to the culture and entertainment of the UK population.

3ii) Do you agree that UK-originated output is fundamental to the delivery of public service broadcasting purposes?:

I think that UK content is vitally important, however, I do not believe that those quotas can be taken up with "general entertainment shows" like "Britain's Got Talent".

Whilst shows like that are produced and focused around the UK, they do not add to the cultural output which I believe this question should be more focused on.

4i) Do you agree with Ofcom's conclusions about the way that other digital channels and interactive media contribute towards the public purposes?:

I do not agree. I feel that Ofcom's focus in this review is flawed in that it focuses on the "main 5 terrestrial channels" and by the time any legislation changes come into effect, the UK population will have been moved onto Digital oupt. Not only will the "terrestrial" term no longer apply, but the full range of free digital content surely comes into the public domain. This is something I believe the review is severely lacking in focus.

5i) Do you agree with Ofcom's assessment of the implications of different economic scenarios for the UK TV market for the future prospects for delivery of the public purposes?:

not possible to give an answer at this time.

5ii) Do you agree with Ofcom's analysis of the costs and benefits of PSB status?:

not possible to give an answer at this time.

6i) Do you agree with Ofcom's vision for public service content?:

No. I believe my answer in 4i focuses on the increased public domain content available to the UK TV market, which has been missed out by this review.

6ii) How important are plurality and competition for quality in delivering the purposes of public service broadcasting, and in what areas?:

Plurality in news and regional output of a factual basis is very important, however any plurality of content in an entertainment and fictional basis is a reduction of choice when broadcasters air their shows on more than one channel.

A repeat of an episode of Gavin & Stacey is a repeat even if on Monday, Episode 15 is shown on BBC4, and then shown again on BBC1 on Thursday.

This plurality is a major dumbing-down of the UK population, and a huge reduction of choice which is part of the benefit of the digital medium being put forward by the government in the switch-over.

6iii) In maximising reach and impact of public service content in the future, what roles can different platforms and services play?:

Licences and output agreements could be focused on the different types of services offered by specific channels, thus releasing certain channels from hitting specific targets.

The example of CBBC being able (once digital channels are available to all) could release BBC1 & BBC2 from showing children's entertainment freeing up airtime and content time from those channels and providing a clear and specific service where required.

6iv) Do you agree that the existing model for delivering public service broadcasting will not be sufficient to meet changing needs in future?:

It will not be sufficient.
See 4i

7i) What are your views of the high-level options for funding public service broadcasting in future?:

not possible to give an answer at this time.

7ii) Are the proposed tests of effectiveness for future models for public service broadcasting the right ones?:

I do not believe they are effective, as they are focused on specific channels and not broadcasters as a whole.

See 6ii as an example.

7iii) Of the four possible models for long term delivery of public service content, which, if any, do you consider the most appropriate and why? Are there any alternative models, or combination of models that could be more appropriate, and why?:

A new model is required for the digital switchover. No other model proposed in this review would be of benefit for this.

8i) What do you think is the appropriate public service role for Channel 4 in the short, medium and long term? What do you think of Channel 4's proposed vision?:

not possible to give an answer at this time.

8ii) Which of the options set out for the commercial PSBs do you favour?:

At present the scope is not wide enough to provide a clear answer.

9i) To what extent do you agree with Ofcom's assessment of the likely future long term issues as they apply to the nations, regions and localities of the UK?:

Not at all. Limited scope.

9ii) Which model(s) do you think will be most appropriate in each of the nations and in the English regions in the long term, and why?:

not possible to give an answer at this time.

9iii) What are your views on short/medium-term issues referred to, including the out-of-London network production quotas?:

not possible to give an answer at this time.

9iv) What are your initial views on the preliminary options set out relating to ITV plc's regional news proposal? (Please note that Ofcom will put forward firm options on these issues, and consult also on ITV plc's regional news proposal, in phase 2 of this Review.):

not possible to give an answer at this time.

10i) Do you agree with our assessment of the possible short term options available relating to children's programming:

not possible to give an answer at this time.

11i) Do you agree that new legislation will need to be in place by 2011 in order to ensure continued delivery of the public purposes in the medium and long term?:

Yes. Not only do I believe a new model needs to be in place, but also the legislation must be in place in order to give the market time to adapt to any new requirements placed on it.

Comments:

I made a request regarding broadcasters requirements to Ofcom in April 08. At no time was I informed of this review by the people I spoke to on the phone, nor in the responses received by email. I feel the effectiveness of this review has been compromised by the people "not" included in it.

Further comments as emailed to members of the PSB review (& ministry of culture, and my local MP)

I've had a quick read through some of the documents and I feel that the review is ? in my opinion ? flawed.

I would like to quote a few extracts, and I will try and find a way to put them in the form, but I also do not think it has scope for my views.

?The Act requires BBC channels and the main terrestrial TV services ? Channel 3, Channel 4, S4C, Five and Teletext - to deliver programmes and services which cover a wide range of subject matter and which meet the needs and interests of many different audiences. Among other aims, they are expected to meet high standards, to educate, to inform, to entertain, and to reflect and support cultural activity in the UK. They should reflect the lives and concerns of different communities in the UK, and include an appropriate proportion of content made outside the M25 area.?

(page 19)

One of my main points was that the review and the current act is solely focused on the main 'terrestrial channels'. In 2003, take-up of digital and satellite services with extra channels was much lower than it is today. With 2012 being the date for switch-off, those terrestrial channels will no longer exist and the act will be meaningless. The act should stipulate the PSB channels being one available to the public as a whole and this will include services across the digital platform.

'Freeview less than a year old. Connected to 1.5

million main television sets in Q1 2003

Freeview connected to 9.3 million main television

sets. Early 2008.

Digital TV penetration 50% Digital TV penetration over 87%?

(page 20)

Your own data shows a 600% rise in digital take up and a 75% increase in penetration.

And yet you still focus on the terrestrial channels which:

'1.11 More choice of channels for audiences means that achieving reach and impact for

the public service television channels is inevitably more challenging. The share of the main five channels has fallen by 17% between 2003 and 2007, although they still account for almost two thirds of all television viewing. The decline is much greater amongst 16-24 year olds (who have grown up with the internet) and among people from ethnic minority groups (where the main five channels now represent a minority of viewing). Our research shows that often these audiences do not turn to the public service channels as their first choice for public service content; they turn to digital

channels and increasingly the internet.?

(page 5)

What are actual demographics by population group?

What has the actual % decline for the 16-24 group been? In 10 years time, the lower-end of that group will be your main basis of the tax-paying community, and if that % decline is large now, without a change in the structure, your tax-paying community may not even watch the 5 terrestrial channels, again making the act rather meaningless.

The report here has no reflection that this generation has also grown up with digital and satellite services, offering a wider range of content. I will concur that the internet has a very large role tho.

?1.6 In this respect, the public service television channels ? the BBC?s channels, Channel

3/ITV1, Channel 4, S4C and Five ? continue to play the dominant role in delivering public service purposes. These channels account for over 90% of investment in new networked UK-originated television content, despite increases in some digital channels? investment in UK programming in recent years.?

This is a very scary statistic.

LESS than 2/3rds of the airtime viewed makes up 90% of the funding.

That means that over 33% has almost no funding towards new and original content.

And yet this review that is meant to be focused on content for the public is allowing more and more digital channels to be created with ? as your data seems to suggest ? no inherent value or cultural benefit for the British public. That seems to make the review rather inadequate. And with the demographic moving away from the ?main 5? then more and more of the British public will be tuning into services that have little or no investment to reflect:

?Many participants felt that television has a real role to play in society

today. Rather than being a cause of societal problems, it was believed that television could have a positive impact, serving to educate people about different cultures and traditions thus fostering understanding and better community links. This is borne out in the quantitative survey which found that just under eight in ten people (79%) said that TV has an important social role to play.?

(Page 5 of the The audience's view on the future of Public Service Broadcasting, April 2008)

To recap the numbers:

80% feel TV has an important social role, to reflect the UK as a whole.

>33% watch TV that has little or investment to the above case

A yet undefined %, larger than 33%, of the 16-24 populous also do not watch TV content with major (90%) investment.

And based on my argument about how the BBC and ITV companies work with their digital content ? Gavin and Stacey was developed for BBC4, so some of that money quoted by the BBC was not originally developed for the main 5. the show may have ?transferred? but that model is antiquated now.

?3.69 Audiences also appear broadly satisfied that the public service broadcasters show

well-made, high quality programmes, with 59% agreeing with this statement overall and with the BBC channels scoring particularly well. This tallies with the results from our deliberative research.?

(page 44)

This is a statistic taken from: ?Source: PSB Review survey, Q35, 2,260 UK adults 16+, October-December 2007?

This is before the news about the reality tv shows and breakfast shows fixing their phone-in votes. I would like to know the perception now. I do not believe this statistic to be valid.

Also, Figure 19 (page 44) makes no reference to reality tv shows, such as ?X-Factor? and ?Faking It USA?

My university dissertation in 2001 stated that this would become a major content of television output, there seems to be no focus on that format of television in this review or in the last.

(I do not think that that my dissertation is something any reviewer would have been aware of, but I highlight this as I believe that it was a recognisable shift back then, and is not something the review has but any focus on and I believe it should. Shows like ?How do you solve a problem like Maria, Britain?s Got Talent? could fit into a number of the categories in figure 19, and it is impossible to quantify their impact in what is a very specific (and profitable for the producers) genre of TV output.

I have got to page 45, and I feel that I have probably missed some important facts in that, and that of the remaining 90 or so pages there will be more items that are worthy of some analysis.

(so far)

I believe your review is ultimately flawed in concept.

I believe that Ofcom as a whole are not taking care of the UK population and the culture and content of the TV market for the UK population.

I believe that any choice of ?working model? as proposed in the review, and Q11i & 6iv & 7iii needs to be a brand new model that will support the new UK Digital medium that the government has put forward we will be on by 2011.

This is why I wrote to all the departments in my original letter requesting information on the broadcasters? documentation.