

BBC Public Purpose Remit: Representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities

Representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities

You can rely on the BBC to reflect the many communities that exist in the UK. These communities may be based on geography, on faith, on language, or on a shared interest such as sport. You can expect the BBC to stimulate debate within and between the communities of the UK, and to encourage people to get involved with their local communities.

What the BBC will do to achieve this Purpose

1. Represent the different nations, regions and communities to the rest of the UK.

Across the range of its network output, the BBC should portray and celebrate the range of cultures and communities across the UK at national, regional and local level.

2. Cater for the different nations, regions and communities of the UK.

The BBC should provide a range of output, including original content, designed to meet the needs of the nations, regions and communities of the UK.

3. Bring people together for shared experiences.

The BBC should broadcast individual programmes that bring together a very wide range of people – for example, great state occasions, important national sports events and high-quality entertainment.

4. Encourage interest in, and conversation about local communities.

The BBC should provide engaging output that gives an accurate picture of the many communities that make up the UK and that informs understanding and stimulates discussion about their concerns. The BBC should provide forums in which these communities can debate among themselves and with other UK communities.

5. Reflect the different religious and other beliefs in the UK.

The BBC should give people opportunities to understand the beliefs of others, and to examine their own beliefs critically.

6. Provide output in minority languages.

In its output, the BBC should support the UK's indigenous languages where appropriate. It may also provide output in other languages used by licence fee payers in appropriate contexts.

Guidance on how the Trust intends to measure performance against the Public Purpose priorities is contained in Annex I. Annex II explains the priorities, and how they have been developed, in more detail.

Annex I: Purpose Remit Measurement

In order to monitor the BBC's delivery of the Public Purposes, the Trust will use largely quantitative measures based on licence fee payer perceptions of the BBC's delivery of the Purpose priorities. In some cases it will be necessary to supplement or replace such measures with qualitative research on priorities which are not readily amenable to survey questions and therefore require more in-depth research. Where appropriate, the Trust will also gather comparative data, using its survey questions, to assess the BBC's performance relative to other media providers.

For details about how the Trust will use these measures in evaluating the BBC's effectiveness in delivering its Public Purposes, please see the Purpose Remit Operating Framework.

Priority (i): Represent the different nations, regions and communities to the rest of the UK.

The Trust will measure:

Audience perceptions of the BBC representing their area and community to other people in the UK.

Priority (ii): Cater for the different nations, regions and communities of the UK.

The Trust will measure:

Audience perceptions of the BBC catering for their area and community

Priority (iii): Bring people together for shared experiences.

The Trust will measure:

Audience perceptions of the BBC providing them with the opportunity to share and talk about the same experience with other people (such as major events, live events and entertainment events).

Priority (iv): Encourage interest in, and conversation about local communities.

The Trust will measure:

Audience perceptions of the BBC helping them to feel more involved in their local communities.

Priority (v): Reflect the different religious and other beliefs in the UK.

The Trust will measure:

Audience perceptions of the BBC raising their awareness and understanding of different religious and other beliefs.

Priority (vi): Provide output in minority languages.

The Trust will measure:

Audience perceptions of the BBC supporting their language with programming and other content.

The BBC's delivery of this priority will also be explored qualitatively amongst minority language speakers and those with an interest in indigenous or minority languages.

Annex II: Explanatory Note

Introduction

This Annex explains the background to the development of the 'representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities' Purpose Remit.

Under its Charter and the Agreement the BBC has six Public Purposes, which are:

1. sustaining citizenship and civil society;
2. promoting education and learning;
3. stimulating creativity and cultural excellence;
4. representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities;
5. bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK;
6. in promoting its other Purposes, helping to deliver to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services and, in addition, taking a leading role in the switchover to digital television.

For each Public Purpose the Trust must adopt a Purpose Remit setting out priorities and specifying how the Executive Board's performance against these priorities will be judged. The Trust must consult publicly in developing the Purpose Remits before adopting them.

The six Public Purposes should not be seen as entirely separate aims but as parts of a whole whose boundaries necessarily overlap. The six Remits should therefore be read together – and within the context of the BBC's overall mission to inform, educate and entertain.

Subsequent to public consultation, the Trust will use the Remits to commission Purpose Plans from the Executive Board. These will set out how the BBC's services and supporting activities will deliver the Purpose priorities. Once it has approved the Purpose Plans, the Trust will amend Service Licences, as necessary, to reflect the role that services play in delivering the priorities set out in Purpose Remits.

The Trust will conduct a full review of the Purpose Remits in 2011/12.

This Annex is divided into three sections:

1. Scope of the Public Purpose
This sets out the types of output and activities to be covered by the Purpose, as required by the Charter and Agreement.
2. Market Context and BBC Role

In this section the overall market context for the delivery of the Purpose is described, including major developments in terms of technologies, audiences and the wider political and policy context. Against this background, the BBC's particular role in delivering the Purpose is outlined.

3. Priorities

This section sets out, in detail, the priorities that the Trust has set the Executive Board.

1. Scope of the Public Purpose

The Agreement requires the Trust to ensure that the BBC: 'reflects and strengthens cultural identities through original content at local, regional and national level, on occasion bringing audiences together for shared experiences'. In addition, the BBC should 'promote awareness of different cultures and alternative viewpoints, through content that reflects the lives of different people and different communities within the UK'. The Trust is also required to 'have regard for the importance of reflecting different religious and other beliefs; and for the importance of appropriate provision in minority languages'.

2. Market Context and BBC Role

2.1 Market Context and Developments

Social context

The UK is made up of an increasingly diverse set of communities. These communities - which can be of place, or interest, or frequently of both - help to build and sustain individuals' sense of identity. Many individuals have, in effect, multiple identities deriving from their membership of a range of communities: a nation, a faith, an ethnicity, a locality - and within these, memberships of groups such as schools, sports clubs and so on.

Many UK communities have retained their strong historical sense of self. Others are changing rapidly in response to economic, social, cultural and demographic developments. The processes of devolution are strengthening the sense of a UK made up of four distinct nations. Net immigration is continuing. The number of people living in the UK who were born abroad is increasing and many individuals in the UK maintain links with their communities of origin outside the UK. At the same time, second and third generation non-indigenous communities continue to develop their own particular identities.

The opportunities for communities to develop, interact and present themselves to their own communities and to others will increase.

The original model of local and regional media is closely linked to geographical boundaries – for example, the circulation area of a newspaper, or the range of a broadcasting transmitter. In this model, local and regional media reflect and also reinforce geographical communities and the particular sense of identity they engender. But this model is breaking down as digital technology gives audiences easy access to content, and social networks, regardless of geographical boundaries. This enables new communities to form online, and also gives all communities increased opportunities to present themselves to others and to interact with them. As a result, membership of communities is increasingly likely to be self-defined rather than imposed by family or geography.

It will be easier for individuals to enter online communities of the like-minded and as a result spend less time taking part in the life of their local community and experiencing the diversity of the UK population. It may also make it more difficult to attract audiences to content that does not relate directly to their own interests.

Investment in traditional local, regional and nations' media has been under increasing pressure.

Traditional local and regional commercial media has been under increasing financial pressure as competition mounts for audiences and advertising expenditure. Digital technology is greatly increasing the pressure by enabling new entrants to come into this market – whether global media corporations or low-cost local operations. The result may be a further reduction in investment in local and regional content by commercial media.

'Localness' remains important to most people.

Despite the growing pressures on geographical communities, there is evidence that 'localness' continues to be important to many people. Most activities in people's daily lives are still carried out fairly close to home.¹

2.2 The BBC Role

This market context suggests the following public service imperatives:

¹ 'Redefining regions', The Future Foundation; September 2003

- to provide the information and the pathways that enable audiences to find out more about other communities within the UK;
- to enable the four UK nations to represent their cultural identity both to themselves and to the rest of the UK; to present and debate issues from their own perspective; and to reflect different regional identities within the nations;
- to bring audiences from disparate communities together to share significant events in the life of the UK. The BBC's coverage of sport in particular has a key role here.

In delivering this Remit, the BBC should take care not to undermine a continuing plurality of local and regional media. Wherever possible it should work in partnership with appropriate local and regional providers and always seek to complement rather than replicate their provision.

3. Priorities

In delivering this Purpose, the Trust will focus on the following priorities for the Executive Board, through which the BBC will also, to an appropriate extent, promote the delivery of the Public Purpose for 'leading digital switchover and encouraging emerging communications technologies'. The Trust has developed the following priorities with reference to the requirements of the Charter and Agreement, the emerging market context in which the BBC is operating and an understanding of the needs of licence fee payers.

(i) Represent the different nations, regions and communities to the rest of the UK.

In *Building Public Value*, the BBC document setting out its strategy for the Charter beginning in 2007, the BBC committed itself to 'reflect modern Britain's diversity in mainstream as well as specialist programmes and services' and to 'extend the opportunities for national cultural expression especially in mainstream programme forms'.

There is good evidence that audiences appreciate the work done by the BBC to represent the UK's nations, regions and communities,² but there is more to do. Within the BBC's coverage of the wider UK narrative, audiences want mainstream and specialist programming that portrays and celebrates the range of cultures and communities across the UK.

² BBC Charter Review: 'What You Said About the BBC', DCMS; July 2004

(ii) Cater for the different nations, regions and communities of the UK.

Audiences value the work the BBC does to cater for the interests of nations, regions and communities of the UK.³ This includes local services; programming tailored for the nations and regions; and output meeting the needs of minority communities. In *Building Public Value* the BBC committed itself to: 'provide civic and cultural support to communities all over the country...to reflect their concerns, celebrate their cultures and build a sense of place.' These communities include those of interest as well as of place.

(iii) Bring people together for shared experiences.

By bringing people together from diverse backgrounds to share experiences that bridge potential divides (for example, of age, or faith, or ethnicity), the BBC can build 'social capital'. Social capital can be thought of as the 'glue' which binds society together, creating trusting relationships between people and facilitating the smoother and more efficient working of society'.⁴ By virtue of its scale and reach, the BBC is in a unique position to create such experiences through, for example, the broadcasting of great state occasions, significant national sports events, and high-quality entertainment that draws large audiences.

(iv) Encourage interest in, and conversation about local communities.

It is important that promoting and reinforcing a sense of community does not deepen divides between communities. In order to keep UK society connected there is a need to ensure interaction between the UK's many communities. Promoting community debate is one way of achieving this. Local, regional and nations' news and current affairs should promote informed debate and enable audiences to build their knowledge and understanding of their own, and other, communities.

(v) Reflect the different religious and other beliefs in the UK.

In the UK's increasingly diverse society faith is a key aspect of personal identity for many people. As a public service broadcaster, the BBC has an important role to play in enabling people of different faiths, as well as those subscribing to non-religious belief systems, to understand each other and also to examine their own beliefs critically. This is

³ BBC Charter Review: 'What You Said About the BBC', DCMS; July 2004

⁴ 'Watching Alone, Social capital and public service broadcasting', Martin Brookes; 2004

particularly important at a time when faith is playing a critical role in shaping world events.

(vi) Provide output in minority languages.

The BBC has a well-established commitment to support the UK's indigenous minority languages and speakers of these languages place a high value on this commitment.⁵ Continuing and strengthening support from the BBC is crucial in safeguarding this key aspect of the UK's indigenous cultural heritage. It may also provide content in other minority languages in appropriate contexts.

⁵ BBC Charter Review: 'What You Said About the BBC', DCMS; July 2004