

Description of the BBC's new on-demand proposals

1. This document sets out a summary of BBC Management's proposals to launch a number of new public service offerings, which will provide the BBC's existing content on-demand to licence fee payers. The proposals are being considered by the BBC Governors through the Public Value Test process
2. Over the last eighteen months the BBC has conducted a number of trials to assess audience demand for new on-demand offerings. Trial initiatives included the Integrated Media Player, TV+¹, radio downloads, video on demand on cable and Homechoice and mobile coverage of major events. Having analysed the consumer research from these trials, BBC Management wishes to launch a number of new, complementary on-demand propositions. These proposals involve a substantial broadening of the current scope of existing offerings and an enhancement of their functionality. BBC Management believes this package represents an appropriate response to current and projected audience demand and fits with the BBC's strategy to deliver public value in the transition to digital.
3. The proposals are:
 - Seven day TV catch-up over the internet
 - Seven day TV catch-up over cable
 - Simulcast TV over the internet
 - Non-DRM audio downloads over the internet

Seven day TV catch-up over the internet

4. The proposed on-demand catch-up facility will give audiences access to the BBC's linear television schedule where rights costs allow. It will be principally organised around a seven day window from the point of original broadcast. The seven day window is defined as:
 - Audiences will have seven days from the point at which it is broadcast within which to receive the programme from the BBC². They will then have another seven days from the point at which the programme is first viewed to watch that programme as many times as they like. After seven days from the point at which the programme was first viewed, the file is deleted or permanently disabled.

¹ TV+ was a body of work that evaluated the opportunities that on-demand offers television

² Also includes packages of existing BBC radio content focused on particular genres, e.g. BBC Jazz or BBC Science

- In addition the service will include 'series stacking'³ whereby all of the episodes in a series are available from the BBC from the point at which they are broadcast until seven days after the transmission of the last episode in the series. The viewer is then able to watch any episode as many times as they like for seven days after the point at which each episode is first viewed. After seven days from the point at which it was opened the episode is deleted or permanently disabled.
 - The definition of the seven day window and the series stacking enhancement is designed to provide a basis for the PVT but could be changed in the future in response to evolving consumer behaviour. Any change would be subject to any appropriate regulatory approval.
5. Catch-up TV will be available in full screen quality as DRM protected downloads delivered via peer-to-peer. A certain amount of TV programmes will be available as quarter screen on demand streams.
 6. A more limited definition of Seven Day catch-up over the internet was evaluated through the Integrated Media Player (iMP) trial which ran from September 2005 until February 2006.
 7. While PVR technologies currently provide a more generous consumption window Seven day catch-up over the internet offers audiences two critical advantages:
 - Retrospective scheduling allows users to view a programme after it was broadcast without having to make the decision prior to transmission. This facility provides significantly more convenience i.e. read the review and then watch the programme. This feature also supports the public service broadcasting objective of creating shared experiences among audiences.
 - Seven day catch-up over the internet is able to place programming in a much richer context than basic PVR systems. TV or radio programmes can be linked to supporting web functionality such as additional material and search to create an overall experience that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Seven day TV catch-up over cable

8. This offering (Seven day TV catch-up over cable) will make BBC television content available on-demand within a seven day window via digital cable (ntl and Telewest) and Homechoice, building on the ongoing technical and consumer trials on these platforms. For these platforms the seven day window is defined as:

³ Series stacking will also apply to radio programming

- Audiences will have seven days from the point at which it is broadcast within which to view a programme. After seven days the programme will no longer be available on a public service basis.
- In addition the service will include 'series stacking' whereby all of the episodes in a series are available for viewing from the point at which they are broadcast until seven days after the transmission of the last episode in the series. After this point all episodes will no longer be available on a public service basis.

Simulcast TV over the internet

9. This will provide UK audiences with the ability to watch the BBC's existing television channels. Simulcast TV over the internet will be provided via multicast streaming

Non-DRM downloads over the internet

10. The provision of audio programmes and material related to audio programming (with the exception of full track commercial music) without Digital Rights Management (DRM) protection alongside the existing seven day on-demand audio service, where the rights holders agree that this form of distribution is appropriate. Removing DRM restrictions allows a broader range of devices to access the material, extending audience choice around where and when they consume BBC programming.
11. The three internet-based offerings will be combined into a direct-to-consumer offering, BBC iPlayer version 1.0⁴, which will incorporate all the existing BBC players and consoles under a consistent user interface and brand⁵. In summary, BBC iPlayer version 1.0 is designed to unify the BBC's provision of audio and video content on-demand and to make it available to UK audiences over the internet.

Further information

12. Delivery over the internet means that BBC iPlayer will deliver content to any device that is connected to the internet, subject to the connection speed being sufficiently fast to allow transfer of rich media assets in a reasonable time. In practice, this means that the service will be available primarily to users with a broadband connection. Where distribution is via downloading, programme files will be available in a range of formats which will affect the size of each

⁴ Note that Non-DRM downloads will also be accessible through podcasting portals such as iTunes

⁵ Radio Player, News Player, Weather Player, Sport Player and Media Console Player

file. The range of formats will be determined by a number of considerations: editorial, audience demand and technical.

13. Currently most broadband connections run to a PC (located at home or in the office), and so viewing is likely initially to occur in front of a computer screen. Wireless devices with the equivalent of a broadband connection to the internet e.g. 3G, may also be able to access on-demand content. Where programmes are downloaded to view (e.g. catch-up), it may be possible to transfer them to portable devices through synchronisation with a computer subject to supporting appropriate DRM.
14. Over time, convergence of technologies is likely to mean more devices become internet enabled, e.g. set top boxes for linear digital television reception. It is anticipated that BBC iPlayer would become available through such converged devices.
15. In release 1.0, existing types of audio and video content that are currently restricted to the UK will continue to be restricted to the UK, and content types that are available internationally will continue to be available internationally. But 7 day TV catch up over the internet and Simulcast TV over the internet will be restricted to the UK only, with the exception of non-DRM protected material⁶.

⁶ While the availability from bbc.co.uk of non-DRM downloads may or may not be restricted or qualified in some way, by definition audiences will be able to subsequently share this material outside of any geographic, device or time limited conditions