

RESPONSE BY THE INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING TRUST TO THE BBC TRUST'S REVIEW SERVICES AND CONTENT FOR YOUNGER AUDIENCES 13-34

December 2008

INTRODUCTION

While we broadly applaud the BBC for its output for younger audiences which includes factual, drama, animation and entertainment, we urge the BBC Executive and the BBC Trust to work harder to deliver content which meets the public purposes as defined in the BBC Charter and their related purpose remits, especially the purpose remit Bringing the UK to the World and the World to the UK which IBT believes is being under-served currently in all genres of programming outside news at a time when it is apparent the world is becoming increasingly interconnected.

We agree fully with Richard Sambrook of the BBC when he states:

*'There was an argument... that local and national identities had the upper hand and therefore local and national media would kill off the international broadcaster. Then came the major forces which underpin globalisation: international security, migration, the concerns over climate change and the worries about the interconnectedness of the global economy. These issues, and many more, have made people realise that the forces that impact on their lives are not just about their village, their city, their country. They are international forces, ones that are not constrained by the nation state, not soluble by them. Now audiences need both their national and international media to understand their world.'*¹

It is clear from recent events – whether they be the terrorist attacks in Mumbai or the events which lead up to the current economic crisis - that UK citizens need to be better informed about what is going on internationally in order for them to play a full role as global citizens. Yet there is evidence that the UK public's awareness of the wider world is very low:

¹ Richard Sambrook, Director BBC Global News, International Radio Forum May 2008

When asked to name countries currently experiencing conflict, while 69% and 65% of those questioned identified Iraq and Afghanistan respectively, less than 1% of respondents were able to identify other countries including Sudan, Somalia, and Central African Republic. Almost one in five (18%) were unable to name five countries in the world in conflict²

It is IBT's view that while news and current affairs provide an essential window on international events, the very nature of news and current affairs reporting tends to focus on disasters and extraordinary events rather than the everyday life of people in other countries. This content about daily life may appear more mundane than 'disaster' news but in order to have a balanced understanding of the world, the public needs to be presented with engaging content which tells the other side of the story – across all genres of programming which should include children's, drama, specialist factual, and even entertainment.

IBT also believes that not all young people are engaged by news and current affairs, therefore IBT strongly urges that the BBC takes a more comprehensive approach to content about the wider world for the younger audience, by providing more accessible, engaging content across all genres, including drama, factual, specialist factual and entertainment.

BBC PURPOSE REMITS & SERVICE LICENCES

While we recognise that the six public purposes should not be seen as entirely separate aims but as parts of a whole, whose boundaries necessarily overlap, in this submission, we primarily focus on the delivery of the purpose remit, Bringing the UK to the world and the World to the UK since this is IBT's area of expertise. We focus on television provision by BBC Three because, again, this is where our expertise lies and do not extensively address radio.

Without quoting the entire wording of the purpose remit Bringing the UK to the World and the World to the UK, there is one paragraph in the annexe which IBT believes are crucial to BBC output for young people and would like to draw attention to it within this submission:

'...a public service imperative for the BBC [should be] to make UK audiences aware of international issues, cultures and viewpoints. This should be achieved through the

² Poll of 2072 people across the UK, conducted by ICM on behalf of the British Red Cross, 2008

provision of engaging content across a wide range of genres and across all BBC platforms.’³

We broadly support this definition of the purpose remit Bringing the UK to the World and the World to the UK, and we applaud the expressed ambition to inform and engage viewers with what is happening in the wider world.

With reference to BBC Three’s performance relating to this purpose remit, we applaud the innovation shown by the channel in its approach to programming about the wider world, however we would like to see more explicit commitment to this type of programming in the channel’s Service Licence. The Service Licence currently demands that BBC Three should mainly deliver the purpose Bringing the UK to the World and the World to the UK through ‘news and current affairs’ which, as we stated above, tends to focus on disasters and not on everyday life . IBT believes that through programming such as *Jamelia: whose hair is it anyway*; *Last Man standing*; *Worlds Strictest Parents*; *Blood Sweat and T-shirts*; *Last millionaire*; *Jack: A soldier’s story* that BBC Three is already providing a range of programming about the wider world outside news and current affairs and we would like to see this delivery reflected more formally in its Service Licence to guarantee continued delivery of such programming in future.

MAINSTREAM PROGRAMMING

While we recognise that this consultation focuses on output on BBC Three we believe there should be an ambition to make programming which attracts and engages the 16-34 age group on BBC1 and BBC2 as well as BBC Three because these channels attract far larger audiences, budgets and marketing resources.

Therefore, we encourage the BBC Trust and BBC Executive to examine whether this purpose remit is being adequately delivered to a mainstream audience across all programming genres and platforms and to take steps to ensure it is given greater priority, in line with the other five purpose remits.

IBT 2008 RESEARCH

We stated in IBT’s submission to the BBC Trust for the purpose remits consultation in April 2007, “there appears to be little or no ambition to engage a mass audience at peak time in matters outside the UK”⁴. IBT’s 2008 *Screening the World* research demonstrates this point clearly.

Screening the World (2008), shows that if current trends continue on mainstream television, instead of broadening understanding, television is likely to limit people’s

³ BBC Trust, Purpose Remits, Bringing the UK to the World and the World to the UK, annexe II, para 2.2 The BBC Role

⁴ IBT submission to BBC Trust Purpose Remit Consultation, April 2007, p 3

horizons. It is doing this by increasingly reinforcing stereotypes about other countries and moving programmes about international affairs onto niche channels which attract far fewer viewers and smaller budgets.

*'The longitudinal element of this research reveals some striking trends. International factual programming on the four main terrestrial channels has now reached its lowest overall level since 1989-90. The increasing levels of output on BBC3, BBC4 and More4 point to the migration of international factual content to digital channels. And the collapse in recorded programme hours of international and developing country factual programming on ITV1 is striking.'*⁵

Additionally, the *Screening the World* (2008) research provides evidence that the information we receive on television about the world outside the UK is oversimplified and reinforces stereotypes, rather than increasing our understanding:

*'Africa receives relatively little coverage and is dominated by wildlife programming whereas the Middle East is dominated by conflict and disaster programming. Europe and North America together make up 47% of all international factual output and are characterised by high levels of travel and crime programming respectively.'*⁶

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS POSED IN CONSULTATION

Part 1: The BBC and young people

1. How well is the BBC serving young people aged 13-34?

IBT believes that 16 to 34 year olds are relatively well served by BBC Three but believes that the 13-16 year old age group is seriously underserved by the BBC as a whole.

How effectively is the BBC delivering its public purposes to them?

With reference to IBT's area of expertise and the purpose remit Bringing the World to the UK, we applaud the imagination and innovation of BBC Three.

To name some of the programmes which we believe have engaged a younger audience with stories from outside the UK which have been transmitted over the past 12 months: *Jamelia: whose hair is it anyway; Last Man standing; Worlds Strictest Parents; Blood Sweat and T-shirts; Last millionaire; Jack: A soldier's story.*

⁵ Screening the World, IBT, 2008

⁶ Screening the World, IBT, 2008

We would encourage more output like these programmes because in 2007 IBT's research⁷ shows that 24.2 hours of new programming which focused on the world outside the UK was transmitted out of a potential 3094 hours of programming during the year. It is our belief that while BBC Three's approach to content about the wider world is to be applauded for its imagination and accessibility, that there should be more of it.

Additionally, IBT would like to highlight that all these programmes are factual programmes and we encourage Channel Controllers and Commissioning Editors to consider other genres as appropriate for engaging content about the world outside the UK – including especially drama.

Is BBC content available to young people in convenient ways and times?

If CBBC were able to transmit until 9pm serving the 13-16 age group or BBC3 were able to begin transmission earlier in the day with programming aimed at the 13-16 age group we believe this would be very beneficial to this sector of the audience.

Are there particular groups amongst 13-34 year olds that the BBC needs to work harder at serving (defined, for instance, by age, gender, social grade or ethnicity)?

Recent research carried out by DFID shows that young people are interested and concerned with what is going on in the wider world: 'Over eight in ten young people are concerned about global poverty and the vast majority agree that we should try to help people in poor countries.'⁸

When questioned about their most popular sources of information about what is happening in poor countries (posed with the question: how do you find out about what is happening in poor countries?') the results firmly establish that television is their primary source of information about the wider world:

75% said school lessons were their main source of information, closely followed by 72% who said they found out about poor countries via television news and only 29% the internet.⁹

When broken down into age groups it is interestingly the older age group, 15-16 year olds, who especially prioritise tv news (80%), while 67% of 13-14 year olds and 70% of 11-12 year olds used tv as their main source. It appears that currently television is still

⁷ Screening the World, IBT, 2008

⁸ UK-wide youth omnibus survey run by GfKNOP, April-July 2008.

⁹ UK-wide youth omnibus survey run by GfKNOP, April-July 2008. Base: all children aged 11-16 in education (1058)

overwhelmingly the most important source of information about the wider world for young people.

IBT believes that this audience, the 13-16 year olds, is currently seriously underserved with information about the world outside the UK on the BBC. They often have no option other than to watch programming designed for an adult audience because there is little provision designed specifically for this age group.

Quoting the BBC website: *'CBBC is for primary school children aged 6-12 years. We want to reflect the lives of our audience and to give them multi-platform content which is innovative, challenging and infectious.'*¹⁰

While BBC Three is described as follows: *'The channel needs to be disciplined about focusing on the young - its centre of gravity will be 16-35 year-olds, people who are young in spirit and mindset.'*¹¹

While some effort was made by the launch of *Switch* to address this significant gap in provision, it is in our opinion rather tokenistic - there is little marketing of the programming either on radio or television and we believe that more programming of this type should be made available on the terrestrial BBC channels. There is content available online but because this is as yet not a universal platform therefore for the purpose of this review we will disregard it. We welcome the statement by Jana Bennett in 2008 when she said, *"We want to extend our hours on BBC Three into the afternoon - so Switch would have a role there as well,"*¹² and we would urge the Trust to approve this extension to allow for the transmission of more programming aimed at 13-16 year olds.

Thus, in conclusion, we urge the BBC Trust to examine whether the BBC is delivering adequate engaging programming for 13-16 year olds, especially that which provides them with a window on the wider world in order that they may develop into adults with an awareness and understanding of what is happening outside the UK.

Additionally, IBT would like to highlight that the needs and tastes of the younger ethnic minority audience should be fully considered in the programming decisions made by the BBC Executive. In 2007 Ofcom found that *'Qualitative research identified a strong feeling of dissatisfaction with the mainstream media in the UK [among ethnic minority audiences].'*¹³

¹⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/tv/network/channels/cbbc.shtml>

¹¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/tv/network/channels/bbcthree.shtml>

¹² What Satellite and Digital TV May 15th 2008

¹³ New News, Future News, Ofcom, July 2007.

How well do the BBC's formal learning resources help young people learn? (These include the BBC Schools webpages and programmes on BBC Two.)

Not relevant to IBT

Part 2: Services targeted at younger audiences – Radio 1, 1Xtra and BBC Three

2. How well are these services performing against their Service Licences? The service licences can be found on the Trust website

BBC Three

We applaud BBC Three because much of its content exhibits all the characteristics outlined in its Service Licence, namely, high quality, original, challenging, innovative and engaging.

We believe that BBC Three's greatest achievement with reference to its Service Licence is in delivering purpose 2 – 'promoting education and learning' in that it does approach content 'by tackling relevant topics in ways that feel different, original and interesting to [the target audience] through entertainment, factual and drama programming'.¹⁴

However we would like to see the commitment to provide such innovative and engaging programming in the Service Licence extended to the purpose Bringing the World to the UK. The Service Licence demands that BBC Three should mainly deliver this purpose through 'news and current affairs' which, as we stated above, tends to focus on disasters and not on everyday life .

IBT believes that through programming such as *Jamelia: whose hair is it anyway*; *Last Man standing*; *Worlds Strictest Parents*; *Blood Sweat and T-shirts*; *Last millionaire*; *Jack: A soldier's story* that BBC Three is already achieving this commitment and we would like to see this delivery reflected more formally in its Service Licence to formalise and guarantee continued delivery of such programming in future.

Radio 1

While IBT's expertise does not lie in radio, we believe that more could be done by Radio 1 to contribute to the audience's engagement with and understanding of the wider world beyond information in news bulletins. We believe there is a real opportunity here to replicate some of the success seen on BBC Three in engaging a young audience with the wider world.

¹⁴ BBC Three Service Licence. Issued 7 April 2008. Para 5.2

3. What contribution do these services make to the BBC's task of serving younger audiences?

It is IBT's opinion that currently BBC Three provides an essential service in engaging the younger audience with the world outside the UK but we would encourage the channel to continue to produce more programming which tells us about the wider world.

4. Do the services need to change in any way to deliver their current remits more effectively? To take account of developments in markets and technologies? To address any weaknesses identified in the BBC's overall provision?

As stated above, IBT would like to see more programming which Brings the World to the UK in genres other than news and current affairs.

It can be seen from IBT's research that drama is potentially a very powerful vehicle for stories about the wider world.

'Television and the internet are the most regularly used media, but feature films emerge as surprisingly influential amongst the young people we interviewed. The discussions we witnessed around films representing Africa –like The Last King of Scotland, Blood Diamond and Tsotsi – were long and intense, and they provoked heavy criticism of traditional media images of Africa.

'Coverage of Africa in the media has always been bad. You never hear anything good.' (Female, Leeds). *'I think with Africa a lot of your education comes from the media. You see a lot of poverty out there. For example, on Family Fortunes, if the first question was "What do you associate with Africa", I could guarantee the top two answers would be something to do with poverty.'* (Male, West Yorkshire).

Although they found the feature films dominated by violence, most young people could see their informative value. 'Hotel Rwanda – I saw it in college. It's good... quite shocking.' (Female, Barnet, north London) *'Hotel Rwanda is a really strong film. A lot of people who watched it were crying their eyes out. It's really good. You get the facts as well.'* (Male, Barnet, north London)¹⁵

We believe that it should be a priority for the BBC to provide such dramas for a younger audience.

¹⁵ Study of young people aged 18-25, Reflecting the Real World 2, 2007

Additionally we would welcome more campaigns and features about the wider world on Radio 1 and 1Xtra.

Background: IBT

The International Broadcasting Trust (IBT) is an amalgamation of two sister organisations: the former Third World and Environment Broadcasting Project (3WE) and former International Broadcasting Trust (IBT). The new IBT is a charity which seeks to promote high quality television and new media coverage of matters of international significance. In the past, 3WE has been active in this area and this submission fully reflects 3WE's long history of campaigning on these issues and arguing that international coverage on television is a necessary tool in informing us all, as global citizens.

IBT represents a coalition of international charities. Its members include: ActionAid, Amnesty International, British Red Cross, CAFOD, Care UK, Christian Aid, Comic Relief, Concern UK, Friends of the Earth, Merlin, Oxfam, Plan UK, Practical Action, Progressio, RSPB, Save the Children, Sightsavers International, Skillshare International, Tearfund, TVE, UNA UK, UNICEF UK, VSO, the World Association for Christian Communication and World Vision. IBT is a registered charity, number 326150.

The views in this submission reflect the concerns of IBT's member agencies regarding adequate common understanding of the world in which we live. These concerns are shared by millions of UK supporters of our organisations. IBT's members, being intimately and operationally concerned with the effects of 'globalisation' on communities and environments around the world, and with communicating across the world, welcome the advent of the global information society.

IBT's argument, reflected in all our policy work since 1997, is that television coverage of the developing world should not just focus on images of suffering which is more often than not what is presented in news coverage. It is IBT's view that an international dimension should be an integral part of all programming.

PLEASE PRINT AND SIGN THIS DECLARATION ALONGSIDE OF YOUR RESPONSE.

If you would prefer that all or part of your response is treated as confidential, please complete the confidentiality section below.

What do you want the BBC Trust to keep confidential?

Nothing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Whole response	
Part of it	[please indicate which part]

Name/ Organisation: Sophie Chalk, International Broadcasting Trust
Address 23 The Embankment, Twickenham, TW1 3DU
Other contact details (telephone, email) sophie.chalk@btinternet.com ; 020 8892 7297

The BBC Trust will retain and use your name, address, email address and organisation you work for (if applicable) for the purposes of administering the public consultations on the younger audiences service review. You will have the option of deciding whether you want your response and name displayed on the BBC Trust's website, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust> (all other personal information will be withheld from display). Your personal details will not be passed to any third parties for marketing purposes.

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If you have requested that all or part of your response should be kept confidential, the BBC will take reasonable steps to maintain confidentiality of that information if a request for its disclosure is received under the Act. Please note, however, that in the event the BBC is able to withhold information under the Act, this decision may be overturned by the Information Commissioner, the Information Tribunal or the courts. Please note that we may still refer to the contents of responses in general terms, without disclosing specific information that is confidential. We will exercise due regard to the confidentiality of information supplied.

DECLARATION

I confirm that the information I have submitted is a formal consultation response. It can be published in full on the BBC Trust's website, unless otherwise specified, and I authorise the BBC Trust to make use of the information in this response to meet its legal requirements. If I have sent my response by email, the BBC can disregard any standard e-mail text about not disclosing email contents and attachments.

Name Signed (if hard copy) Sophie Chalk