

BBC review to focus on impartiality and 'levelling up' job opportunities

A review of the BBC has been launched to consider if reforms are needed to help it achieve greater impartiality and build a more diverse workforce.

The first Mid-Term Review – launched at the halfway point of the BBC's ten-year Royal Charter – will assess whether current regulations and governance could be improved to ensure it is delivering for licence fee payers.

The terms of the review are published today and reveal it will focus on the BBC's compliance with editorial standards and evaluate how it is representing audiences from working class backgrounds.

It will look at the effectiveness of the BBC's editorial complaints process, including Ofcom's role in holding it to account, and inspect the corporation's market impact on the UK media landscape, in particular in areas such as the commercial radio and local news sectors.

Following discussions with the broadcaster, the Culture Secretary has also today issued a new legal direction to the BBC to make sure it promotes equality of opportunity for people from working class backgrounds.

Changes to the Framework Agreement, a document which includes further detail on the BBC's regulatory duties as outlined in the Charter, will give the corporation a legal duty to follow through on commitments to do more to reflect under-represented people and perspectives, reflecting this government's desire to see a BBC that promotes greater diversity of opinion.

This includes a target for 25 per cent of staff to be from low socio-economic backgrounds, making sure 50 per cent of radio and 60 per cent of TV programme production spend is outside London by the end of 2027, and delivering 1,000 apprenticeships per year by 2025.

Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

The BBC is a world-class broadcaster but one which has to adapt to a rapidly changing landscape just like all broadcasters are. The Government is committed to ensuring the BBC is more impartial, more accessible and more reflective of our country's variety of viewpoints.

This review will build on our recent progress to make the BBC more accountable to those who fund it, level up people's access to the job opportunities it offers and ensure it continues to work in the best interest of the public.

In addition, the review will assess the arrangements of the BBC's commercial

subsidiaries – such as BBC Studios – to ensure they appropriately support its public service activities, can operate effectively and do not create an unfair competitive advantage in accordance with the corporation’s Charter.

The Mid-Term Review may recommend changes for consideration at the next BBC Charter Review or it could lead to updates to the Framework Agreement before the review, which would require agreement between the government and the BBC, together with Ofcom’s input where relevant.

It is the first time in 12 years the Framework Agreement has been updated during a Charter period, and the first update since the current Charter began in 2017.

The broadcaster will be obliged to report on its progress in its Annual Report and Accounts, supporting Parliament and the public to hold the BBC to account on delivery.

Separately, the government will soon launch a review of the BBC licence fee and the feasibility of alternative funding models in advance of the next Charter which is due to commence in 2028.

ENDS

Notes for editors

Mid Term Review

The Charter clarifies that the Mid-Term Review is a “review focusing on the governance and regulatory arrangements for the BBC”. It specifies that the review must take place between 2022 and 2024. The Charter also states that the review cannot look at the BBC’s Mission, Public Purposes or the licence fee funding model for the period of this Charter.

The Mid-Term Review will have a particular focus on the following issues:

- Editorial standards and impartiality: assessing the effectiveness of the BBC’s governance mechanisms (including changes made in the light of the [Serota Review](#)) in ensuring compliance with its editorial standards including impartiality requirements, and the regulatory arrangements for the enforcement of the BBC’s content standards;
- Complaints: the way the BBC handles complaints through its BBC First system, and Ofcom’s framework for assessing BBC complaints as part of ensuring effective oversight of the BBC and its relationship with licence fee payers;
- Commercial governance and regulation: whether the governance and regulatory arrangements of the BBC’s commercial subsidiaries ensure the effective functioning of the BBC’s commercial subsidiaries in accordance with its Charter obligations and appropriately support the BBC’s ability to maximise revenue in support of its public service activities;
- Competition and market impact: evaluating how the BBC and Ofcom assess the market impact and public value of the BBC in an evolving marketplace and how that relates to the BBC’s role in the UK media ecology,

including with regard to commercial radio and local news sectors and other content makers and distributors;

- Diversity: evaluating how well the BBC's governance arrangements deliver on the duty for the BBC and its output to reflect the entirety of the whole United Kingdom, including how it ensures diverse perspectives and interests are taken into account, and its duty to enter partnerships with other organisations throughout the UK, and also the extent of Ofcom's regulation of these requirements; and
- Transparency: assessing the way in which BBC governance mechanisms support the BBC's duty to demonstrate high standards of openness and transparency in the BBC's reporting of progress against key commitments and performance against the above themes, and the extent of Ofcom's regulation of that transparency.

Framework Agreement

It is an agreement between DCMS and the BBC which sits alongside the Royal Charter, providing further detail on the BBC's obligations and responsibilities.

The updates to the Framework Agreement now include new BBC commitments to:

- More fully reflect and represent people and perspectives in the UK that currently are under-represented in the BBC's content;
- Increase investment outside of London, with 60% of radio and 50% of TV programme production expenditure to be outside London by the end of 2027;
- Deliver 1,000 apprenticeships per year by the end of 2025;
- Make progress on workforce accessibility targets, including the new target for 25% of staff to be from low socio-economic backgrounds;
- Report on how the BBC's commercial activities increase the UK's cultural and economic impact abroad.

The agreement also reflects BBC Board's responsibility to oversee the delivery of the BBC's impartiality action plan and assess the BBC's performance against its editorial standards as recommended by the Serota Review.