

UNCERTAIN FUTURE



WHY THE BBC
MUST SURVIVE

SECTION ONE

War on the BBC

In 2022 the BBC celebrates 100 years of broadcasting. 2022 has also seen the intensification of attacks on the BBC by forces, which, for many years, have eroded its finances and want to eradicate it as a serious competitor to the large commercial media organisations.

The BBC has many flaws. But the fact that it proves broadcasting can be run with incredible success as a public service, obliged to attempt to balance different political positions, is the very reason its enemies, both commercial and political, want rid of it.

Since the 1980s, public services have been radically undermined – contracting out in the NHS and local government coupled with a real freeze in funding have been the norm, as part of policies designed to make profits for large companies, weaken organised labour and undermine public control over key services.

The attacks on the BBC are part of this same process. We need to look for ways of fighting for a strong, democratically accountable communications system, built on the principles of public service broadcasting. Market driven broadcasting, like market driven health and education services, serve nobody's interest, except the already rich and powerful.

of its coverage of the Suez Crisis in 1956. In 1968 the Labour Minister, Anthony Wedgwood Benn, said 'Broadcasting is really too important to leave to the broadcasters.'

In the 1970s it was attacked by all sides for its coverage of the crisis in Northern Ireland. Its programmes were also alleged to have encouraged the breakdown of social deference, and fostered the 'permissive society'.

In the 1980s, the attacks took on a far more intense form, particularly those launched by the Thatcher government, which accused the BBC of 'disloyalty' and even 'treachery' over its reporting of the Falklands War, the bombing of Libya by the USA and the ongoing Northern Ireland 'troubles', among many other things. On the other hand, many on the Left were outraged by the BBC's coverage of the industrial action provoked by the government's attacks on organised labour, culminating in the 1984-85 miners' strike, coverage which they regarded as taking the government's side.

But it was the Thatcher government's commitment to promoting market forces right across the economy, and in particular in public services, that brought a whole new dimension to the attacks – namely an economic one. The neo-liberal Adam Smith Institute attacked the BBC as a public monopoly and argued that it should be broken up and privatised. The right-wing press, led by Rupert Murdoch's *Times* newspaper, campaigned vociferously and repeatedly for the introduction of advertising on the BBC.

In 1986 the Committee on the Financing of the BBC, chaired by the neo-liberal economist, Alan Peacock, a member of the pro-market Institute of Economic Affairs, reported. The Committee was set up to recommend advertising on the BBC but it rejected this policy and argued instead that, with the coming of new technologies such as cable and satellite broadcasting, 'British broadcasting should move towards a sophisticated market system based on consumer sovereignty'. Once the technology allowed, the BBC should become a subscription service.

Much has happened since, but the script has remained the same.

Under the Tory governments elected after 2010 the attacks intensified once again. A squeeze on the licence fee between 2010 and 2020 slashed the BBC's income by 30%. The BBC has also been forced to pay for broadband roll out, the Welsh language TV channel S4C, local television, the funding of local democracy reporters on local and regional newspapers, BBC monitoring and the World Service. This meant further cuts in the BBC, as the licence fee was made to pay for things it was never designed to cover.

The Tories also forced the BBC to take over payment for free licence fees for the over 75s. This

Attacks on the BBC are relentless in the right-wing press



We focus on the BBC in this pamphlet but it is part of a public service system that includes ITV, Channel 5 and Channel 4, all commercially funded but required to provide public service broadcasting. The government has announced its intention to privatise Channel 4, which is currently publicly owned but costs the taxpayer nothing. Selling Channel 4 to private owners is strongly opposed across the UK television industry and will be challenged inside and outside Parliament in the coming months.

But what's new? Hasn't the BBC always been the butt of attacks?

That's true. In the 1930s Tories attacked the BBC for the way it reported unemployment and the Labour Party complained it was not given a fair hearing. In the late 1940s critics attacked the BBC's broadcasting monopoly, claiming that more competition would make better broadcasting. Regulated competition came with ITV but that didn't stop the attacks. The BBC came under fire by the Tory government because

proved too expensive, and the BBC had to end support for that concession in 2021. The BBC got the blame, not the government – a message that was hammered home repeatedly by the Tory press.

Executives from one of the BBC's greatest enemies, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp and News UK, met Tory ministers on 40 occasions between July 2019 and February 2021. Only the *Daily Mail* group came near to that total, with 16. And the *Mail* is also a longstanding enemy of the BBC. Murdoch met Boris Johnson three times in the first 14 months of his premiership.

Three days before the 2019 General Election, Johnson said he was 'certainly looking' at the future of the licence fee. In 2020, the highly influential neo-liberal Institute of Economic Affairs reasserted its longstanding demand that the BBC be funded not by the licence fee but by subscription, as 'changes in technology mean that the current approach to financing, owning and regulating the BBC is no longer tenable'. There was 'no need for specific policy in relation to public service broadcasting'.

In August a group of Tory MPs wrote to the BBC accusing it of being seen as 'anti-British politically biased ... and ... out of touch with its core audience'. This was but the most recent of the attacks on the BBC by the Tories which, as noted above, have now been going on for over 40 years. In January 2022 the Culture Secretary, Nadine Dorries, froze the BBC's funding for two years and said 'she could not envisage a world where households in 2028 were still paying a fee based on ownership of a television'.

In the lead up to the next BBC Royal Charter in 2027, the pressure to reduce the presence of the BBC in the media market, to reduce its independence still further and to make it more compliant to government policies will intensify. We need to be aware of what is at stake in this war on the BBC.

SECTION TWO

Why is the BBC vulnerable to attack?

Is the BBC independent from direct government control?

The BBC is established under the terms of a Royal Charter, which means that the process of BBC Charter renewal is not subject to Parliamentary scrutiny. This gives the government immense influence over the Corporation. The current Charter expires on 31 December 2027. The Chair of the BBC Board is appointed by the government, which oversees the committee which

nominates the rest of the Board's non-executive members.

Politics plays a major role in who gets to run the BBC. Governments use their power to manipulate senior appointments. In 1986 Margaret Thatcher, advised by Rupert Murdoch, appointed Marmaduke Hussey (a former chief executive and managing director of Times Newspapers) Chair of the Board of Governors. In 1987 he forced the resignation of the Director General (DG) Alisdair Milne, because Milne had stood up to Thatcher's attacks on the BBC.

In 2001 Tony Blair appointed Gavyn Davis as Chair. He resigned in 2004, along with the DG Greg Dyke, in the wake of the findings of the report by the government-appointed Hutton Committee, which condemned the BBC's editorial decision to broadcast a *Today* programme report about the government's decision to go to war in Iraq.

Tim Davie, a former deputy chairman of the Hammersmith and Fulham Conservative Party, became DG in 2020. In 2021 Sir Robbie Gibb, a Brexiter with close links to the Conservative Party, joined the BBC Board. He had written scathingly about the BBC in a 2020 *Telegraph* article, accusing it of having been 'culturally captured by the woke-dominated group think of some of its own staff'.

Is the BBC allowed to decide what new services to deliver?

The Charter requires the BBC to 'have particular regard to the effects of its activities on broadcasting competition in the United Kingdom'. Proposals for new BBC services are checked by the market-oriented regulator, Ofcom, which subjects them to a 'market impact study' in order to ensure that commercial broadcasting services will not be negatively affected by the proposals. No such requirement is placed on commercial media when launching services which might damage the BBC.

Nor is Ofcom the only body that has the power to limit the BBC's activities. One particularly striking case of the BBC being prevented from developing new services was the blocking by the Competition Commission of Project Kangaroo, a joint venture between ITV, Channel 4 and BBC Worldwide to develop an online streaming service, because it 'would be too much of a threat to competition in this developing market'. This happened in February 2009. Britbox, which is effectively Kangaroo under a new name, was finally launched in the UK in November 2019.

It's Not Perfect

Ofcom has been responsible for regulating the BBC since 2017. In its latest report it says, "Given the

"Changes in technology mean that the current approach to financing, owning and regulating the BBC is no longer tenable"

Culture Secretary, Nadine Dorries (left), is hostile to public service broadcasting



"Unfortunately, the BBC tends to take the line that if it's being attacked by both sides, it's probably got the balance about right"

BBC Panorama reporter, Martin Bashir (right)

The Daily Express seizes every opportunity to attack the licence fee



importance of the BBC to many people in the UK we have consistently called for the BBC to be more transparent."

People often feel there is a lack of public accountability on the part of the BBC, a sense that, in its own eyes it can do no wrong. When people want to make legitimate complaints about programmes the procedure is complex and frustrating.

When the BBC makes mistakes the consequences are often high-profile, damaging and costly – and are eagerly exploited by its enemies in the press and Parliament.

One example is the *Newsnight* programme on Jimmy Savile, scheduled to be broadcast on 7 December 2011 which claimed he had sexually abused children. It was cancelled at the last moment and the two journalists working on it took their story to ITV where it was finally transmitted on 3 October 2012.

A report by Nick Pollard, former Head of Sky News, concluded the BBC's 'rigid management chains' made it incapable of 'handling the Savile case'.

More recently there was the controversy over Martin Bashir and the *Panorama* interview with Princess Diana. The subsequent report by Lord Dyson in May 2021 was damning. It accused the BBC of covering up the methods used by Bashir to make the programme and criticised the BBC's own investigation in April 1996 by then Head of News, Tony Hall, and Ann Sloman, the head of weekly news shows, as 'woefully inadequate'.

It's Not Impartial

As noted above, the charge that BBC news and current affairs programmes are biased comes from both the right and the left, although the former are far louder, given that they're amplified daily by right-wing newspapers which are bitterly hostile to any form of public enterprise. They want the BBC to be as slavish a cheerleader for the Tory government as they themselves are, and whose billionaire owners long to destroy a competitor.

Unfortunately, the BBC tends to take the line that if it's being attacked by both sides, it's probably got the balance about right. However, it could equally well be the case that how it understands impartiality needs radically rethinking.

The *Ofcom Broadcasting Code* requires that 'news, in whatever form, must be reported with due accuracy and presented with due impartiality', and one of the five public purposes spelled out in the

BBC Charter is 'to provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them'. The *BBC Editorial Guidelines* stress the importance of achieving due impartiality, and explain that this:

"usually involves more than a simple matter of 'balance' between opposing viewpoints. We must be inclusive, considering the broad perspective and ensuring that the existence of a range of views is appropriately reflected. It does not require absolute neutrality on every issue or detachment from fundamental democratic principles, such as the right to vote, freedom of expression and the rule of law. We are committed to reflecting a wide range of subject matter and perspectives across our output as a whole and over an appropriate timeframe so that no significant strand of thought is under-represented or omitted ... We must always scrutinise arguments, question consensus and hold power to account with consistency and due impartiality".

The fulcrum on which the BBC conducts its 'balancing' act largely replicates or mirrors the political one, in that it attempts to balance out the main political views represented at Westminster (and, albeit to a considerably lesser extent, at Edinburgh, Cardiff and Stormont).

Its political coverage has always tended to favour the governments of the day (unsurprisingly, as they hold the purse strings). It is thus equally unsurprising that in recent years the BBC's fulcrum has shifted to the right, or what Tariq Ali calls the 'extreme centre', given twelve years of

Tory governments and Labour's continuing rightwards shift (broken only by the brief Corbyn interregnum).

Such a conclusion is borne out by virtually all academic research, most of which concludes that the resulting bias is less deliberate and conscious and more the consequence of taken-for-granted working practices and uncritical journalistic assumptions, as well as governmental pressure and spin and the powerful pull exerted by the news agenda of the right-wing press.

However, at the same time as replicating the rightward shift in the parliamentary fulcrum, the BBC also began to include more views from outside the 'Westminster bubble'. As John Bridcut had suggested in 2013 in one of the BBC's periodic impartiality reviews, 'in today's more diverse political, social and cultural landscape, it [impartiality] requires a wider and deeper application'.

Indeed it does, and for years many on the Left, not least the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (www.cpb.org.uk), had quite correctly accused the BBC of marginalising political voices from outside the main political parties, and indeed



from the extremities of those parties.

However, when the BBC finally appeared to have responded to this criticism, it did so mainly by including more voices from the Right, in particular those hostile to immigration and the EU – best exemplified by Nigel Farage’s 35 appearances on *Question Time*.

This resulted in alienating many on the Left who, even if they’d never been exactly natural allies of the BBC, due to its coverage of labour relations and Labour politics, considered themselves at least as critical friends of this key public institution which they saw as to some extent ‘balancing’ the overwhelmingly right-wing national press.

The urgent questions for the BBC here are: in achieving balance by including a wider range of views in its broadcast output, how wide should that range be? And should it include ill-informed views, even if they are widely held and loudly trumpeted by significant sections of the daily press? In response to Professor Steve Jones’ assessment of the accuracy and impartiality of BBC science coverage, the BBC Trust stated that ‘programme makers must make a distinction between well-established fact and opinion in science coverage and ensure the distinction is clear to the audience’ and that ‘there should be no attempt to give equal weight to opinion and to evidence’. This was said in relation to coverage of climate change, but there is every reason to apply such an approach to any other topic in which the actual facts of the case contradict mere opinion. And in our increasingly divided and disinformation-riddled society, there is a worryingly large number of such topics.

Furthermore, at a time when certain cabinet ministers, and indeed the prime minister himself, are perfectly prepared to say brazenly on air whatever suits their particular purposes, whether or not it is true, and many national newspapers are only too happy to aid and abet them in practising the dark arts of post-truth politics, the need for a national broadcaster which can be trusted to fulfil its Charter obligation ‘to provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them’ has never been greater. The alternative is the *Daily Mail* of the airwaves.

SECTION THREE

Answering the BBC’s detractors

Why won’t subscription work?

If the BBC was a subscription service then only those able and willing to pay would have access. What you could access would depend on what you could pay. Services would be geared to those that generated income and away from



those that did not, based on the size or spend of the audience. In short, the BBC would mirror the rest of the non-PSB commercial market because it would be subject to the same market-driven pressures. The greatest value and justification for the BBC is that it is a universal service, and free at the point of use. For a shared, collective fee, paid by more than 90 per cent of all households, individuals and families can enjoy a range of content that would not be available if it was sold as a pay service.

The BBC currently provides 10 TV services, 10 national radio stations, 40 local radio stations, iPlayer content and services, BBC Sounds, the BBC website and more, for just over £3 a week. The size and scope of the BBC enables these to be offered together at a considerably lower price than if they were provided separately. With a pay service, users would have the choice as consumers to pick what they wanted, but that would break up this larger whole, so that most users would access less of what is currently available, and some parts would become affordable only to the rich. We would have the opposite of a universal service, available to all users, supporting the widest access to information, education and entertainment.

What’s wrong with advertising?

Everyone knows that who pays the piper calls the tune. When our media is dependent on advertising finance it has to provide what advertisers want, which also skews content towards serving more affluent audiences desired by advertisers. We are used to adverts appearing mostly between programmes but as these traditional forms decline, brands have become more adept at getting their messages into programmes too. Most of the original programmes made by commercial streaming services contain ‘brand integration’. In 2019 Netflix’s *Stranger Things* did deals with 75 brands, deals that are not fully disclosed and transparent to the rest of us. The BBC’s public service media carry no advertising, will not permit paid product placement, and do not carry programmes that are funded by, sponsored or supported by brands. Going forward, that ad-free space and provision will

UKIP promoted Nigel Farage’s many appearances on BBC *Question Time*

“Programme makers must make a distinction between well-established fact and opinion in science coverage and ensure the distinction is clear to the audience”

"The BBC plays a pivotal role in our national culture and creative industries, while globally it reaches nearly half a billion people a week beyond the UK, a reach even the Romans would have envied!"

Boris Johnson threatened the BBC during the 2019 election campaign

only grow in importance in an increasingly commercialised media landscape.

So what has the BBC given us?

Lovers of Monty Python's *Life of Brian* will remember that wonderful scene in the film when revolutionary leader Reg (played by John Cleese) asks his assembled band 'just what have the Romans ever given us?' After a few moments' thought the answers flow thick and fast, kicking off with aqueducts, onto sanitation, roads, wine, public baths, law and order, and ending up with peace (at which Reg explodes!).

Similar points are made by some people about the BBC. 'I don't watch TV so why should I pay the licence fee?' goes the cry. So just what does the BBC give us for our money? Here are some key facts from the BBC's latest annual report:

- The BBC is used by 90% of UK adults and 80% of young adults on average per week.
- Used by an average of five million adults every single minute of the day and night, across TV, radio and online, and by a total of 45 million people across all ages over 24 hours.
- Delivered £2.63 of direct economic impact for every £1 spent with 50% of that economic impact outside London, compared to a sector average of 20%.
- UK adults spent on average 18:02 hours with the BBC each week, up from 17:45 in 2019/20.
- 78% of UK adults say the BBC is effective at informing, educating and entertaining people.
- Requests for news on iPlayer were up by more than 85% year-on-year in 2020.
- BBC's news coverage was the first port of call for the vast majority of the country during the pandemic. Audiences for the *BBC News at Six* were the largest in almost 20 years, whilst BBC One's 6.30pm bulletin in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the English regions continued to be the UK's most-watched news programme.
- There are more than 19 million users per week on average of BBC News Online.
- There has been record viewing on BBC iPlayer this year, with requests up 28% on the previous year.

And that's not all. Educational services played an important role supporting students, teachers and parents during the exceptional educational problems arising from the Covid pandemic. Millions of children, parents and teachers have relied on the BBC's Lockdown Learning educational offer. There were almost one million iPlayer requests for Bitesize Daily shows for the first full week of school closures in January 2021.

For younger people the BBC

also owns and operates, a free-to-air free of commercials children's television. It's used for all BBC content for children and teenagers aged 6 to 17.

The importance of the BBC's eight orchestras and choral groups in serious music-making in the UK can't be overstated. The BBC remains the most important promotor of large-scale new works in the UK, responsible for more premieres each year than all the country's other orchestras put together. BBC Proms season, as well as Radio 3's many concerts, creates live classical music on air enjoyed by millions.

The BBC is also committed to playing independent work on Radio 6 Music and supporting the Asian Network.

As Reg found out, there was more to the Romans than just aqueducts while the BBC is much more than news. The BBC plays a pivotal role in our national culture and creative industries, while globally it reaches nearly half a billion people a week beyond the UK, a reach even the Romans would have envied!

And crucially it demonstrates how spurious are the 'nobody watches the BBC' stories in the BBC-bashing national press, usually based on hopelessly flawed and biased 'public opinion' surveys that they've commissioned themselves.

SECTION FOUR

The BBC and Public Service Media in the 21st Century

Why do we need public service media in the 21st Century?

We need public, not privatised, services. Properly funded and run they can deliver services fairly, cheaply and effectively, whether water, electricity, transport, energy, food, or communications. Support for public ownership has been boosted by the negative experience of privatised services.

The market can only deliver so much. It is not good at delivering services we all need, regardless of our income.

Only properly regulated, creatively funded Public Service Media (PSM), including a reformed BBC, can sustain an informed democracy and a culture that celebrates diversity. Among the key guiding principles for this provision are universality of access, independence, public accountability, quality and diversity.

That will not happen if the BBC is driven to subscription, and if the major commercial companies are allowed to intensify their stranglehold on communications.

The longer-term future for PSM is dependent



on its integration with the provision of public services across all information, communications, and cultural activities. Under a suitable funding settlement that enables such development, PSM would be a gateway to showcase and help people access other public subsidised resources: museums, performing arts; public subsidised sports, health, recreation and leisure; libraries and their digital services; community media, including hyperlocal information and media resources; education and training services, from pre-school to lifelong learning.

The BBC should be at the centre of this networking of provision, but all PSM should contribute, and a new Public Service Media Development Fund should support the expansion of creative content and voices.

If not advertising and subscription, how do we pay for public service media?

The licence fee should continue until, through public consultation, we find a workable alternative. That could be a tax on all households, set, collected and distributed independently of government. It could be supplemented by a purchase tax on all media goods, radios, TVs, mobile phones etc

It should fund only the BBC, not licences for pensioners, S4C or the World Service – these have traditionally been the responsibility of government, not the BBC.

We also need to fund public service broadcasting above and beyond the BBC. That can be done by levying a tax on the income of all major commercial media providers in the UK – the social media giants, (Meta, Google) and the major newspaper publishers (such as News Group and the Daily Mail and General Trust).

What will be the structure of governing public service media (PSM)?

- Regulation would be at strict arm's length from government and based on principles of transparent public accountability.

We need a new Public Service Communications Law. This would establish a Public Service Communications Authority, (PCA) charged with overseeing the expansion of public service media in the UK. Its membership would draw from a pool of organisations that represent communities of interest in the UK – local authorities, civil rights organisations, consumer groups and trade unions. These would be tasked with organising elections for seats on the PCA within their communities. The pool would be monitored by the PCA to ensure diversity and representativeness.

- The PCA would establish the BBC as an independent public organisation, removing its royal charter. All bodies charged with regulating PSM organisations would be appointed using the

same method as that used for the PCA.

- The PCA would devolve power over communications strategy to the national Parliaments and Assemblies of the UK, ensuring that they set up structures to keep public service media oversight independent of political interference.
- The regulation and oversight of the BBC should be carried out by the PCA, or shared with Ofcom, subject to the latter being reformed and required to prioritise public service provision over and above the management and promotion of markets. This means rewriting the purposes of the organisation as set out in the Communications Act 2003 so as to place the emphasis squarely on promoting public service values across the commercial communications system.

Do we need a new way of funding public service media?

- The PCA would appoint an independent committee charged with assessing the financial needs of the BBC and other forms of Public Service Media.
- Its recommendations would carry the force of law. This would prevent governments using their control over funding to influence media performance.

Do we need other more up-to-date forms of public service media?

- The reformed BBC would make a major contribution to the spread of public service content.
- However, we also need a Public Service Media Development Fund to reach beyond the BBC and to support new forms of public service provision. This would be open to social enterprise, cultural or community media organisations to apply for funds to produce new works and to partner with the BBC or other PSM for exhibition and promotion of this content.
- Levies on the revenues of digital media giants like News Group, Google and Netflix could provide the money to support the work of the Development Fund.
- Ofcom's regulations should be altered to require any provider to deliver PSM content and meet public interest standards once it reaches a specified share of the market. That would radically enhance the range of public service material accessible to the public.

Should everyone have access to public service media?

- Public service media should remain universally accessible, with public support for those who cannot afford the licence fee or the new alternatives. Universal, free broadband provision should underpin this.

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SECTION FIVE

What can we do?

We have presented some of the arguments in defence of the BBC but there is a wealth of information available for people who want to further explore the arguments to promote a reformed BBC able to survive for the rest of the 21st century.

One of the clearest and most recent books is *The War Against the BBC* by Patrick Barwise and Peter York (Penguin, 2020). It's packed full of information and written in a lively, accessible style.

There are also organisations, apart from *MediaNorth* (www.medianorth.org.uk), which focus on the BBC's future. They include the Media Reform Coalition (www.mediareform.org.uk), the British Broadcasting Challenge (www.britishbroadcastingchallenge.com), and media unions like the National Union of Journalists (www.nuj.org.uk), BECTU (www.bectu.org.uk), and Unite (www.unitetheunion.org).

In the run-up to the next BBC Charter we have to ensure that the voices of those who care about the survival of the BBC are heard and the destructive arguments presented by those who want the BBC dismantled are refuted. That depends on us organising meetings, writing letters to newspapers and contacting our MPs to see where they stand on the BBC.

If you are in a union make sure that the arguments in defence of a reformed BBC are presented and that the union adopts policies which link support for the BBC to those which defend other public services like the NHS.

If you are in a political party make sure these vital policy issues are discussed.

What's On The BBC?

Lord Reith, the BBC's first Director General, declared the BBC's role was to inform, educate and entertain. Its critics now want to strip out the popular programmes and restrict it to making programmes which commercial broadcasters wouldn't touch. Their argument is simple. The BBC is too big, it crowds out commercial rivals and should be

restricted to supplying only those the market will not provide. Such a course of action would be fatal for the BBC.

Here's a list which captures the range and variety of programmes the BBC now carries:

Strictly Come Dancing, The Archers, Life on Mars, Call the Midwife, Newsnight, Outside Sources (Ross Atkins), *Fortunately – with Fi and Jane*, *Composer of the week* (Radio 3), *University Challenge*, *Pointless*, *Mastermind*, *Killing Eve*, *Peaky Blinders*, *Countryside*, *The Antiques Road Show*, *The Repair Shop*, *In Our Time*, *More or Less*, *Start the Week*, *Late Junction*, *Night Tracks*, *Analysis*, *The Food Programme*.

The rich diversity of the BBC's output would make it easy to draw up another alternative list to match this.

The case for PSB

"The business model that sustained news for 200 years is crumbling – fast. There are now 'news deserts' without any local newspaper. That's terrible for democracy. Bad players step in to fill the vacuum.

The BBC is global – with hundreds of correspondents around the world (vital to understand economics, security, climate change, immigration, food resources, pandemics).

It is national (including Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

And it is local – with a solid network of radio and TV reporters all over the UK.

Of course, everyone hopes that a new business may emerge for private news – but it would be crazy to diminish the most comprehensive news provider without knowing what (if anything) will replace it. And don't buy the argument that our Public Service Broadcasters are hindering private companies from flourishing. America has no systematic PSBs to compare with ours – and their news ecosystem is, if anything, weaker."

– British Broadcasting Challenge

www.britishbroadcastingchallenge.com/case-for-psb

The War Against the BBC. How an unprecedented combination of hostile forces is destroying Britain's greatest cultural institution ... And why you should care.

Patrick Barwise
Peter York



MediaNorth

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