

BBC Charter Review Consultation
BBC Trust
180 Great Portland Street
LONDON
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From the President Paul Nurse

5 November 2015
Our ref: PN/BH/JB

RE: BBC Charter Review Consultation

Name: Paul Nurse
Name of organisation: The Royal Society

The Royal Society is a self-governing Fellowship of many of the world's most distinguished scientists drawn from all areas of science, engineering, and medicine. The Society's fundamental purpose, reflected in its founding Charters of the 1660s, is to recognise, promote, and support excellence in science and to encourage the development and use of science for the benefit of humanity. It is the UK's national academy of science and we welcome the opportunity to comment on the BBC's plans.

The BBC is a wonderful institution and a central pillar of British society. However, it has not always reflected on all elements of British culture with the same enthusiasm. Science has made a major contribution to civilization and culture in the UK. While we are rightly proud of Shakespeare we should be equally proud of Newton and Darwin. The UK can make a strong claim to be the birthplace of modern science. At a time when science is increasingly seen as core to policy making and a driver for economic growth – as evidenced by George Osborne's declaration of science as a 'personal priority' – it is important that the BBC is a leader in science coverage.

Tony Hall has made a commitment to return to the public service broadcasting ethos on which the BBC was established. Science must be as big a part of that as the arts and there are indications that will be the case in *British, Bold, Creative*. There have been high points such as the BBC's year of science in 2010 but that should have set the standard rather than being a high point.

The Royal Society objectives include promoting science and its benefits and supporting education and public engagement and so our main stake is in the *Educate* section of the document. Here you will hopefully be aware of the Society's commitment to being a partner in *A New Age of Wonder* – the science strand of the Ideas Service. The combination of the knowledge and expertise of science organisations with the story telling, innovation in communications technology and reach of the BBC can make a winning combination and the Royal Society looks forward to making that a reality.

In relation to the *Inform* and *Entertain* sections it is vital that science and engineering enjoy a higher profile than they currently do. If we want to place science and the arts back at the heart of British culture then they cannot be central to only one strand of the BBC's activity. Science must be core to the *Today Programme* and the *Ten O'Clock News*. It must get a share of the primetime schedules of *BBC One* and feature prominently on *BBC Online*. All of these will be drivers to the success of the Ideas Service.



President Sir Paul Nurse
Executive Director Dr Julie Maxton

Founded in 1660, the Royal Society is the independent scientific academy of the UK, dedicated to promoting excellence in science.

Registered Charity No 207043

I welcome the broad thrust of the ideas in British, Bold, Creative and look forward to seeing and indeed participating in their delivery.

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Nurse". The script is cursive and fluid.

Paul Nurse
President of the Royal Society