

Letter from Gavyn Davies, Chairman, BBC, 22nd April 2002

British Broadcasting Corporation Broadcasting House Portland Place London W1A 1AA Telephone 020 7580 4468



From the Chairman

22 April 2002

Lord Pearson of Rannoch
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

Dear Lord Pearson

Thank you for your further letter of 23 March, previously acknowledged.

I note your suggestion that Minotaur's latest report should be passed to an independent arbiter but this is not a course of action we wish to pursue at the present time. I gather that you are in regular touch with Anne Sloman. I'm sure she will be happy to address your concerns.

Turning to your points about the changes to the BBC's governance arrangements, these are designed to ensure that the BBC's self-regulatory mechanisms fit appropriately into the new Ofcom-centred regulatory regime for the broad communications industry. They have not resulted from a lack of confidence in existing arrangements, though, as is made clear in *BBC Governance in the Ofcom Age* (a copy of which I enclose), we recognise that the existing regime could be improved upon.

These changes are not designed to enable the Governors, independent of management, to ensure that the BBC's public service remit is delivered. The Governors and the Executive Committee are charged with working together to ensure that this is achieved, though as the document makes clear, they perform clearly defined and distinct roles. The Governors are a supervisory board; the Executive Committee runs the BBC in the public interest within an agreed strategic and policy framework.

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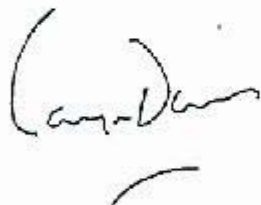
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I am not convinced that your proposal for establishing a separate licence-fee funded trust to employ staff in the Governance and Accountability department would add value and I have confidence in the professional staff in this department providing robust and independent support for the Governors. The Objectives and Compliance Unit will only serve the Governors, and the Head of the Unit will not have a reporting line to BBC management.

Governors receive independent advice from a number of sources including financial auditors, fair trading auditors (who in future will be contracted through the Governance and Accountability department) and, under the new arrangements, on editorial matters from an editorial adviser to the Governors' Programme Complaints Committee. This Committee's remit is being broadened to include reviewing how effectively the BBC handles complaints and comments from the public beyond the serious programme complaints handled by the Programme Complaints Unit. The move of the Programme Complaints Unit to Public Policy will define more clearly their role in reporting to BBC management, as distinct from the Governors.

As I've said on previous occasions, we intend to see that all views on the European debate are reflected in BBC programmes, and that our coverage is rigorous and scrupulously neutral. If you have a specific complaint about a programme, the Programme Complaints Unit is there to investigate it for you.

Yours sincerely



Gavyn Davies



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