

CITIZENS' COALITION FOR PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING
LAUNCH STATEMENT

The coalition - made up of a broad mix of civil society groups, charities, community groups and arts organisations - believes that public service broadcasting is a public good, and that plurality in public service broadcasting must be maintained in the digital age. British public service broadcasting is a cultural as well as an economic asset to the UK, and we believe the government must take decisive steps to ensure that we have a regulatory environment that allows this sector to prosper.

WE SEEK TO:

- *Alert civil society - and the public in general - to the threat posed to Britain's democracy and social fabric by the erosion of plurality in public service broadcasting.*
- *Ensure that the voices of civil society groups, and citizens, are heard in the debate.*
- *Ensure any future commitments to plurality in public service broadcasting do not threaten the independence, integrity or funding security of the BBC.*
- *Support all broadcasters, and other programme suppliers, who are committed to providing public service content.*
- *Encourage the British public, opinion leaders, Government, MPs, Peers, MEPs and all branches of the digital industries to accept and introduce a fair and equitable method of providing additional financial support for public service broadcasting outside the BBC.*

1. Background

Lord Carter's report on *Digital Britain* seeks - among other things - to consider whether the UK can design and sustain a long-term and sustainable second public service organisation, which will complement and compete with the BBC in serving the public. We believe it can, but we are strongly opposed to the report's recommendation to 'top slice' 3.5% of the television licence fee.

2. Our Principles

- 2.1 The coalition welcomes the commitment, enunciated by both Digital Britain and Ofcom, to maintaining plurality in public service broadcasting in the UK; we seek to provide expert, practical advice - from the citizen's perspective - as to how this can best be achieved.

- 2.2 Members of the coalition believe that the integrity, editorial independence and current funding base of the BBC must all be protected and maintained, as they are paramount to the success of public service broadcasting in the UK.
- 2.3 In addition to the television licence fee - which funds not just television but the corporation's radio, online and other services - the coalition gives broad support to the proposed partnership between Channel 4 and BBC Worldwide, but calls for an urgent exploration of the potential of using industry levies on telecoms operators, internet content users, pay TV channels and digital hardware suppliers, to provide secure and substantial long-term funding to sustain plurality and quality in UK public service content.
- 2.4 The coalition also aims to halt the rapid decline in UK-produced public service content. This includes not only original drama, UK film, live music and children's programming, which is of primary importance, but all the genres of programming identified by Ofcom as commercially unviable, including regional, local and international news and programmes about the wider world.
- 2.5 In addition, the coalition believes that the principles of public service broadcasting should include arrangements that enable the public to experience and evaluate newly emerging voices and programme suppliers, both in form and content.

3. About the coalition

A full current list of organisations and individual signatories can be seen on the CCPSB website at <http://www.publicservicebroadcasting.org.uk>