

Dame Caroline Dineage DBE MP
Chair, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee
House of Commons

and

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Keeley
Chair, Lords Communications and Digital Committee
House of Lords

Dear Dame Caroline and Baroness Keeley,

The ongoing BBC Charter Review is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the British public and Parliament to debate and decide the future of the BBC.

The BBC is a vital and valued independent public media institution. It is essential to British society, culture, the creative industries and - crucially - our democracy. As such, **the Charter Review process must be conducted in a democratic, open and genuinely public manner.**

However, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's public consultation on BBC Charter renewal, which closes today, was needlessly rushed and limited in scope - amounting to little more than a tickbox survey.

Neither the Government nor the BBC took efforts to widely promote the consultation, and the Terms of Reference for Charter Review indicate this survey may be the only opportunity DCMS provides for licence fee payers, BBC audiences and the wider public to share their views on BBC reform.

As the respective Chairs of the Commons Culture, Media and Sport and Lords Communications and Digital Committees, you and your colleagues have a unique role in ensuring that the BBC's next Royal Charter, and the process by which it is decided, represents the best interests of the British public.

We are therefore concerned that your Committees have not yet announced any calls for evidence or terms of reference for your own parliamentary inquiries into Charter renewal and the future of the BBC.

The official Charter Review process has been running for four months, and the Government says it intends to publish its White Paper proposals this year. This is a vanishingly small period of time for such a significant debate that will not only affect the BBC and the wider media industries, but will also have an extraordinary and historic impact on the entire British public.

During the previous BBC Charter Review from 2014 to 2016, your predecessor Committees provided an exemplary forum for evidence gathering, expert testimony and parliamentary scrutiny of proposals for BBC reform. Across three separate inquiries lasting a combined 27 months, these Committees spoke to a wide range of media experts, industry stakeholders, civil society groups and members of the public, which helped to create landmark reports on the BBC, its future and the Government's conduct during Charter Review.

It is vitally important that Parliament, through your Committees, opens this current Charter Review process to public participation, to ensure the next BBC Royal Charter is informed by the widest possible range and diversity of views, interests and evidence - especially from voices and groups beyond established media stakeholders and professional political influencers.

We would welcome correspondence from you or your clerks detailing your Committees' plans to engage in the Charter Review process.

In the spirit of creating a wide-ranging and democratic Charter Review, we have published the **Alternative Green Paper** - an open, collaborative compilation of proposals for BBC reform, featuring submissions from civil society, campaign groups, media experts and individual members of the public.

We invite you and your Committee colleagues to take these ideas as inspiration to expand your own debates on the BBC beyond the narrow range of analysis and proposals offered by the Government's Green Paper.

The Media Reform Coalition would also welcome the opportunity to submit our own evidence, analysis and proposals on BBC Charter Review, and we hope to be invited to speak to you and your colleagues in the course of your inquiries.

Kind regards,

Prof Lee Edwards and Dr Tom Chivers
Chair and Vice-Chair
Media Reform Coalition

The Alternative Green Paper – mediareform.org.uk/bbc-alternative-green-paper