



BRAVE NEW WORLD SERVICE

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE BBC
TO BRING THE WORLD TO THE UK

JOHN MCCARTHY WITH CHARLOTTE JENNER

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INTERVIEWEES

Steven Barnett, Professor of Communications, University of Westminster
John Baron MP, Member of Foreign Affairs Select Committee
Charlie Beckett, Director, POLIS
Tom Burke, Director of Global Youth Work, Y Care International
Alistair Burnett, Editor, BBC World Tonight
Mary Dejevsky, Columnist and leader writer, The Independent and former newsroom subeditor, BBC World Service
Jim Egan, Head of Strategy and Distribution, BBC Global News
Phil Harding, Journalist and media consultant and former Director of English Networks and News, BBC World Service
Lindsey Hilsum, International Editor, Channel 4 News
Isabel Hilton, Editor of China Dialogue, journalist and broadcaster
Mary Hockaday, Head of BBC Newsroom
Peter Horrocks, Director of BBC Global News and BBC World Service
Lord Digby Jones, Chairman, International Business Advisory Boards at HSBC and British Airways and former Director General, CBI
Lord Frank Judd, Peer and former Director of Oxfam
Liliane Lador, Controller of Languages, BBC Global News
David Levy, Director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford University and former Controller of Public Policy, BBC

Ishbel Matheson, Director of Media, Save the Children and former East Africa Correspondent, BBC World Service
Rod McKenzie, Editor, BBC Radio 1 Newsbeat and BBC 1Xtra News
Richard Ottaway MP, Chair, Foreign Affairs Select Committee
Rita Payne, Chair, Commonwealth Journalists Association and former Asia Editor, BBC World
Marcia Poole, Director of Communications, International Labour Organisation (ILO) and former Head of the World Service training department
Stewart Purvis, Professor of Journalism and former Chief Executive, ITN
Tony Quinn, Head of Planning, JWT
Nick Roseveare, Chief Executive, BOND
Richard Sambrook, Global Vice Chairman and Chief Content Officer, Edelman UK and former Director of BBC Global News
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Cover and inside cover pictures: Broadcasting House (Photo credit: BBC Press Office).

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FOREWORD



The reputation and renown of the BBC World Service is beyond doubt. Ever since the hastily settled licence funding agreement between the BBC and the UK Government last autumn, there has been widespread concern, both in the UK and internationally, about the impact of the cuts to be imposed on the service over the next two years. Until 2014 the World Service will remain subsidised by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office [FCO] but funding will be substantially reduced. Public debate has been focused on the services to be closed and the jobs that will inevitably be lost. But this report focuses on what will happen after 2014 when funding support from the Government is withdrawn.

Journalist, author and former hostage, John McCarthy, has very good reason to value both the domestic and international coverage of the BBC. It was twenty years ago that global and UK public awareness of his captivity supported diplomatic efforts in securing his release after five years as a hostage in Lebanon. This summer John, along with CBA researcher Charlotte Jenner, has taken the opportunity to interview a wide range of opinion leaders and media commentators including current and former BBC staff. John has asked them the timely question, how might the World Service change once it is funded by UK licence fee payers and managed as part of the wider BBC?

This report aims to inform wider discussion around the BBC's vision for an integrated World Service. The changes to the funding structure and the BBC's commitment to a newly designed building for all news staff provide a real opportunity and sound basis for editorial integration of the World Service and BBC domestic news services.

The BBC has long been the cornerstone of Public Service Broadcasting globally but such a role in today's complex and commercially driven broadcasting environment is not always an easy one. The corporation must steer a delicate course between providing the services and content that UK licence fee payers want in an entertainment led media environment and providing content that enables UK citizens to be active and informed global citizens. But, as Mark Scott, Managing Director of ABC Australia says, "strong and trusted international reporting is at the heart of being a public service broadcaster in a globalised world".

The BBC has a clear remit to 'Bring the World to the UK' and with careful and considered planning the changes should provide a unique opportunity for the BBC to deliver that remit more effectively. Inevitably, BBC management is often distracted by domestic agendas and policy, but with the appointment of a new International Trustee and the BBC Trust poised to set licence terms for a new, independent World Service, it is essential that the BBC seizes the moment to outline and communicate a clear vision for this Brave New World Service.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sally-Ann Wilson".

Sally-Ann Wilson
Secretary-General, CBA

INTRODUCTION

I begin with a personal admission. I am an avid fan of the BBC World Service and have been so for a long time. As a hostage in Lebanon in the late 1980's, sitting with a radio pressed to my ear and hearing the tune *Lillibullero*, followed by the words 'This is the World Service of the BBC', I would feel an enormous surge of hope and reassurance. The World Service entertained me, gave me a sense of perspective and taught me a great deal about the world I so wanted to return to. Without its depth of coverage of news, current affairs, culture and science, I am sure I would have found coming out of five years isolation far more daunting. My experience has instilled in me feelings of great affection for the World Service and it would seem I am not alone. Burmese pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, recently spoke of the positive role it played during her 15-year house arrest, describing it as her 'only line to the outside world'.

In the seventy-nine years since its inception as the Empire Service in 1932, the BBC World Service has grown to become one of the most respected and trusted international broadcasters in the world. Its reputation rests on its commitment to broadcasting reliable and impartial information across the globe, in English and up to 30 other languages. It has acted as a lifeline for those without a free media as well as being a trusted source of international news and analysis in an increasingly frenetic global media market.

But despite being a beloved jewel in the nation's broadcasting crown, the World Service is not immune to the rapidly changing media environment in which it operates nor is it immune to the financial constraints under which many UK public services are currently operating. And so, whether we supporters like it or not, the World Service is entering a period of unprecedented change.

Cuts: As a part of the Government's 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 16% reductions were imposed upon the World Service's Foreign Office grant-in-aid funding, a figure which the BBC believes in reality to be 20%. These cuts will mean the loss of some 540 staff and the closure of 5 language services.

Funding changes: In an agreement reached with Government regarding future funding, as of 2014 funding for the World Service will switch from Government grant-in-aid to funding via the BBC licence fee. This will mean that the BBC, which has also seen a real terms cut in income, will have to fund the World Service, as well as other previously Government funded broadcast services, out of the licence fee income.



Photo: BBC Archive

Integration: In 2012 the World Service will be moving from its long standing home in Bush House to a building shared with the domestic news services of the BBC. The new custom built centre at Broadcasting House will be known as 'W1'. The move is the first stage in a plan to integrate the World Service with BBC domestic news in order to create one, multi-platform, global newsroom.

BBC restructuring: Stringent savings measures are due to be brought in across the BBC under the Delivering Quality First review, which has been further impacted by the 16% real term cut to the licence fee income over the next six years. There have also been changes in the top management structure with Helen Boaden recently being made Director of News, with overall responsibility for both global (including the World Service) and domestic news services.

With the biggest institutional changes in World Service history on the horizon and deep cuts being made to its funding, a crucial question hangs in the air. What does the future hold for the World Service? As an avid supporter the time feels right to gauge what the future role and potential of the World Service could be.

In this report I hope to frame a much needed debate around the upcoming changes. Based on a series of recent interviews with media commentators, BBC 'insiders' and opinion formers I will consider the potential benefits integration of the World Service into the BBC could bring to the UK public, highlighting the opportunities as well as the very real challenges the BBC faces in trying to realise them.

“With the biggest institutional changes in World Service history on the horizon and deep cuts being made to its funding, a crucial question hangs in the air. What does the future hold for the World Service?”

John McCarthy



Photo: Geoff Dunlop/Kailash Multimedia

With both the World Service and domestic news operations being funded via the licence fee and brought together in one location could the World Service be used more effectively to fulfil the BBC's public service responsibility to 'Bring the world to the UK'? Could it engage a wider domestic audience in international issues and entice domestic news away from its current rather narrow agendas? Perhaps the in-depth knowledge and expertise that forms the core of the World Service could inform domestic programming, bringing a more internationalist agenda to UK licence fee payers? Could World Service journalists working alongside domestic news help to diversify the range of voices we hear and see on the BBC? And could the impending changes create a reinvigorated 21st Century World Service?

There are some serious concerns. The World Service has always been world rather than UK facing and the most serious concern for the World Service is undoubtedly determining how UK licence fee payers will feel about funding an international service that is predominantly serving an international audience. In addition some of my interviewees raised the question of how safe the World Service budget will be once it is part of the larger BBC income pot. Others wondered if World Service agendas will be overwhelmed by those of a more dominant and high profile domestic news service once funding and physical space are shared. Will foreign news coverage suffer as a result? And will funding changes and BBC-wide budget reductions jeopardize the World Service's ability to maintain staff around the world?

But amongst these concerns there are a number of opportunities, particularly for UK audiences.

Photos (from left to right): John McCarthy's release, 8 August 1991; John returns to Lebanon in Spring 2011, on the 20th anniversary of his release, to make a BBC radio programme.

WORLD SERVICE MISSION STATEMENT

The BBC World Service's 2007 operating agreement with the BBC Trust outlines its mission as, 'to provide a trusted, relevant and high quality international news service', which should 'make a significant contribution to sustaining citizenship around the world through providing an indispensable service of independent analysis and explanation with an international perspective which promotes greater understanding of complex issues.'

According to the BBC World Service's current head, Peter Horrocks, the role of the World Service is 'to serve audiences both internationally and in the UK with the highest quality impartial news and to give them an unrivalled understanding of the world.'

VALUE

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE WORLD SERVICE TO THE UK?

Historically the main function of the World Service has been outward facing. It has fulfilled the public purpose laid down in the BBC Charter of 'Bringing the UK to the World' or, more appropriately, 'Bringing the World to the World', through in depth and impartial programming on world culture, news and events. To date the service has played far less of a role in the second part of the BBC's international remit, which requires it to 'Bring the World to the UK'.

The World Service has a massive global audience of 180 million. Its UK listeners, albeit devoted, number fewer than two million. With the FCO picking up the tab, few people in the UK seem to be unduly concerned that their taxes are ultimately paying for a service that is predominantly consumed by listeners abroad. In fact, such a relatively small amount of money, less than £300 million, allocated by a major government department associated with international relations, has broadly been considered worthwhile and reasonable. But after 2014, when the BBC Trust assumes responsibility for paying for the World Service out of the licence fee, some fear that the UK press and public could be less sympathetic.

The licence fee income is already under considerable strain following last year's hurried funding settlement between the Government and the BBC. A six year licence fee freeze was accepted alongside the additional financial burden of funding the World Service, BBC Monitoring and part of the Welsh language channel, S4C, out of the licence fee income. In future when, perhaps inevitably, difficult choices

start having to be made between funding for domestic services and say, a foreign language service, how might the UK licence fee payer feel about such choices?

If the World Service is to be funded directly by the UK licence fee payer, it is crucial that the benefits and value of the World Service to the UK public are communicated clearly and effectively. As former ITN Chief Executive and Professor of Journalism, Stewart Purvis, points out: "The BBC needs to talk up the World Service more, especially now that it will be funded by the licence fee."

It seems to me that the benefits and value of the World Service to the UK fit into two categories. These are: what the World Service can do for the UK around the world, and what it can bring to UK audiences.

BENEFITS TO THE UK ABROAD

Soft power

When discussing *how* the World Service might serve UK interests internationally, many of the people I interviewed spoke of 'soft power'. Due to its fairness, impartial tone and stringent efforts for factual accuracy, the World Service garners both trust and respect from its global audience. Over the years this has had a tacitly positive impact on how the UK, its government and people are viewed around the world.

Richard Sambrook, former Director of BBC Global News, believes that because the World Service does not follow a nationalist government line and often chooses to explore

Photos (from left to right): BBC World Service World Have Your Say presenter, Ros Atkins, with children in Soweto; BBC World Service Focus on Africa presenter, Paul Bakibinga, interviews former child soldiers in Uganda.

Photo: BBC World Service



“The BBC needs to talk up the World Service more, especially now that it will be funded by the licence fee.”

Stewart Purvis, Professor of Journalism, City University

political, social, sexual or human rights issues that other international broadcasters ignore and local broadcasters are unable to address, it has a profoundly positive effect upon how Britain is viewed. “When people around the world hear and consume the BBC providing this attempt to be as truthful about the world as possible, including sometimes being critical of the UK or UK policy, they respect that. It reflects British values to do with fairness, quality, straight dealing, without pushing Britain’s interests. That then reflects well on the BBC and on Britain.”

The value of this kind of ‘soft power’ is not to be underestimated. From diplomacy to security and trade, at the very least it gets us through the door in countries that might otherwise be hostile towards the UK. And on a more general level, whether we are travelling abroad on holiday or trying to do business with other countries, the World Service often paves the way for us to be greeted more favourably. Lord Digby Jones, who has travelled worldwide for British business, as former Director General of the CBI, Minister of State for Trade and Investment and now as Chairman of the International Business Advisory Boards at HSBC and British Airways and in advisory roles at JCB, Triumph and Jaguar, confirms the value of the World Service to UK plc. “One of the things that Britain is known for and valued for is its fairness. We’re seen as pretty arrogant, we’re seen as pretty slow but we are also seen as fair minded, good people and one of the ways in which that is projected is through the World Service.”

In a volatile world and with Iraq, Afghanistan and our colonial



Photo: BBC World Service

WORLD SERVICE HISTORY



Photo: BBC Archive

The BBC World Service was first launched as the ‘Empire Service’ in 1932 to provide short wave radio broadcasts overseas, predominantly to countries within the British Empire. Six years later the first language services were set up, in Arabic, Spanish and Portuguese and by the end of the Second World War the Empire Service was operating in more than forty languages.

In 1939 the name was changed to the ‘Overseas Service’ and the operation moved from its home in Broadcasting House to Bush House, where the words “Nation Shall Speak Peace Unto Nation” were inscribed over its doors. With the onset of war the role of the Overseas Service began to evolve, becoming a British counter to propaganda from the Axis powers and a symbol of resistance in Nazi-occupied Europe.

But by the 1960s audiences were changing and the BBC had fallen behind its Russian, Chinese and American competitors, losing its title as the biggest overseas broadcaster in the world. New, younger audiences, who were unable to relate to the colonial nostalgia for which the Overseas Service had become known, demanded a different approach to overseas programming. As a result the BBC World Service was born in 1965, reflecting a new emphasis on world affairs.

During its long history the World Service has survived a number of funding reviews by successive Governments, although various language services have been opened and closed. Under Prime Minister James Callaghan a proposal to cut 40% of the World Service’s output was eventually withdrawn but with Mrs Thatcher in Government, funding for the World Service was cut and Spanish, Maltese and Italian services were closed.

In 2011, the BBC World Service is undergoing some of the biggest cuts yet, losing 25% of its budget, closing 5 language services and reducing shortwave transmissions.

past, the far-reaching, positive influence of the World Service is invaluable. As Jim Egan, Controller of Strategy and Distribution for the BBC Global News division, told me, “You should be able to argue successfully and convincingly for the World Service even if you couldn’t hear one minute of its radio output in the UK. Its value shouldn’t turn on whether you can consume it here. It should turn on what we as British people think the World Service achieves outside the UK and the value that British people place on that impact.”

BENEFITS TO THE UK AT HOME

While the principal value of the World Service may be what it achieves internationally, once it is paid for out of the licence fee and is physically integrated with domestic services in W1, there is undoubtedly a new opportunity for it to have an enhanced impact in the UK.

Bringing the World to the UK

From the global financial crisis to the Arab Spring, recent events have shown the extent to which we all live in an increasingly interconnected world. The distinction between home and foreign news agendas is becoming blurred. The lives of people in one country or region are frequently affected by political, social and economic developments elsewhere. Understanding the world and our place in it, learning about other people and discovering what they think of us, has become a vital part of national, local and individual life. It therefore seems utterly appropriate that a public service broadcaster such as the BBC should be responsible for educating, as well as entertaining, its audience in this regard.



Photo: BBC World Service

The World Service is tailor-made to provide UK audiences with better international understanding. The breadth and depth of its coverage could, as Marcia Poole, former Head of the World Service training department and current Director of Communications at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) says, “plug the analytical gap that there is [in domestic services].” Peter Horrocks, Director of the BBC World Service and the Global News division, agrees: “We can bring something to the UK audience which at the moment it doesn’t get as strongly as it might do.”

It feels somehow incongruous that the UK should have such a well-respected international offering as the World Service, whilst domestically a move towards entertainment-led media has meant there is less opportunity for domestic audiences to be exposed to wide ranging and in-depth coverage of foreign affairs. As Rita Payne, Chair of the Commonwealth Journalists Association and former Asia Editor at BBC World News points out, “This year we suddenly had a burst of foreign news, with overseas turmoil, the Middle East, Yemen, but for the average person in Britain, many would not have known any background. The World Service, with its breadth of programmes and language services, makes the nuances clear; that Tunisia isn’t the same as Yemen, Yemen isn’t the same as Egypt, Egypt isn’t the same as Bahrain and Syria. That’s the understanding that the wider UK audience is lacking.”

Generating understanding, overcoming ignorance or prejudice and encouraging social cohesion within the UK could be valuable benefits of the sort of content the World Service provides. Rita Payne argues, “If you stopped an average person in the UK and asked them about Iran they would probably think they were all mad, flag waving Ayatollahs when in fact there are very cultured, erudite, liberal Iranians, there are every type. [In the UK media] everything gets frozen in a narrow band that reinforces stereotypes and I think that is very, very dangerous. The more that people locally understood other people, there would be more cross cultural reference points and both sides would benefit.”

The World Service has real potential to enhance community cohesion in the UK. English language platforms can deepen understanding about the rest of the world, arguably leading to less reactionary views on political ‘flashpoints’ such as immigration. Similarly, the foreign language services of the World Service may keep UK diaspora communities connected to news from their places of origin as well as providing a deeper insight into the society in which they now live.

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Rita Payne, Chair of the Commonwealth Journalists Association



Photo: BBC World Service

For UK audiences it seems clear that the potential benefits of the World Service go far beyond merely informing people about the wider world. The domestic media frequently uses the US when seeking international comparisons and perspectives but the World Service has the scope to offer a far greater diversity of views and experiences for comparison. In the running debate on NHS reforms, are comparisons with the American healthcare system very helpful? Why don't broadcasters report on the situation in Europe asks Mary Dejevsky, columnist and leader writer for the Independent and former World Service newsroom subeditor. “Who’s talking about how the health service works in France, a lot of Brits have first hand experience of that, or in Belgium or in Scandinavia? Because there is actually socialized medicine over there, [France] is much more appropriate for a comparative discussion.” Likewise debates on migration, law, identity cards and so forth could be greatly enhanced when viewed through a wider international lens.

Finally, as well as encouraging other countries to do business with the UK, greater access to World Service content in the UK could also play a part in encouraging British businesses to look around the world for new opportunities, in places that at first could seem alien.

Photos (from left to right): Dawood Azami, presenter, BBC Afghan Service; Bikisu Labaron and producer, Christophe Pons, broadcasting for BBC World Service, Focus on Africa.

BBC FUNDING EXPLAINED

At present there are three funding streams that support the BBC's portfolio of services. These are: Government grant-in-aid (taxpayer's money allocated to the BBC by the Government), licence fee funding and commercial funding.

BBC WORLD SERVICE FUNDING

Now

The World Service is currently funded by the UK taxpayer through a 'grant in aid' from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The level of this funding is set by the Government in 3 year funding cycles. Whilst the Government dictates the overall funding and has a say over the opening and closure of language services, the World Service is editorially independent of UK Government and all editorial decision making rests with the BBC. For the period between 2010 and 2014 the annual level of funding has been set at approximately £256m. This was a 16% funding decrease, which the BBC rounded up to 20% to account for extra expenses over the 3-year period.

These funding changes have resulted in the World Service having to make considerable cuts to its staff and services. In June 2011 the Foreign Secretary, William Hague, agreed to supplement the funding originally agreed by £2.2 million to help protect the Arabic and Hindi language services.

Post 2014

As part of the current Coalition Government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in October 2010, an agreement was reached with the BBC that from 2014 the UK Government would no longer fund the BBC World Service. Instead it will be funded by the licence fee. However, as outlined in the agreement, the Foreign Secretary will retain a say over 'the strategic direction and objectives' of the BBC World Service and the right to open and close language services.

BBC DOMESTIC FUNDING

Now

All BBC domestic programming on radio and television is paid for by the licence fee.

Post 2014

BBC domestic services will continue to be funded in the same way but as of 2014 the BBC will also be funding the World Service, BBC Monitoring (from 2013) and the Welsh S4C channel out of the licence fee. The licence fee is set by the Government. In 2010 the Government set the licence fee at £145.50 for a colour TV licence and £49 for black and white. They also decided to freeze it at this level until 2016. This means that the BBC will see an increase in its funding responsibilities after 2014 while at the same time it will receive a real term cut to the licence fee budget.

BBC WORLD NEWS AND BBC.COM FUNDING

Now

BBC World News, the BBC's international television news channel and BBC.com, the BBC's international online news service for users outside the UK, are both commercially funded and receive no direct funding from either the UK taxpayer or the licence fee.

Post 2014

There will be no changes to the funding of BBC World News and BBC.com after 2014, both will remain commercially funded.

INTEGRATION: A BRAVE NEW WORLD SERVICE?

With the integration of the World Service into the wider BBC and physically into the W1 premises, the potential benefits the World Service could bring to domestic audiences seem clear. But how is that integration going to work? What are the challenges that come with integration and how might they be managed?

The integration at W1 is generally seen as a positive step and one which some believe has been a long time coming. Richard Sambrook says, “One of the frustrations is that the World Service ought to bring more intelligence about the rest of the world into the BBC. It’s always been talked about theoretically but in practice there’s a bit, but not a lot, of that going on.” In fact the move could potentially break new and exciting ground in the way we approach news in the UK. Sambrook explains, “More and more issues require a global perspective in some way to properly explain them to people. I think there is an opportunity to get much more joined up-ness into the way that we think about, report and analyse issues out of this reorganisation. We’ve freed ourselves a little bit from the kind of rigid geographical, domestic/foreign, framework.”

A number of BBC staff interviewed for this report, however, highlighted the fact that a lot of co-operation and integration across the BBC’s international and domestic services is already happening. Mary Hockaday, Head of the BBC Newsroom at TV Centre, explains that with teams providing news for the commercially funded BBC World News and BBC.com in the Newsroom at Television Centre, “we already have services that are internationally focused and so they

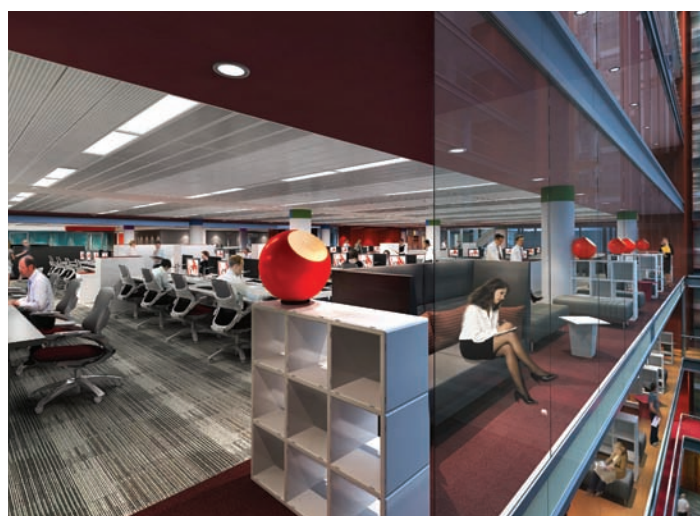


Photo: HOK

are absolutely integrated as part of the warp and weft and form a real bridge across to the colleagues in the World Service because they are often sharing an agenda, sharing decisions about key deployments, who might be being sent somewhere and who is covering what. Moving to W1 and the integration are not ‘big bang’ moments where the world completely changes and we suddenly do things that we’ve never done before. This is definitely a journey and there are already good ways whereby we collaborate.” Indeed, although World Service radio, English and foreign languages are physically at Bush House, all BBC news staff use ENPS (Electronic News Production System) and can easily see each other’s work. Hockaday gives an example of how this works: “If Radio 4’s six o’clock news programme is working on a foreign story or wants to get a sense of how important, how salient it is, one of their reference points might be ‘what’s Bush House doing with this?’ and then they might well draw on some of the material, whether that’s script lines or cues, or copy.” A Bush House journalist also attends editorial meetings at TV Centre to liaise between senior editors at the two locations whilst different services and programmes can use the same newsgathering journalists and often make common cause when bidding for interviews with major international figures.

Liliane Landor, Controller of Languages in Global News, is also very positive: “We are building a global BBC with a very tight reliance, internally, on one another in News, so when there is a big Arabic story for example, the BBC, domestically, gets a huge advantage from BBC Arabic sitting here, in the same building, the same newsroom, from people who speak



Photo: HOK

“More and more issues require a global perspective in some way to properly explain them to people.”

Richard Sambrook, Former Director, BBC Global News

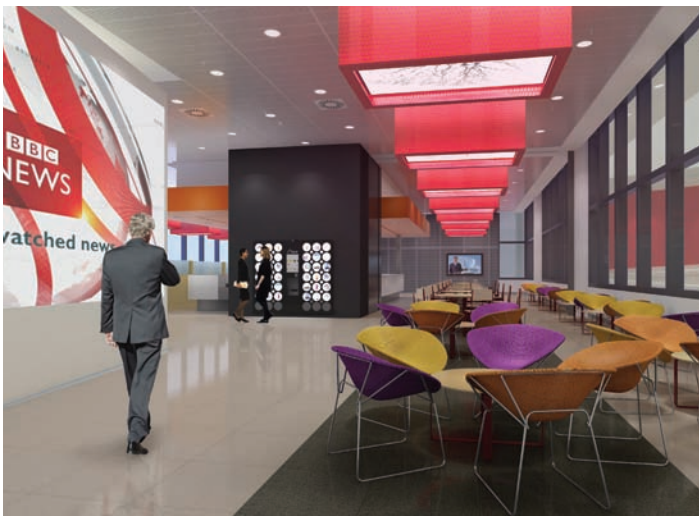


Photo: HOK

the language, from people who can analyse, from people who have the contacts, from people who can package or write you an online piece with the insider's knowledge. Of course we've been doing this already but once we're all in the new building in W1 and once we start working together... I think the gains will be momentous and that's what the British audience will get from our presence.”

POTENTIAL CONCERNS

But for all these upbeat attitudes from some senior figures at Bush House and TV Centre, there are many fears about how the integration at W1 will actually work in practice. There are reservations about the ability of the World Service to maintain its distinctive 'voice', its staffing levels and its output when living alongside a powerful domestic news operation and there are concerns too about the structure of the whole news division in the immediate and long-term future.

Peter Horrocks, whilst enthusiastic about the integration at W1, recognises these doubts and acknowledges that they are based on serious issues. Firstly, the shift in funding of the World Service from FCO to Licence Fee was only decided a matter of months ago (October 2010) and was not a planned reform, meaning issues such as governance still need to be worked out. Horrocks explains, “It was decided within a 10 day period, behind closed doors. There were no white papers, discussion documents or position papers. Suddenly something absolutely fundamental to a key part of the BBC was decided without there having been any of the usual preamble.”

INTEGRATION EXPLAINED

W1 will be one of, if not the world's largest, live broadcast centres. The World Service staff will move in by the summer of 2012 and the first news programme from the new site will be broadcast on June 25th. The rest of the news services will move to the building following the summer Olympics in 2012.

World Service staff will eventually be located with domestic and other international colleagues across five floors of the new building. The newsroom will be on the lower ground floor. The ground floor will be home to some of the planning department. The third floor will be the programmes floor, where World Service programmes such as Newshour, The World Today and World Have Your Say, will be housed alongside the Today programme, World at One, PM and The World Tonight. Forward planning and commissioning operations, the Direction area, will be clustered in the middle of this space. World Service and Radio 4 documentary teams will be neighbours on the 4th floor and most of the language service teams will be on the 5th floor.

The 26 language services have been reconfigured into 7 hubs. The Persian, Turkish and Arab teams will sit together for example and all the South Asian teams will be in one hub. Liliane Landor, Controller of Languages in Global News, says “what will be interesting in W1 is the fluidity, the movement. If there is a big story, say Yemen falls, then the plan and idea will be to have people from the Arabic service going into the main newsroom and working from there for (both) Arabic and for the main newsroom.”

Within the W1 newsroom, World Service journalists will be expected to work on domestic content as well as international in both English and foreign languages and across multiple platforms.

Photos (from left to right): Computer-generated images of the new newsroom at W1; a third floor open-plan office at W1; the W1 media cafe.

There has also been major organisational change within the BBC with Helen Boaden becoming Director of the BBC News Group in April 2011 and taking responsibility for Global News as well as domestic news output. Stewart Purvis sees the reshaping of the BBC's higher management structure over the past decade as a demotion of the World Service – though maybe an accidental one. "It's interesting to reflect on how the job of running Bush House has slipped down the BBC hierarchy. It used to be one of the top five jobs in the corporation. So it seems the BBC itself has downplayed the role of the WS in its own operations."

Funding

Although World Service funding has been set for the next six years, which includes the further three years of FCO funding and three years of licence fee funding, the integration at W1 clearly comes at a time when very significant budgetary pressures will make managers wary of resources that need to be ring fenced. It is a situation, as Peter Horrocks says, "that naturally means that there is going to be an argument about resources and that can cause some tension between an international news service and a domestic news service."

The World Service will have to fight its corner to ensure that its funding levels are not eroded in order to fund more popular BBC domestic programming. A Director of News with a very strong commitment to global news will be needed to ensure World Service funding levels are protected so that a strong footprint of correspondents



Photo: BBC Press Office



Photo: BBC World Service

and stringers around the world can be maintained. It has always been one of the BBC's great strengths to be able to say that its journalists were actually on the scene of a story or were close enough to speak to the people involved.

Audience needs and editorial style

A further concern about integration relates to differences in audience needs and editorial culture between the World Service and domestic operations. Leaving aside the language services for the moment, whilst most journalists may be speaking the same language – even covering the same stories at times – their audiences demand a totally different approach. World Service journalists aim to provide news programmes that will appeal to international audiences, anywhere in the world. The brief is to make one programme for everyone, the only certain common denominator for listeners in say, the US, Brazil, France or China being an appetite for knowledge about the wider world. Domestically, on the other hand, the BBC offers a range of services: some general news coverage, some niche services targeted at people with particular interests or a particular demographic. Every news programme has a different flavour; Radio 1's Newsbeat is a very different creature to Radio 4's Today programme for example and the editors of each programme will be aware of their particular audience's appetite for foreign news.

There are also different styles of journalism. The general view is that domestic news journalism is more modern while that of the World Service, though having changed in recent years, is more old-fashioned. Some World Service

“The problem for the World Service within an integrated newsroom is how you retain the focus on using the resources you have for covering a real breadth of stories across the world.”

David Levy, former BBC Controller of Public Policy



Photo: BBC World Service

insiders believe that they are more scrupulous about sourcing and accuracy than their domestic counterparts. Their domestic colleagues are insulted by that view and argue that not only do they care just as much about getting a story right but that they also have to do so in a landscape filled with direct and aggressive broadcast competitors.

So, the integration is not an automatic or necessarily easy fit and these differences need to be managed carefully. Neither approach should be stamped out to make way for the other. Instead, if the integration is managed well and the ‘geography’ of W1 is used to encourage physical and intellectual engagement, then journalists in each news operation should be able to learn from each other.

Peter Horrocks thinks so: “There’s plenty that the domestic output can teach the World Service, writing quality, visuals, how to tell a story effectively. Equally there’s brilliant expertise and diversity of view that World Service teams, because of how they come from around the world, can inject into news. I think the BBC knows that World Service English is an absolute treasure. It’ll be about suffusing that journalism, that strong journalism into all of our English platforms.”

However, bridging the cultural gaps may not be easy and will take time and firm, decisive management. Richard Sambrook warns, “managers up against deadlines and budget pressures think it can happen overnight or within 3 months when actually it probably takes 5 years or something, really for those barriers to change. You’ve got to restructure it, reorganize it,

LOCATION OF NEWS SERVICES

Historically there has been a geographic separation between the World Service in Bush House and the domestic news services in Television Centre or Broadcasting House but some of the international and domestic BBC news teams are in fact already working together under one roof. In 1996 the BBC’s domestic radio and television newsrooms, as well as the newsgathering operations of domestic news and the World Service English language arm, were brought together at TV Centre.

In 1998 all of the BBC’s international news and information output services were brought together under one senior manager as BBC Global News. This division includes the English language TV channel BBC World News and the online news service, bbc.com/news, as well as the World Service, which includes English and foreign language services. At present World News and bbc.com staff work out of TV Centre while the World Service remains based at Bush House, its home for over 50 years.

NOW

BUSH HOUSE

Global News World Service World Service Trust

TV CENTRE

BBC NEWS 24 BBC News BBC.com BBC World News
BBC domestic newsgathering (TV and Radio)

BROADCASTING HOUSE

BBC Audio and music

2012

BUSH HOUSE

Vacant

W1 (New Broadcasting House)

All of BBC Audio and Music
All of World Service and Global news
All of BBC News

Photos (from left to right): Lyse Doucet, presenter, BBC World Service and BBC World News; participant in live Arabic BBC World Have Your Say in Egypt; BBC World Service programme, The Forum, recording at the Jaipur Literary Festival.

a bit of a turnover of staff who come in and are used to the new ways of working and think that's automatically how it has always worked and then it kind of takes root and off you go."

Domestic take over?

When there is a big story, whether it is domestic or foreign, domestic news services tend initially to focus all resources and attention on that story. What interviewees have described as the 'hunting in packs' mentality or just plain 'panic' sets in and the story is covered exhaustively with 10 different reports on various aspects of the same story. Then, as the situation changes, the focus immediately switches to the next big story.

Integration at W1 could potentially facilitate such intense coverage to the detriment of the World Service's broader and steadier approach. As academic and former BBC Controller of Public Policy, David Levy says, "the problem for the World Service within an integrated newsroom is how you retain the focus on using the resources you have for covering a real breadth of stories across the world rather than just really focussing in on one, two or even half a dozen stories where the BBC throws all of its resources at those."

If the World Service, with its unique and respected identity, is to be protected from becoming a cipher for domestic news, the BBC must have a clear idea of what it wants from and for its international coverage. Peter Horrocks points to this as an issue. "I think that the international story for the BBC in the coming years needs to be clearer, needs to be more prominent and most

importantly needs to be understood by audiences".

If the leadership of the news operation isn't clear about its agenda and is too focussed solely on the domestic services, then broad international coverage in the World Service style will inevitably suffer. Peter Horrocks admits "there's a concern about whether the domestic news agenda or rather the domestic perspective of the international news agenda might swamp, might drown out that sort of authentic international voice that I have been talking about."

To prevent this swamping of the international agenda, one contributor suggested a 'Birt-ist' dictat that news programmes could be simply told that they had to have a certain percentage of air-time devoted to foreign stories – this percentage being set programme by programme. This is perhaps a rather too arbitrary approach but at the very least it is imperative that the BBC news leadership ensures that domestic news editors know what expertise the World Service has, who those experts are and where to find them.

Domestic appetite

Though the integration at W1, if managed with a firm international understanding, should mean that editors of domestic programmes will have a clearer picture of what's going on in the world, maybe spotting some stories and trends more quickly, that doesn't of course mean that those editors will use those stories in their bulletins.

Rita Payne says that domestic news coverage will obviously get priority and that in terms of international news stories,

WORLD SERVICE AND BBC CUTS IN FOCUS

WORLD SERVICE CUTS

Following the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, which implemented cuts to the Foreign Office grant in aid funding for the World Service, the World Service must find savings of some £46 million per year over the next three years. As a result of these savings it will lose a total of 540 staff across all its services. It has also closed a number of language services. These include Caribbean English, Portuguese for Africa, Macedonian, Serbian and Albanian. As well as complete closures, the World Service language services will go through a number of platform changes, which will mean the end of radio programming in Azeri, Mandarin Chinese, Russian (save for some programmes which will be distributed online), Spanish (the remaining residual service for Cuba), Turkish, Vietnamese and Ukrainian. These services will instead be available through online and via mobile. Short wave and medium wave broadcasts will also be gradually phased out according to audience and need. Short wave broadcasts in Indonesian, Kyrgyz, Nepali, Swahili and the Great Lakes service for Rwanda and Burundi ceased in 2011.

BBC DELIVERING QUALITY FIRST

As part of a general efficiency review and following the cut in real terms to the licence fee income, the BBC must find savings under the Delivering Quality First (DQF) programme of 20% by 2017. This will be done in phases but should not affect the World Service as it will have already undergone cuts to its services before it is brought under licence fee funding.

“... the international story for the BBC in the coming years needs to be clearer, needs to be more prominent and most importantly needs to be understood by audiences.”

Peter Horrocks, Director of Global News and BBC World Service

“what you might end up with is having a lot on America, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq and hear almost nothing about Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, and Malaysia. Whole swathes of the world are left out and, especially with Asia rising as a force and the whole balance of power shifting, there is a risk that you will end up with people living on two different planets.”

Established views on what different audiences want from programming can often lead to editors shying away from international content as too dry and complex. Whilst of course in depth analysis of obscure elements of a country's political system is not appropriate to any but the most specialist audience, for a number of reasons that I have already outlined, getting more information about the rest of the world to a mass audience, in innovative and interesting formats, is fundamental to the BBC's public service responsibility. The integration at W1 gives the domestic BBC news operation the perfect opportunity to blaze the trail and move towards a more modern interpretation of domestic news that naturally encompasses the international. For this opportunity to be realised, domestic editors and management need to understand the relevance of and need for more international content for their audience and be open to change within the new integrated environment of W1.

The international 'vision' of the BBC will be crucial in ensuring the breadth of international coverage and the role of the World Service in that. The BBC will therefore have to make a clear and convincing argument about the role of foreign news coverage not only to its audiences but also to its domestic staff.

SO WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN?

Safeguards

From 2014 the BBC Trust will face the difficult task of balancing the interests of one audience that pays for services with those of another that, by and large, does not. The way that the BBC Trust responds in discharging this responsibility is arguably one of the most important questions for the future of the World Service.

One of the Trust's first moves has been to appoint an International Trustee to oversee the World Service. For Peter Horrocks this Trustee is very important: “They will be someone who holds a torch for the World Service and for the international news services as well.” But simply appointing an International Trustee is not enough. It is imperative that the position is more than just a figurehead. It needs to have teeth and be respected as an important role. Moreover, the person who fills the position must be fully across the needs and vision of the international services as well as being up to the challenge of fighting the World Service's corner.

It seems to me that Chris Patten's appointment as Chairman of the Trust is a positive thing for the World Service. He is extremely supportive and seen as key to ensuring the healthy survival of the World Service's role in international news. But his tenure is only due to run for five years, which whilst taking the BBC into the new funding regime is not long term enough to necessarily secure the future safety of the World Service. Similarly, BBC Director General, Mark Thompson, who has expressed his intention to maintain and even increase World Service funding in the future, will not be in his current role forever.

People come and go and priorities change. So, to be truly secure, the World Service needs more than personal assurances and support, it needs constitutional protection. One option would be a Service Licence that not only clearly outlines and protects the remit of the World Service but also the degree of resources that need to be applied to international services. On a more rudimentary level, processes need to be put in place in the W1 newsroom to ensure that the World Service is not marginalised. Former East Africa correspondent and current Director of Media at Save the Children, Ishbel Matheson, suggests “it's about having people at a senior



Photo: BBC World Service World Have Your Say presenter, Ros Atkins, in Egypt for live show.

level at those meetings so, at your morning meeting, you'd have a World Service daily editor who has just as much shout as the editor of the World at One. It's partly about the rankings that sit within the BBC hierarchy."

Promoting the World Service in the UK

Perhaps one of the most effective guarantees for the World Service would be to have a large and vocal audience in the UK.

Rajar figures show that the domestic audience of the World Service is in fact growing, even though the World Service is not currently heavily promoted to UK audiences. At around 1.8 million listeners it is on a similar plane to Radio 3. Due to its separate funding structure and because it has been managerially separate from the domestic BBC radio and music family, it has historically not been included in broader promotions. Once the service is funded by the licence fee there should be no reason for its programmes not to be promoted on other channels. The Today programme, for instance, might highlight an upcoming World Service programme on the country, or international issue in the headlines that day.

Co-production and partnerships

While news and documentary commissioners argue that liaison is already strong between BBC channels and the World Service, independent production companies often find that securing a co-production is not easy. If planned ahead, production teams can make two versions of a programme and the financial advantages, especially given the modest radio production budgets, would be enormous for all concerned;



Photo: BBC World Service

better programmes at no extra cost. Stewart Purvis thinks management needs to be pushed on this: "I think there has got to be a message from the top that there is 'one' BBC and that BBC Global News in general and the World Service in particular are major elements of that one BBC." As well as sharing commissions, the World Service could actually provide programmes for domestic channels. As a senior editor at the World Service suggested, "it is not impossible especially given the squeeze on budgets that Radio 4 is going to face that we could make a programme for Radio 4. Actually, could Newshour go on Radio 4? Well, we're not there at the moment but it's clearly possible in the future."

And internationally, the World Service also needs to continue developing delivery partnerships. With shortwave audiences falling, a smaller proportion of its audience listens directly to the BBC. Peter Horrocks recently said "increasingly they hear us, or see us or view us online, via a partner. We now supply news and other programmes to around 2000 partner radio stations around the world. Through our partners we reach 53 million listeners a week over the world." Using partner stations could be a very effective way of ensuring the reach of the World Service is not damaged by recent cuts to services.

21st Century World Service

The World Service has recently been taking advantage of the opportunities presented by developing technologies to diversify away from its traditional strength in radio in order to reach new audiences online, on TV and on mobile phones.



Photo: BBC World Service

“We live in a world now of Facebook and Twitter and YouTube where people expect to get something back, they expect their lives to be enriched, not in the way that the Beeb used to enrich lives through content, but through participation and involvement.”

Tony Quinn, Head of Planning, JWT



Photo: BBC World Service

New technology could enable the BBC to become more than a broadcaster, it can become a hub for news but also for the exchange of views, connecting people right around the globe, building, as Tony Quinn, Head of Planning at advertising agency JWT, puts it, “a kind of Dialogue Corporation. You don’t broadcast, broadcast is very one way. We live in a world now of Facebook and Twitter and YouTube where people expect to get something back, they expect their lives to be enriched, not in the way that the Beeb used to enrich lives through content, but through participation and involvement.”

With audiences becoming ever more sophisticated in the ways they consume news, if the World Service is to truly ‘bring the world to the UK’ then the BBC needs to play to its technological strengths. Charlie Beckett, Director of the London School of Economics’ media think-tank, Polis, agrees and believes the time is right for integration, “it’s the combination of there being a demand to know about foreign information and also interestingly there being the mechanisms to connect people who want to know about particular bits of foreign news. I think that that can be exploited better in the integrated service than it would be in the autonomous BBC World Service.”

The World Service has built up a relationship of trust with audiences around the globe. It is in a fantastic position to move international communication forwards by combining that audience relationship with new technology. Journalistically, the World Service offers an unrivalled source for understanding the world and with technology it can generate live, global discussion.

The World Have Your Say programme already provides a live international exchange of views. There could be more programmes of that sort. Social media could be used to bring in new audiences as Steven Barnett, Professor of Communications at the University of Westminster, suggests, “World Service on Facebook, World Service on Twitter.... here is an opportunity to find out what is actually going on, to listen to perspectives that you will not find elsewhere and to do it on a medium that is so easy to access.”

Photos (from left to right): Dawood Azami, presenter on BBC World Service’s Afghan Service; Mike Johnson, presenter on BBC World Service programme, One Planet, interviewing former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan; Mark Doyle, BBC World Service correspondent at the Presidential Palace, Haiti.

CONCLUSION

In the process of writing this report, one thing has become increasingly clear. The World Service has never been more relevant or needed; for those audiences around the world who have no other source of honest news, for those who want a cool, calm, authoritative voice to cut through the babble of available information and for the UK public in general, who need more information about the rest of the world.

The preceding pages show the extent to which the World Service is facing one of the most crucial moments in its history. There is a genuine opportunity to bring its expertise to a wider UK audience by enhancing the quality, tone and range of the BBC's international coverage. But that opportunity needs to be seized decisively and will only be successful if the BBC can find a way of articulating the value of the World Service to UK audiences and to its own journalists.

Now is not the time for platitudes and quiet assurances, the BBC needs not only to be clear and decisive but must be brave in its approach. It must take the lead as a public service broadcaster, using the opportunity that World Service expertise provides, to modernise the domestic news agenda to more accurately reflect the nature of our globalised world. Of course, this must not be at the detriment of the World Service's international role, which should be maintained and nurtured in the years to come.

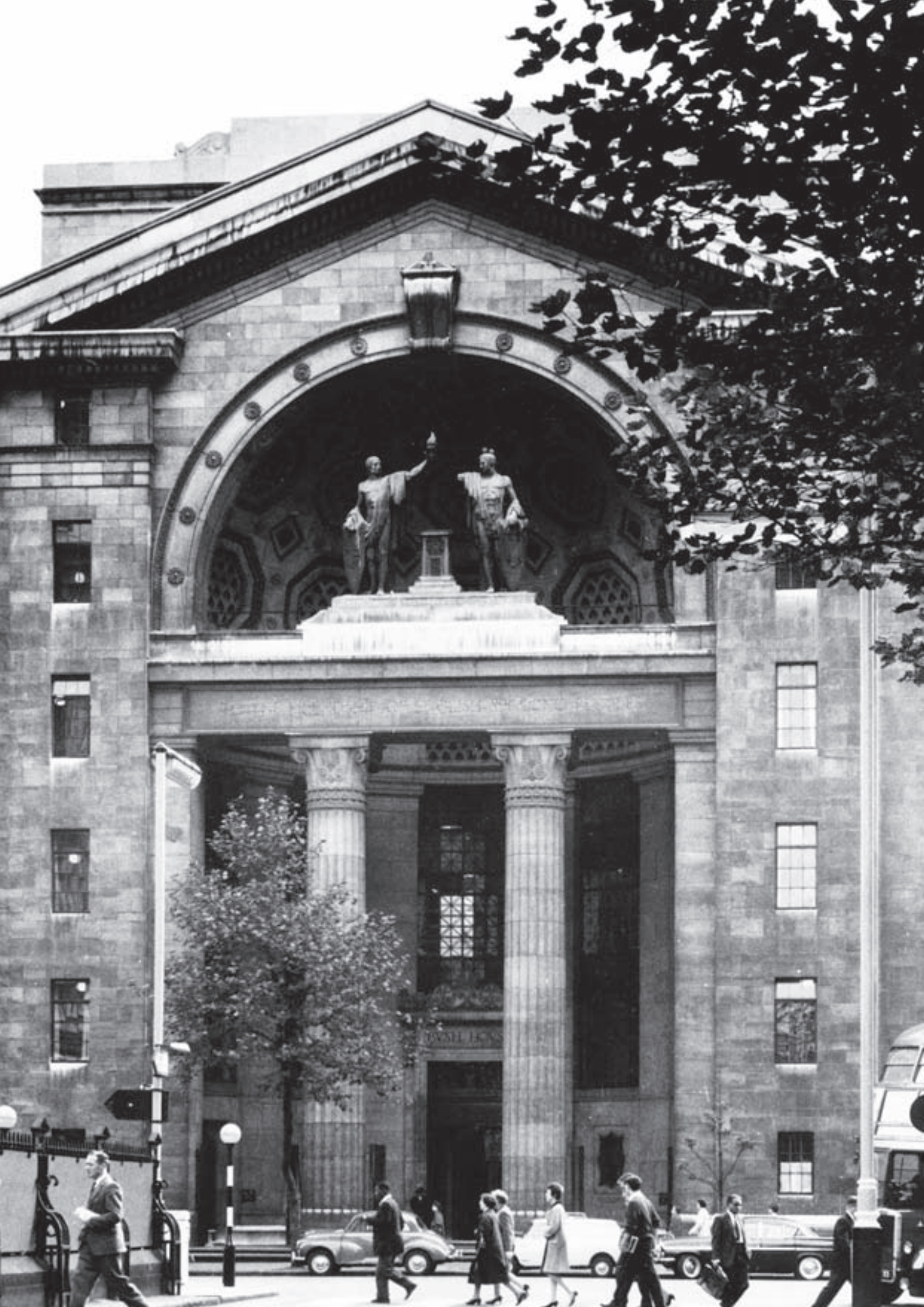
The BBC is charged with maintaining international news coverage of the highest possible standard and the courtyard of W1 encourages one to hope that this commitment will not be lost. This public space is in fact a huge work of art, called simply, World. Its surface curves slightly, like that of the earth and steel lines of longitude and latitude link flag stones inscribed with place names from around the world.

It seems a fitting way in to a new era for a broadcaster with the motto "Nation shall speak peace unto Nation". Only time will tell whether the BBC is able to grasp the nettle of integration and realise the full potential the impending changes offer them. If it fails in this important task, then it arguably places the World Service in serious danger, risking the future of one of the most valuable assets the UK has ever had.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The BBC should:

- Clearly define the World Service's remit, vision and purpose within the newly integrated BBC operation – this must happen as soon as possible.
- Identify and communicate effectively the national and international benefits and value of the World Service to the UK licence fee payer.
- Ensure that the 'champion' of international services on the BBC Trustees is a strong, independent and authoritative figure whose 'voice' is respected and heard.
- Ensure that the wider BBC understands the World Service, its value and its benefits
- Guarantee constitutional protection of the remit of the World Service and its budgets.
- Innovate and make use of appropriate technologies to enable the World Service to reach out to the largest audience possible, both in the UK and abroad.
- Implement a programme of placements over the next two years for senior staff [managers and editors] from BBC domestic news with the BBC World Service and vice versa.



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