[GB] New Tests to Be Satisfied Before the Announcement of New Public Services

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For some time there has been concern in the United Kingdom about the development of new services by the BBC. The Corporation is financed mainly by a compulsory licence fee levied on all users of television sets. Complaints have been made by commercial broadcasters that this can be used to fund services which compete unfairly with their own offerings. As a result, a strict division is expected between BBC public services financed by the licence fee and its commercial services financed from other sources such as the sale of rights. The United Kingdom minister has now issued a stricter definition of what may be included in the public services. He must give his consent before any new public service is launched or an existing one is subject to material change. He will also periodically review existing services.

When a new service or a material change to an existing service is proposed, the minister will publish details and invite written representations from the broadcasting industry, the regulatory authorities and consumer groups. He will seek to establish that the proposed service is compatible with the BBC's public service duties and that the value to the public of the services is proportionate to its likely impact on the market. He will pay particular attention to whether the BBC has consulted licence fee payers and published the results, the nature and coverage of commercial services of a similar nature, the likely impact of the proposed services on commercial services and the distinctiveness of the proposed services from those provided by other broadcasters. He will also need to establish that the service will be universally accessible within a reasonable period of time and free at the point of use. He will then publish details of his decision.

BBC: The Criteria for Public Services.

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