VLV Voice of the Listener & Viewer

Championing Excellence and Diversity in Broadcasting Autumn 2026 Bulletin 142

BRITISH BROADCASTING: A YEAR OF CUTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Steve Clarke

Former Editor, Royal Television Society Magazine, Media writer, author, editor and lecturer

With brutal cuts at the BBC and Channel 4, you could be forgiven for thinking that as the New Year hovers over the horizon all is doom and gloom in UK broadcasting.

Yet the truth is that, despite the economic head winds, recent months have been a period of achievement by our public service broadcasters.

The FIFA World Cup brought the nation together, principally because of the excellent coverage provided by the BBC and ITV.

By any standards, the BBC Proms were a source of delight and surprise. ITV's 70 Up, the final instalment of the documentary series that began at Granada's World In Action in 1963 was received rapturously by critics.

All this and the return of The Celebrity Traitors which confirmed its position as the single show that remains a national appointment to view in the age of streaming and audience fragmentation.

But first, the bad news as the BBC's new director general Matt Brittin continued to wield the axe and more details emerged of the £500 million worth of savings he and his senior team are implementing.

Around one in ten BBC jobs would go. For radio listeners the cuts were particularly painful. The number of permanent presenters on Radio 4's Today programme shrank from five to four in September, following Amol Rajan's exit, closely followed by the announcement of Emma Barnett's impending departure in January 2027.

Radio 4's The World Tonight was axed after more than fifty years. Other Radio 4 programmes that would end were the Midnight News, Money Box Live, AntiSocial, The Law Show and Crossing Continents. On the World Service, The Inquiry, The Conversation and The Fifth Floor were also disappearing.

Also set for the history books was Radio 4 flagship, the consumer show, You and Yours.

On television, linear channels BBC 3 and BBC Scotland will be mothballed from next spring, so will BBC Radio 4 Extra. It is the second time BBC 3, the original home of Gavin & Stacey and Fleabag, has been axed.

Brittin didn't stint on his media appearances speaking at both the Edinburgh Television Festival – the last to be held in the Scottish capital – and the RTS's London Convention. He described the licence fee as "yesterday's model" and "no longer fit for purpose.

He appeared to favour a compulsory household levy paid via utility bills.

The VLV has also favoured some form of universal licence fee, as Chairman Colin Browne made clear to the House of Commons Select Committee which was considering the future of the BBC. This system would ensure that the 20% of UK households who presently don't pay the licence fee would have to pay.

Few could disagree when Brittin described the BBC as "facing a moment of real jeopardy." Time will tell if his decision to overhaul the iPlayer, possibly adding Channel 4 content to the platform, and prioritise the needs of younger audiences will enable the BBC to thrive in the future.

"Young people are on YouTube five times as much as they're consuming television, so we've got to be there. We need to have our content out in front of young audiences, whether it's on TikTok or whatever. We need to be closer, simpler and faster," he told the FT.

The media Green Paper, published in the summer, set out proposals to make public service content easier to find online but any obligation for video sharing platforms like YouTube to give prominence to PSB material in their algorithms looks likely to be opposed by the tech companies.

Giving the MacTaggart lecture at the Edinburgh Television Festival, YouTube's EMEA boss Pedro Pina said PSB prominence on YouTube could undermine the "foundational principle" of free viewing choice on the Google-owned service and "push down" creators.

When in October, Brittin appointed a new Director of News and Current Affairs, Rachel Jupp, observers thought a key factor in her appointment was her experience overseeing the BBC's approach to AI in the US; Jupp's senior roles at the BBC included editing Panorama and head of BBC News documentaries and long-form journalism.

continued on page 3

Voice of the Listener and Viewer
Championing Excellence & Diversity in Broadcasting

VLV President
Lord Tony Hall CBE

VLV Patrons
Sir Peter Bazalgette
Ms Helen Boaden
Roger Bolton
Baroness Jane Bonham-Carter
Mark Damazer CBE
Rt Revd Lord Eames OM
Ms Claire Enders
Lord Inglewood DL
Lord Tom McNally
Lord Puttnam CBE
Ms Gillian Reynolds CBE
Ms Sarah Thane CBE JP
Sir John Tusa
Mr Will Wyatt CBE

VLV Trustees
Mr Andrew Board
Mr Colin Browne (Chairman)
Ms Toni Charlton
Ms Kate Dixon
Ms Mary Dixon (Secretary)
Mr Peter Gordon (Treasurer)
Professor Sylvia Harvey
Mr Allan Jack
Ms Helen Jay
Professor Catherine Johnson
Mr Hesham Sabry

VLV Office
142-143 Parrock Street
Gravesend
Kent DA12 1EY

Tel: 01474 526250
email: info@vlv.org.uk
https://www.vlv.org.uk

Office Hours
Tues - Thurs: 9.30AM - 2.30PM

Sarah Stapylton-Smith
VLV Administrator

VLV represents citizen and consumer interests in broadcasting and champions excellence and diversity in broadcasting. VLV is free from political, sectarian and commercial affiliations. VLV is concerned with the issues, structures, institutions and regulation that underpin the British broadcasting system and in particular to maintain the principles of public service broadcasting.

Views expressed in the bulletin are those of contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the VLV.

The Bulletin is edited by Sarah Stapylton-Smith with **special contribution by Steve Clarke** and published by Voice of the Listener & Viewer Ltd, a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales No 4407712. Charity No:1152136

ISSN 1475-2948

FROM THE CHAIRMAN, COLIN BROWNE

Looking back over the past six months since the Spring Bulletin, I cannot remember a period when there have been so many developments affecting the future of public service broadcasting and the media more broadly in the UK; and yet many key decisions have yet to be taken.

On the future of the BBC, we await the publication of the Government's White Paper following an extensive consultation process; and similarly, its decision on the nature and level of BBC funding. Currently, these are expected before Christmas, but these dates often slip.

The mood music from Government sounds positive, with a real understanding of the BBC as a strategic national asset. But converting this goodwill into concrete action is never straightforward, particularly as regards funding at a time when national and personal resources are very stretched.

The Culture Media and Sport Select Committee produced a helpful report, recognising the importance of the BBC to the UK , both culturally and as a provider of trusted news services at a time of so much false and partisan information online and on social media. The VLV presented written and oral evidence to the Committee. This is on our website, together with our response to the Government's consultation.

The VLV's view has been clear and consistent. We believe the BBC needs to be fully independent from Government. It needs to consult better with citizens and audiences. Above all, it needs to be universally available and universally funded – not a hybrid subscription service or funded by advertising. We have long advanced the concept of some form of universal licence fee, which all households would pay, as is the case in a number of other European countries. This would address the problem of households not paying the licence fee, even though they are known to be accessing BBC services.

Matt Brittin, the Director General, says the BBC has to make funding cuts of £500 million within the current Charter period. The VLV has great sympathy with the BBC's predicament. We do however have serious concerns about the way the cuts are being implemented. There is no consultation. There has been no communication of an overall plan or philosophy as regards where the cuts are to be made. The announcements appear random and piecemeal. There is real concern that some of the cuts being made, particularly on Radio 4, are very much at the classic public service end of the spectrum – the kind of distinctive programming that no one else would make; in other words, the kind of programming for which the BBC enjoys the privilege of the licence fee.

More broadly, the Government's Green Paper entitled 'Watch this space: a new strategic direction for UK media' took an in-depth look at some of the key issues facing PSM, including the potential move away from DTT to IPTV; prominence and discoverability of PSM services online; listed events; and vulnerable and rural audiences. It's a constructive paper, which recognises the importance of the public service media. Our response is on our website.

It is not only the BBC which faces severe financial problems. The new Chief Executive of Channel 4, Priya Dogra has announced the company will have to shed nearly 30% of its workforce, as part of its plans to create a simpler, more focused organisation.

In the face of fierce competition from the streaming channels and You Tube, PSBs are working more closely together. There is talk, for example, of the BBC iPlayer becoming a home for PSB and other services.

It is good to see this increased level of cooperation as we work to try to try to ensure that British consumers continue to enjoy a range of quality programming made in the UK, designed primarily for a UK audience; and that our cultural and arts sector benefit from this investment. There will be plenty to talk about at Autumn Conference on 15 December.

I look forward to seeing you there!

Colin Browne, **Chairman of VLV**

continued from page 1

Arguably, Channel 4's new CEO Priya Dogra faced an even tougher task than Brittin as she prepared to cut 28% of her workforce.

There were reports of preliminary talks between government, the BBC and Channel 4 regarding a possible merger of the some of the two broadcasters' activities, including UKTV, that would save costs while keeping the main Channel 4 as a stand-alone service.

Elsewhere, Sky's takeover of ITV was confirmed. However, the move could be subjected to a lengthy period of regulatory investigation, a mistake, said Lord Grade, who speaking to the RTS stressed the importance of a speedy takeover at a time of rapid change.

But in October, reports suggested that Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy was minded to refer the merger to Ofcom and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) on public interest grounds.

Across the Atlantic, Skydance's (the owner of Channel 5 via Paramount) $110 billion purchase of Warner Bros was completed. It was confirmed that Mark Thompson would remain in charge of CNN, now part of the Skydance media empire.

For many, the viewing highlight of 2026 was the World Cup, held in the Americas and which saw England beaten by Argentina in the semi-final. The game was watched by more than 20 million viewers on the BBC. Despite the sometime inconvenient viewing times due to time differences, for certain matches UK audiences were prepared to stay up late.

For the home side's clash with Mexico, arguably England's best performance of the tournament, a TV audience of 9.1 million watched England win in the Azteca Stadium. Audiences for terrestrial TV continued to decline, but this was the biggest TV audience ever for a live UK broadcast between 2am and 4am.

With 86 Proms held over eight weeks, 2026's BBC Proms were arguably more eclectic than ever, as classical musicians rubbed shoulders with tributes to Marvin Gaye and Miles Davies, in the centenary year of the great jazz musician's birth.

The legendary 85-year-old Argentinian pianist, Martha Argerich's performance of Beethoven's Piano Concerto Number Two accompanied by the Munich Philharmonic proved to be a crowd pleaser of the highest order.

On ITV 70 Up was seen as an elegiac ending to a TV programme that remarkably was still capable of moving viewers despite being invented at a time when there were only two channels. This time round 70 Up was directed by the award-wining Asif Kapadia, whose documentaries have included Senna and Amy.

As feted as 70 Up was, its viewing figures were no match for The Celebrity Traitors, but then no other programme can match its popularity as 8.9m people tuned in for the opening episode.

Our public service broadcasters are under huge pressure as they navigate momentous changes. Thankfully for audiences they continue to deliver across a wide range of viewing and listening choices.

IN MEMORY OF PROFESSOR BOB USHERWOOD

Colin Browne
VLV Chairman

Professor Robert (Bob) Usherwood, who has sadly passed away, was said by those closest to him to have two religions – librarianship and cricket. Public service broadcasting was not far behind.

Bob had a distinguished career as a librarian. Dedicated to the role of public libraries in civil society, he became one of the country's youngest chief librarians. His leadership led to Sheffield becoming the country's leading centre for research in librarianship. He became President of the national library association in 1998.

His vision for a high-quality public library service was matched by his dedication to high-quality public service broadcasting. Becoming a member and then a Trustee of the VLV during the chairmanship of our founder, Jocelyn Hay, Bob was always focused on the importance of public service broadcasting, and particularly the BBC, to civil society in the UK.

I valued his contribution hugely when I became Chairman in 2012. He had the ability to see key issues from the perspective of our members and audiences more generally.

He was also great fun; and his cheerfulness continued despite his deteriorating health over the last couple of years.

He will be greatly missed, and our deepest condolences go to Margaret, his widow, and to his daughters Julie and Tania.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE BBC'S FUNDING CRISIS?

Professor Patrick Barwise
Emeritus Professor of Management and Marketing, London Business School

In the run-up to BBC charter renewal, the corporation is facing perhaps its greatest ever funding crisis. The main reason is the reduction over the last 15 years in the real-terms public funding of its UK services, which largely account for the public's willingness to pay the licence fee. It also faces challenges on the cost side: hyperinflation in most programme genres; having to 'ride two horses' (online and broadcast) in distribution until at least 2034; and the need to invest in new digital services and processes to keep pace with technology and consumption trends, especially among younger audiences. But the cumulative real-terms funding cut since 2010 is the main reason for the crisis.

Public funding of the BBC's UK services: 2010/11 vs 2025/26

	2010/11 nominal (£m)	2010/11 in 2025 prices (£m)	2025/26 (£m)
TV licence fee revenue	3,100	4,817	3,879
Licence fee collection costs	-124	-193	-190
DWP payment for over-75s	579	900	0
Total before top-slicing	**3,555**	**5,524**	**3,689**
Top-sliced to fund other activities	-80	-124	-293
Net public funding for UK services	**3,475**	**5,400**	**3,396**

Source: BBC Annual Reports 2010/11 and 2025/26.

Comparing the figures in the 2010/11 and 2025/26 BBC Annual Reports, and allowing for general (CPI) inflation, the public funding of the BBC's UK services was reduced by £2bn/year (37%) in 2025 prices, from £5.4bn to £3.4bn:

Based on media coverage, you might think that the main reason for this 37% real-terms funding reduction was fewer people paying the licence fee. But in reality, it was mainly driven by the actions of previous governments:

- Repeated below-inflation funding settlements, salami-slicing the licence fee from £226 to £174.50 in 2025 prices – a 23% real-terms reduction
- The withdrawal of government (DWP) funding for free TV licences
- An increase in the amount of licence fee income 'top-sliced' to fund other activities (the BBC World Service, BBC Monitoring, the Local News Partnership, and part of the cost of S4C) from £124m to £293m in 2025 prices.

It's true that the increase in evasion, from 5.2% to 11.8%, also played a part, as did the increase in the number of 'no licence needed' households claiming that they did not need a TV licence because they 'no longer watch live TV' but 'never watch the BBC iPlayer'. To put this in context, in 2015, 99% of UK households used the BBC's services in a single week. The figure may now be 'only' 97% or 98%. But the idea that a large number are forced to pay without getting any direct benefit over a whole year seems implausible.

Many, however, take the BBC for granted - until they're deprived of it: after nine days without it, 70 per cent of those who'd said it was poor value changed their minds.

To mitigate the cuts, the BBC limited free TV licences to households in which the licence payer or their partner was aged 75+ and receiving Pension Credit (a means-tested government benefit) and has made continuous efficiency savings (reducing overhead costs, cutting staff and budgets, and squeezing suppliers). But, according to the National Audit Office, it now faces diminishing returns from these savings and most future cost-cutting will have to come from axed programmes, lower budgets and a reduction in the number of TV channels and radio stations.

It also faces diminishing returns from commercial income, largely generated overseas from programme sales and format licences. With less investment in original content, quite simply it now has less to sell.

The Government says it wants to ensure sustainable BBC funding under the next charter. Achieving that will require widening the payment base to bring it closer to the BBC's near-universal household usage. The financial stakes are surprisingly low: the £180 licence fee (with easy payment options), for those that have to pay it, is equivalent to just £3.45/week – less than a single takeaway coffee - for the whole family. Well-targeted exemptions for households for whom even this represents a significant burden should be easily affordable, even in today's dire fiscal situation. But, as always, any policy that ends – never mind reverses – the salami-slicing of BBC funding will be strongly opposed by its, mostly right-leaning, critics.

An earlier, open-source version of this article was published by The Conversation on 15 October: ***What's behind the BBC's funding crisis? An expert explains***.

THE BBC'S FUTURE: TIME FOR GOVERNMENT TO ACT

Phil Harding
British journalist, broadcaster, and former senior BBC Executive

The government says the BBC is one of the two most important institutions in this country. So why is the government not treating the future of the broadcaster as being as important as it says it is? For all its kind words the government is not matching its rhetoric with actions. At the moment the government seems to be prepared to leave the BBC to do its best to manage decline. Promises of White Papers and funding settlements seem a long way off.

There will always be a debate about the size of the BBC. The Daily Mail will always find wasteful excesses, real and imagined. For some on the right there will be a question as to whether the BBC should exist at all. In the past BBC funding has been a private Whitehall affair. BBC executives, special advisors, ministers exchange emails; there are meetings behind closed doors. Those meetings are happening now on a weekly basis. Sometimes the Chancellor or the Prime Minster gets involved. Figures will be swapped back-and-forth. Sometimes the BBC manages to call on additional political allies to re-open the argument. Finally a figure is announced. The BBC may find itself being bounced into a take it or leave it deal. It's bloody but very polite. That's the nature of Whitehall negotiations.

That's not good enough this time.

The BBC is in a serious financial hole at the moment. Programmes, networks and channels are under threat. Virtually every area faces massive reductions.
Of course there have to be changes. Some are very necessary. Not every programme or radio station should survive, certainly not forever. There is usually a fuss whenever programmes are scrapped. Programmes will always have their dedicated audiences.

To stay creatively nimble the BBC needs to keep changing. Above all it needs to keep pace with the changing technical world and the changing ways we use the media. But what's happening now is more than that and with little public debate.

Since 2010 the BBC has had its real-terms funding cut by around 40%. At various times successive governments have loaded more and more responsibilities onto the BBC's bill: the World Service, over 75's, S4C. Each addition has made the BBC poorer.

Currently there are two things going on. On the one hand there are the necessary changes that the BBC needs to make to stay up-to-date with the population's changing media habits. The other much less discussed topic is that fundamentally the BBC does not have enough money to do what it ought to be doing.

Often the two arguments get confused with one another. Real cuts sometimes get dressed up by BBC management as being necessary modernization. That line doesn't help the BBC's case.

The big risk is that with all the changes that are being announced now, bit by bit, announcement by announcement, we could end up with a BBC that is unrecognisable from anything we have today.

There are some fundamental questions here for the government and for all of us: does this country need a publicly funded world class news service with comprehensive national and international coverage? Should there continue to be high-quality British made drama? Groundbreaking documentaries that bring the world to our screens? Entertainment and comedy that reflect our country back to ourselves? In other words, do we want a BBC that can do the job it's been given?

If we do want such a BBC then the money is going to have to be found. As we can see at the moment the BBC is making its case on its airwaves but that's not enough.
In the end it's the government that sets the level of public funding the BBC will get. The government should be leading this debate. Instead it is silent hiding behind the excuse of its forthcoming White Paper.

When that White paper does come out a big risk is that the bottom line – the actual amount of money for the BBC – will get lost in a row about the method of funding, should it be a digital surcharge or a household levy etc. In the meantime the government seems happy to sit and watch the BBC announce cut after cut.

Just how serious is this government about the future of the BBC? That's the test. One thing is for sure you can't turn the clock back. If you allow the BBC to wither away now you won't be able to put it back together again. A public debate is needed and needed now.

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC VOICES IN PSM FUTURES

Rhianne Jones
Research Director, Responsible Innovation Centre

As a nation, we are used to talking about public service media. Every day we discuss programmes we love, coverage we disagree with and content that makes us think differently. What we talk about far less is how public service media should evolve in an increasingly digital world, or how audiences themselves might help shape that evolution.

As debates about the future of the BBC and wider public service media continue, a familiar question arises: how can audiences be meaningfully involved in shaping institutions that exist to serve them? While public consultation is often discussed, examples of citizens being brought together to learn about issues, deliberate with one another and develop collective recommendations remain relatively uncommon.

That is what inspired a recent public deliberation led by the Responsible Innovation Centre for Public Media Futures (RIC), an independent research centre funded by UKRI and hosted by BBC R&D. Working with the BBC and other partners, 100 people from across the UK were brought together through a civic lottery to consider a central question: *How can technology be shaped and used to ensure everyone benefits from public service media in an increasingly digital and online world?*

Over several weeks, participants heard from experts, explored evidence, shared personal experiences and worked through difficult trade-offs. Their discussions ranged across issues such as digital inclusion, online safety, AI, misinformation and how audiences discover content. Unlike many public debates about technology, the process was designed to give people extended time to learn, reflect and deliberate before reaching conclusions.

A broad consensus emerged. Participants recognised the opportunities that technology creates while also expressing concerns about online harms, social fragmentation, unequal access and the growing influence of AI. Many described feeling overwhelmed by information and a growing sense that technology was moving beyond their control. Crucially, they wanted public service media organisations, including the BBC, to play a distinctive and proactive role in addressing these challenges, by putting public values at the centre of innovation.

Several themes stood out. Participants wanted public service media to help people develop the skills and confidence needed to participate fully in digital life. They called for healthier and safer online spaces, particularly for younger people. They supported greater transparency around algorithms, responsible approaches to AI and stronger efforts to tackle mis- and disinformation. Throughout the deliberation, participants consistently returned to the idea that technology should serve people, rather than the other way around.

While the focus of the deliberation was technology, one of the strongest outcomes was in highlighting the value of public participation itself.

Audiences are often invited into discussions about the future of media through opinion polls, consultations or reactive debates on specific issues. These methods are valuable, but they rarely give people the time, information and space needed to engage with complex questions in depth. This deliberation demonstrated how eagerly members of the public are both willing and able to do exactly that.

We heard clearly throughout the process how participants greatly valued the opportunity to share their views, and that they wanted the public to have a stronger voice in shaping the future of public service media and technology.

It also highlighted the benefits for public service media organisations. The process generated rich insights into public expectations, as well as showing an uplift in participants' knowledge and support for public service media. Perhaps more importantly, it created a genuine dialogue between audiences and institutions. Participants did not approach these issues as technology experts; they approached them as citizens, viewers, listeners and users whose lives are increasingly shaped by digital media.

For organisations such as the BBC, this feels especially relevant. Public service media exists to serve the public, yet opportunities for the public to help shape its future can be limited. This deliberation offers one practical example of how audiences can be actively brought into important conversations about innovation, technology and the future direction of public service media.

At a time when our media landscape is experiencing huge disruption, and trust and public institutions are under scrutiny, that may be one of the most important lessons from the project. The public is not simply a passive audience for change.

People want a voice in shaping it. Giving them that opportunity could lead not only to better decisions, but also to a stronger relationship between public service media and the people it exists to serve.

Please scan the QR to access the full report.

RADIO 4 EMBRACES MULTI-PLATFORM

The changes at Radio 4 are part of the drive by Matt Brittin to make the BBC a digital-first organisation as audiences seek out more programmes online – and to save money.

You and Yours will be replaced by a new consumer programme “designed to work both on air and on demand that builds on Radio 4’s tradition of original reporting, practical advice and holding organisations to account, ” explained the BBC.

Axing such a high-profile programme is inevitably controversial. Former You and Yours presenter John Howard told the Guardian it was wrong to axe You and Yours because the programme focused on areas ignored by other parts of the media.

However, BBC Sounds director Jonathan Wall said commissioning fewer shows would allow the broadcaster to concentrate investment on priority programmes and “make our best shows work across broadcast, on demand and different formats.”

BBC audio needs to save around £5.5 million next year; 44 jobs in the department will go by March 2027. Compulsory redundancies would have to be made as not enough volunteers had come forward.

Wall explained: “These are difficult decisions, and they are not based on cost alone. We need to make significant savings while investing for the future. I am extremely grateful to the teams behind the programmes affected and we will support colleagues and work closely with unions throughout consultation.”

As part of the changes some Radio 4 programmes are being expanded. These include in Our Time and Start The Week. The idea is that 60-minute editions of these shows will be more podcast friendly. The weekend edition of Farming Today was also being expanded.

In an unrelated move, Radio 4’s long-wave broadcasts stopped on June 27th.

WHERE NEXT FOR CHANNEL 4?

In common with the BBC, Channel 4 is seeking big economies – 28% of staff are being culled in the biggest round of redundancies in the broadcaster’s 43-year history.

As part of this, commissioning teams for drama and comedy are being merged into a single scripted department. A similar move is expected in unscripted, with plans to combine documentaries and factual entertainment, reality and entertainment, and specialist factual.

Fewer shows will be commissioned, with the aim of finding well-funded hits supported by increased marketing.

On the plus side, Channel 4 recently won the contract to sell TV and digital advertising for Paramount’s UK channels, including Channel 5, Nickelodeon and Comedy Central. The business was previously handled by Sky, where Channel 4’s new CEO Priya Dogra used to work.
Some industry insiders believe Channel 4 is financially unviable in its present form and that collaboration with the BBC is inevitable.

However, speaking at the RTS London Convention in September, Dogra ruled out a merger: “I don’t want to merge with the BBC because it will be a takeover by the BBC.”

Michael Grade, who ran Channel 4 from 1988–1997, told another RTS event that the broadcaster should make a virtue of being small.

He said: “It’s a crowded market but in any market whether it’s a supermarket or online retail, there’s always that niche player that punches above its weight and provides something different.”

THE ARCHERS’ BIRMINGHAM FUTURE IN DOUBT

Plans for The Archers to be recorded at a new bespoke studio at Birmingham’s Typhoo Tea Factor have been abandoned as part of ongoing BBC cuts.

There was speculation that the recoding of the beloved Radio 4 soap could be moved to a studio in London or Cardiff.

A BBC spokesperson said they "recognise and value The Archers' long-standing relationship with the West Midlands" while confirming they are seeking "a more cost-effective solution."

The Archers is celebrating its 75th year anniversary and recently ran a storyline featuring the show’s first ever lesbian wedding.

VLV 2026 AGM

The 24th Annual General Meeting of Voice of the Listener and Viewer Ltd will be held on Tuesday, 15 December 2026 at 4.00pm, at The Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BG.

Nominations and resolutions should be sent to the Chairman at VLV, 142–143 Parrock Street, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 1EY, not less than 3 days and not more than 21 days before the AGM. Papers for the AGM will be emailed in advance and copies by post will be available on request by contacting Sarah Stapylton-Smith at the VLV office.

TRUSTEES

Professor Maria Michalis and Alan Barlow will be standing for election for a three-year term and Allan Jack for re-election for a second three-year term.

After two three-year terms as a trustee Professor Sylvia Harvey is obliged to stand down for a year before she can be re-elected.

We would like to thank her and all our trustees for the work, support and time they have devoted to the VLV. They are volunteers and without them the VLV would not be able to carry out its important work. If you are interested in working with the VLV as a volunteer or becoming a VLV trustee, please get in touch with the chairman, Colin Browne.

VLV AWARDS

The VLV Awards for 2026 will be presented at the Spring Conference on 28 April 2027 and the nomination forms will go out with the Spring Bulletin. The awards cover the whole of calendar year 2026. Remember to note radio or television programmes that you may want to nominate.

Diary Dates

VLV Autumn Conference & AGM
Tuesday 15th December 2026
10.30am - 5.00pm

The Geological Society / Online

Jocelyn Hay Lecture
Wednesday 20th January 2027

delivered by VLV President, Lord Hall

The Geological Society

Keeping up to date

VLV sends out regular updates by email - please ensure that Sarah in the VLV office at info@vlv.org.uk has your up to date email address.

We upload all the latest VLV news at https://www.vlv.org.uk

And finally...make sure you're following us on LinkedIn.

NEW SUBSCRIPTION / DONATION / CHANGE OF ADDRESS* (delete as appropriate)

VLV Subscription

Individual £30.00 / Joint (two at same address) £45.00 / Student e-membership £10.00

Please make cheques payable to VLV and send to: The Old Rectory Business Centre, Springhead Road, Northfleet, Kent DA11 8HN or pay online at https://www.vlv.org.uk

PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS

Name:_____

Address:_____

Post Code: _____Tel:_____ Email:_____

OR to pay by Credit Card please complete the form below or telephone 01474 338716

Name of Cardholder: _____

Card type: Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Expiry Date ☐☐ / ☐☐ Issue No. ☐☐ CVS ☐☐☐ ***(last 3 digits of security on reverse of card)***

Card No. ☐☐☐☐ / ☐☐☐☐ / ☐☐☐☐ / ☐☐☐☐ Amount £_____ Signature of Cardholder _____

I would like to pay by standing order ☐ please send me a form.

giftaid it I would like to GiftAid my payment ☐ please send me a form.