

2.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Broadcasting comes under the jurisdiction of the recently formed Government ministry, the Department of National Heritage. Prior to this, it was overseen jointly by the Home Office and the Department of Trade and Industry.

There are separate regulatory systems for the public sector and the private sector.

BBC Board of Governors

The BBC is a public corporation operating under a Royal Charter, and a Licence and Agreement from the government. The Charter sets out its objectives and constitution, and states its sources and uses of income. The Licence and Agreement include the terms and conditions under which the BBC is allowed to broadcast, and clauses on financing and programming.

The Board of Governors consists of 12 people, appointed by the government and intended to represent a cross-section of interests to protect the public interest in broadcasting. It is responsible for ensuring that the BBC meets any obligations in its Charter and Licence. The governors appoint the BBC's Board of Management, which is led by the Director General, and is responsible for the management of the Corporation, its services and its staff. All 12 governors are part-time, although the chairman now works four days a week. This has led to concern in some quarters that the governors are playing too great a role in the day-to-day management of the BBC, rather than concerning themselves with broader strategic issues.

The BBC's Charter comes up for renewal in 1996, and the role of the governors is one of the issues which is already being considered in the discussion about the future of the BBC. This debate was opened officially in November 1992, when the Government published its Green Paper on The Future Of The BBC. Other key questions are how the BBC should be funded in future, although it already seems likely that the licence fee (paid by every home which possesses a TV set) will be retained in some form, and the range of services and programming which it should (and can afford to) supply.

At present, the BBC Home Service operates two television channels (BBC1 and BBC2), five national radio networks, and 37 regional radio stations, funded by the licence fee.

The Independent Television Commission

The commercial stations are licensed and regulated by the Independent Television Commission (ITC). This body was established by the 1990 Broadcasting Act, and replaced the Independent Broadcasting Authority and the Cable Authority. The ITC consists of a chairman, a deputy and between eight and 10 other members, all appointed by the government.