



Policy on ticketing for BBC public service events

August 2017

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Policy on ticketing for BBC public service events

1. Introduction

1.1 The BBC has a tradition of mounting and running a range of cultural, educational and sporting events, either on its own, in partnership with other suitable parties, or having a presence at third party events. These events may include concerts, festivals, award ceremonies and other activities. Output from such events form an important and valued strand of programming for the BBC's UK public services and the World Service.

1.2 The Framework Agreement allows for the BBC's licence fee funded public services to be supplemented by certain specified forms of additional funding. One of these additional sources is the recovery of the costs of events from the proceeds of ticket sales. The Agreement lists a number of specific events that the BBC can undertake¹. It also requires the BBC to develop a policy statement covering other similar events that it plans to undertake and which contribute to the BBC's mission and public purposes. The policy statement must be agreed with the Secretary of State.

1.3 This document fulfils that requirement. It provides guidance on the types of ticketed events that the BBC is likely to undertake, the principles that will determine the selection of such events, and the procedures and approach it will adopt in running events including the recovery of costs.

1.4 The BBC's approach to events is framed by a number of the obligations placed on it in the Charter and Framework Agreement. It seeks to balance the fulfilment of the BBC's mission and public purposes through public service activity and the duty to undertake partnership activities², while being mindful of the BBC's duty to have particular regard to the effects that such activity may have on competition.³

1.5 The BBC Board will keep this policy under review and consult the Secretary of State on any substantive changes. The Board will also regularly assess the application of the policy.

2. Why does the BBC run events?

2.1 As noted above, the BBC has an established history of offering a range of events to the public. The categories of events are set out in more detail in section 7 below. The scope of events are largely a function of the creative remit of the BBC's UK public services and the World Service, as the output from such events generally forms an important and valued strand of programming for these services. The aim of these events is to showcase and

¹ Sub-clause 49(4) (h) of the Framework Agreement permits the BBC to recover costs of the following events, specifically, from the proceeds of ticket sales: The Proms, Proms in the Park, Cardiff Singer of the Year and Young Musician of the Year and requires the BBC to agree a statement of policy with the Secretary of State for other similar events.

² The Charter places a duty on the BBC to work collaboratively and seek to enter into partnerships with other organisations, particularly in the creative economy, where to do so would be in the public interest. See Article 13 of the Charter.

³ The Charter places a duty on the BBC to have particular regard to the effects of its activities on competition in the United Kingdom. See Article 11 of the Charter.

provide added value to the BBC's public services. The events are usually run on a one-off or annual basis. They are only undertaken if they will contribute to the fulfilment of the BBC's mission, public purposes or general duties in one or more of the following ways:

- Showcase cultural, educational or sporting events of the highest quality
- Increase and extend the impact and reach of BBC content and services among all audiences, including attracting under-served and new audiences
- Bring together audiences in the UK's nations, regions and communities for shared cultural experiences and help ensure that the needs of diverse audiences are met
- Provide opportunities for collaborative engagement and partnerships with cultural organisations with similar objectives, as a key way of fulfilling the duty on the BBC to seek to enter into partnerships. When considering commissioning a new event not previously mounted, the BBC will consider whether it can undertake the event in partnership with other such organisations
- Raise funds and/or awareness of issues relating to pan-BBC charitable appeals; or
- Fulfil the remit of the BBC Performing Groups – the five BBC orchestras - whose mission and purpose is to stage public concerts year round at a range of venues.

2.2. The events should aim to provide an activity or experience that the commercial sector does not usually provide, such as offering opportunities and a platform for new, diverse and emerging talent. In this way, the events should enhance public value by extending choice.

2.3 The commissioning of new events will be approved at a senior level within the BBC, taking account of the need to satisfy the requirements in this policy.

3. Why does the BBC charge for events?

3.1 A BBC event will always have an audience. It will aim to add value by offering that audience a deeper, distinctive and immersive experience which goes beyond the experience the audience would get from watching or listening to the BBC broadcast programme or service, or the experience of attending a studio as a member of the audience.

3.2 The BBC incurs additional costs in staging such events. It has to make a judgement about whether it is appropriate to charge an entry fee to recover the additional costs of staging an event. Some major events will be free of charge to those attending to ensure universal availability. At the same time, where an event provides value to the audience beyond the broadcast experience it can be reasonable and appropriate that those benefiting should contribute to recovering the additional cost of staging the event through ticketing. In addition, the BBC will also take into account its duty to have particular regard to the effect of its activities on competition in the United Kingdom.

3.3 Examples of BBC events where a charge is levied for entry include most of the BBC's orchestral performances and concerts by the BBC Performing Groups (e.g. concerts from the Wigmore Hall), The Proms, Proms in the Park, R2 Hyde Park, BBC Teen Awards,

Young Musician of the Year, Sports Personality of the Year, The Songs of Praise, Big Sing in the Royal Albert Hall and the Asian Network festival.

3.4 The BBC may also charge a cost recovery fee for access to individual BBC events at third party events and festivals including Hay Festival, Cheltenham Science Festival, Cheltenham History Festival and Eisteddfod. In addition, events are organised by the BBC to benefit BBC-approved charitable appeals such as BBC Children in Need, Comic Relief and Sport Relief, where ticket income is donated to the charity concerned after basic costs have been covered.

4. Principles on charging for events

4.1 In deciding whether to charge for entry to an event, the BBC will be guided by the following principles. The BBC Board will approve a decision to charge for a new category of event, taking account of these principles. The principles are:

- Ensure best value for licence fee payers and fairness for non-attending licence fee payers
- Maximise the value of BBC content budgets for the benefit of all licence fee payers
- The duty to have particular regard to the effects of the BBC's activities on competition and seek to avoid adverse impacts which are not necessary to the fulfilment of the mission and public purposes
- The duty to have regard to promoting positive market impacts by offering a greater range of events than can be offered by the commercial market and helping to stimulate public demand
- Fulfil the BBC's partnership duty. For example, charging an entry fee is sometimes required by venues as a condition of partnering with the BBC, e.g. the Royal Albert Hall for the Proms
- Ensure that BBC and BBC partnered events can attain a suitable sense of scale and creative ambition; and
- Fulfil the remit of the BBC Performing Groups. For example, the ability to charge admission in appropriate circumstances is necessary to ensure that the BBC maintains its ability to continue to stage a diverse series of orchestral concerts across the UK nations and regions, featuring the BBC orchestras, singers and bands.

5. Approach to running ticketed events

5.1 The following requirements will apply to how the BBC approaches the conduct of ticketed events:

- Where the BBC charges for tickets, it will do so proportionately and usually at a modest rate to promote accessibility for audiences while also having regard to the impact the pricing of tickets for the event could have on the wider commercial market
- Public service events should not aim to make a profit – they must be run on a cost-recovery basis only. The proceeds from ticket sales will only be used to pay for events or for a series of events costs and will not be designed to generate further income for the BBC
- Ticket revenue must only cover event costs and not broadcast/production costs. Clearly separated accounts must be kept to demonstrate this; and

- The BBC will not charge for admission to regular recordings of programmes, as opposed to events. It will also not normally charge for events held on its premises, with the exception of the venues of the BBC Performing Groups.

6. Nature of Event Costs

6.1 The cost of mounting or attending these types of events can include:

- Venue hire costs
- Costs of seating
- Cost of facilities hire and installation, such as technology, broadband, staging, additional audience screens and other related audience services
- Security and hospitality staff
- Concession management
- Transport, and
- Other facilities for the audience at the event and required to mount the infrastructure of the event

6.2 Normally, only a part of each event’s costs would be covered by funds from ticket sales. These funds, therefore, generally serve to supplement licence fee support for this category of activity.

7. Categories of event

7.1 The BBC has a tradition of mounting and running a range of cultural, educational and sporting events, either on its own, in partnership with other suitable parties, or having a presence at third party events. These events may include concerts, festivals, award ceremonies and other activities.

This section provides further guidance on how the BBC will approach different categories of ticketed public service event.

BBC cultural, educational and sporting events

7.2 Where the BBC wishes to mount a new event, it will do so for demonstrable editorial and public purpose or mission reasons (see para 2.1). It will also consider whether it is adding to the level of choice in the market by examining what type of events are already available to the public before commissioning the event.

7.3 The BBC’s events will have a demonstrable link to the BBC’s editorial output and provide a broader editorial repertoire and offering than commercial events in similar genres.

7.4 Examples of these types of events include BBC Proms in the Park, where the BBC aims to enhance and supplement the close of the main Proms season with a series of outdoor events in the Nations; BBC Radio 1’s Big Weekend⁴ which is staged in areas that are usually

⁴ In the case of BBC Radio 1’s Big Weekend the BBC has made a strategic decision to try to avoid charging entry beyond the cost of processing the tickets. This event is staged deliberately at the start of the festival season and is designed to provide a young audience with their entry point to music festivals so that they will then feel confident to explore other “paid for” festivals across the season.

underserved by commercial festivals and where the BBC event organisers seek to rotate to a new location each year; and the Radio 3 Free Thinking Festival in the Sage in Gateshead where the BBC seeks to explore a subject area which is not covered by commercial providers.

Third party festivals and other third party/partner events

7.5 The BBC is committed to having a presence at third-party festivals and partner events in pursuit of its partnership duty. The BBC works with cultural partners and organisations throughout the English regions – and within the cultural context of each Nation. Ticketed events are a key way of fulfilling the partnership duty by allowing the BBC to:

- work with local/national partners on ad hoc events of national, regional or local significance – for example, *Hull City of Culture*; and
- maintain a consistent BBC presence at selected third-party arts, cultural and science festivals.

7.6 In addition to covering third party festivals on-air, the BBC also partners with a selection of appropriate organisations to bring BBC content, talent and programming to festival audiences, e.g. Edinburgh Festival in Scotland, the Eisteddfod in Wales, and the Hay on Wye and Cheltenham festivals.

7.7 The ability to recover a portion of event costs at festivals is an important facilitating factor in enabling the BBC to have a presence on the ground and to fulfil its partnership duty. The BBC will take a number of factors into account in deciding whether to charge for tickets including:

- The need for extra infrastructure such as audience tents, extra facilities, and enhanced digital infrastructure; and
- Partner perception - within the paid ticket environment of a partner's festival with multiple venues, a 'free' BBC event area could have a detrimental effect on other venues within the festival which have to charge an entry fee.

BBC-approved charitable appeals

7.8 The BBC mounts events in conjunction with BBC Children in Need, Comic Relief/Sport Relief and national and regional approved charity appeal partners. Typically these fundraising events include special concerts, comedy events, celebrity challenges, festivals and sporting events such as the BBC Children In Need, Countryfile Ramble, Stand up for Comic Relief, Children in Need Rocks and Carfest. Ticket income and other ancillary fundraising from the broadcast of such events benefits the charitable appeal once basic costs have been recovered.

7.9 In some cases, such events will be mounted with a partner such as a venue or other suitable third-party organisation who may provide services and or facilities for free or at a reduced cost to the charity.