1. Executive Summary

This document is structured to set out a series of issues and problems first, and then propose a set of recommendations to address those issues. Those recommendations need not be taken as a package. Indeed, while some are intentionally complementary, others will be alternatives to each other.

For ease of reference, we summarise those recommendations here.

We recommend that the BBC formulate a set of strategic objectives around online accountability, and publish it online in the spirit of allowing its licence fee payers to hold it to account. We offer a draft

3. Audit the existing accountability blogs, and consider whether to cut back, extend or consolidate.
4. For blogs which do not carry accountability responsibilities, clarify their role and communicate to blog owners where to direct accountability issues that arise in their area.
5. Across BBC social media activities, provide staff with a clear place to direct users to tackle accountability questions.

D   B

We recommend that the current suite of feedback programmes should be relaunched as fully cross-media brands, using online vehicles to allow users to set the agenda in an open fashion and integrating with current interactive offerings. Further:

- Allow users an opportunity to set the agenda within these spaces by filtering and promoting each other's contributions and ideas
- Build a model of "networked accountability" around these brands by cultivating panels of audience experts
- Transfer the "audience representative" role and powers enjoyed by presenters of feedback programmes to online hosts

C   A   A

We recommend that the BBC take seriously the idea that the accountability should be driven by the audience – allowing licence fee payers in effect to hold the BBC to account. This should be facilitated either by the adoption of new technical platforms and/or by the definition of clear ombudsman-style powers for blog hosts.

C

The BBC needs to understand, on an ongoing basis, the demographic biases of contributors to different accountability platforms, in order to take them as seriously as they deserve and to make any allowances for how this might distort the picture of user views.

There needs to be a culture change inside the BBC such that it becomes an accepted and expected part of the job of senior editorial management to read online social media output associated with their linear brands, as well as being aware of the competition.

E   . .

We recommend that the BBC should consider to what extent conversations which are now conducted on bbc.co.uk could be conducted externally instead. Regardless of the outcome, the BBC also needs to spend more time reading and engaging with online commentary around itself and its brands.

E   C

We recommend explicitly charging a team with supporting social media activities around accountability, trained to be aware of recurring issues and able to support blog authors and production staff and able to step in as hosts where necessary.

We recommend that:

1. Complaints concerning the content of comments on blogs or messageboards be handled by the Editorial Complaints Unit.
2. The Social Media Complaints Board commit itself publically to a maximum response time.