



National Audit Office

Comptroller and Auditor General
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Helping the nation spend wisely

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Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State
Department of Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
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Dear Minister,

I am writing to follow up our discussion on 4 May when you invited me over to talk about the way ahead on the government's proposals for giving the National Audit Office full access to the BBC to improve transparency.

I understand that since we met there have been further discussions between officials at the Department, the BBC and the National Audit Office about the draft of the Agreement which will give effect to the Government's proposals. Whilst I recognise that this is an agreement between the Government and the BBC I thought it might be helpful if I set out my position.

My understanding is that the draft Agreement does not address all the concerns I have previously raised, but that it does provide for the Comptroller and Auditor General to have discretion over the subjects to be examined, subject to those being notified in an annual programme of work, and a right of access to the necessary information. These are clearly improvements on the current arrangements and I welcome them.

My views, and those of the Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts, on the requirement for the Comptroller and Auditor General to report to the BBC Trust rather than directly to Parliament are well known to you. You are also aware from our earlier correspondence and discussion of the importance I attach to having the flexibility to adjust my planned programme of work where circumstances dictate.

I believe that recent discussions between officials have explored the possibility of allowing some limited flexibility in an annual programme of work, either by creating an opportunity to review the programme at specified points in time or by creating a notice period before any changes to the programme can be made. This falls short of the Comptroller and Auditor General having full discretion over the subjects and timing of examinations by National Audit Office, and I feel sure you would share my concern if it delayed the National Audit Office's scrutiny of important matters of value for money.

I would be happy to discuss how such an arrangement might be made to work if that would be helpful: I am fully committed to making the new arrangements work on behalf of taxpayers.


AMYAS MORSE

