



# HOUSE OF LORDS

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## **The Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence**

Inquiry on

### **SOFT POWER AND THE UK'S INFLUENCE**

*Evidence Session No. 4*

*Heard in Public.*

*Questions 63 - 92*

MONDAY 15 JULY 2013

4.30 pm

Witnesses: Martin Davidson CMG, Peter Horrocks and Dr Jonathan Williams

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### Members present

Lord Howell of Guildford (Chairman)  
Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top  
Lord Forsyth of Drumlean  
Lord Foulkes of Cumnock  
Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts  
Baroness Hussein-Ece  
Lord Janvrin  
Baroness Morris of Bolton  
Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne  
Baroness Prosser  
Lord Ramsbotham

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### Examination of Witnesses

**Martin Davidson CMG**, Chief Executive, British Council, **Peter Horrocks**, Director, BBC World Service, and **Dr Jonathan Williams**, Deputy Director, British Museum

**Q63 The Chairman:** A very warm welcome to our three witnesses this afternoon. I will not introduce you, because we know very well who you are. You have in front of you a list of the interests that are declared to give you a good idea of all the different aspects of the interests and involvement of Members of this Committee in this broad area of study and inspection. I hope that is helpful. Just a bit of logistics: if a Division is called, I shall have to immediately adjourn the Committee for five minutes. One always hopes it will not happen, but it may happen, so just to warn you about that.

As you know, we are concerned with the concept of soft power and British influence. There are many different phrases to describe how and why this is becoming a more significant part of our affairs. The excellent paper that comes from the British Council—from Mr Davidson's stable—states, which I rather like, that “soft power involves the things that make people love a country rather than fear it”. That is quite a good starting point. Can we begin by each one of you giving a short statement on what your understanding of soft power is and how it affects your work, and whether it is more important or less important? Later on we will go

into why it has become more significant and everyone is talking about it. But first just give us a feel of how you see that it connects up with the interests and priorities of the country in which we all live. Who would like to start? Mr Davidson, you are in the middle, so you start from the middle.

**Martin Davidson:** Thank you very much, Lord Chairman. We would define soft power as a nation's ability to build trust and make relationships of value through sharing its most attractive attributes. The British Council is only one part of that set of soft power instruments that the UK has. In our case, the attractive instruments that we seek to engage are our language, which is one of the most powerful attractors to our country; our education system; and our arts and creativity. There is a fourth area that I think is also extremely important, which is the way in which our society is organised, and if we have time, I will come back to that in a moment.

There are also a wide range of other very important actors in the whole area of soft power. The Premier League, for example, is extremely important and one of the most attractive aspects for people right around the world when they look at the UK. Our wider sports agenda is also seen as hugely attractive. Broadcasting, of course, is a major attractor, and not simply the World Service—I will leave it to Peter to talk about that—but more generally there are probably very few countries in the world where you are not likely to see a BBC programme. There is also our scientific research, our commercial arts, our design systems, and you only have to bear in mind that in Formula 1 eight of the 11 teams are based and designed here in the UK. I would think that also aspects of our military are seen as a soft-power engagement, not least the way in which the military and civilian organisations react and interact with each other. There is also of course the Royal Family.

Within the areas that the British Council covers is our language, and we estimate there are 1.5 billion people in the world learning English at this time. Many of them are looking to the

UK for an involvement. In education there are something like 0.5 million foreign students at all levels studying here in this country and who go back with a changed attitude towards us. Our arts and creativity are also huge attractors. Right across the board, in all areas of the arts, the UK is seen at the forefront of that agenda. Our acceptance of difference, our tolerance of different views, our diversity: all are seen as important aspects of the way we organise our society, along with the rule of law, a certainty of how society operates, and also pluralism, the opportunity for individuals to take part in that society. All are critically important.

Within the broader context we believe there are three critical aspects that are important to consider. The first is that Government has a very limited role that it can play in the area of soft power. If government fingerprints are all over the activity then, almost by very definition, it is seen as less trusted, less open, less honest and moving more towards the propaganda area. But it does not mean that the Government has no role. We would regard Government as having a critical role in creating the environment and conditions within which soft power can be operated. Not least this requires movement of people, and simple things like visa policy make a huge difference to how a country is seen and whether or not people are able to move backwards and forwards. Supporting and helping create the different instruments of soft power that a nation might have, but at arm's length, is a critical component of effectiveness in soft power.

The second critical element is mutuality. We cannot expect others to be interested in us if we are not interested in them. Increasingly, if you talk to China, if you talk to India, if you talk to a whole range of other countries, they want us to be involved and looking at them and seeing them as of interest to us, just as much as presenting ourselves.

I think the third area is that this is a long-term, slow-burn activity. It is not an activity that turns itself around within a few years but rather something that is generational: "How do

you build a generation of engagement between this country and other countries?” not, “How do you make it highly instrumental within a very short period of time?”

**Q64 The Chairman:** Thank you very much. You have raised a lot of points that we will come back to, but may I go to Mr Horrocks now?

**Peter Horrocks:** Thank you very much, Lord Chairman. I would absolutely associate myself with the definition that Martin Davidson gave and the definition of Joseph Nye—whose work I know you have already looked at—of the ability of a country to get what it wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment. Of course for a broadcaster attracting audiences comes naturally, and it might be worth explaining to the Committee the way in which the BBC’s main channels in English describe themselves to audiences around the world. We do not use Britishness. We describe the World News television as coming from “the world’s newsroom”, our new newsroom at Broadcasting House in London. We describe the World Service as “the world’s radio station”. So, there is a sense of ownership by the world of something that is obviously a British-funded asset.

Next April the jurisdiction of the BBC World Service comes completely under the BBC Trust who will be funding it through the UK licence fee rather than through the grant-in-aid that the World Service has received from the Foreign Office. It recently published a draft operating licence, which is the governance document from next April for the World Service. It describes the editorial agenda of the World Service in this way: that it should provide a global perspective on the world, not one based upon any national or commercial interest. So, the BBC Trust is saying explicitly that we should not be taking a British or national commercial interest. How, therefore, can we be a contributor—as we believe we are—to Britain’s soft power, that paradox? Well, it is because of the mutuality or the exchange of ideas, which is such an important characteristic of global debate. In particular, through digital, we believe the BBC in all its activities provides Britain’s biggest digital export. But digital is

about two-way: it is multi-layered; it is multi-polar. And that is what we believe our audiences around the world are looking for. The result of that? We recently announced the new audience reach for the BBC's international news, its global news reach, of over a quarter of a billion people, the largest audience ever. Despite the cuts that we received a couple of years ago, the World Service is now also at its highest ever level, and BBC Worldwide has an audience of about 100 million alongside that, plus, we believe, an enviable reputation for the quality and impartiality of our news. That creates value to licence fee payers who benefit from the BBC's reputation in terms of the interviews that we can get and the money that BBC Worldwide, our commercial arm, creates. It also does come back to the UK and creates reputational benefit for the UK, because audiences around the world, of course, understand this is something that the UK is providing. That generosity of spirit, described by Kofi Annan as "Britain's greatest gift to the world", is reciprocated, although we have a global perspective as our editorial driver.

There are many ways in which we can assess that direct benefit to Britain, but I will give one example in terms of commerce. A survey of international business leaders, conducted a couple of years ago by an independent polling organisation, indicated that business leaders who consumed the BBC were twice as likely to regard Britain as an attractive partner to do business with than those who did not. There is other evidence I could provide the Committee with.

So, we can attract people to Britain precisely because we are not pursuing a British agenda. We are, however, communicating British values and, of course, we reflect fully news and culture from the BBC. Therefore the paradox creates the ability for us, with our fellow organisations, to be the strongest of soft power.

**Q65 The Chairman:** Thank you very much. Dr Williams, you are the centre of a gigantic hub of culture and activity worldwide. How do you see the subject?

**Dr Williams:** Thank you, Lord Chairman. I have learnt an awful lot about what soft power is from reading the proceedings of this Committee, and it seems to me that the definitions, the discussions that you have had, have laid some very useful parameters. Certainly in thinking about what soft power might be, in trying to develop my own abstract definition, what I am about to say may be somewhat academic. But that is what I am, so I have to be true to myself. That is an appropriate thing to say, because one of the key things about soft power is that its exercise is based—and this is a point the Committee has touched on—on the notion that, whatever the message about the country that may be broadcast, it has to be consistent, credible and coherent with everything else that the world knows about the country concerned. I think that is a really important point when we think in the abstract about what soft power may be.

I think what my two colleagues have said is absolutely right: that if it is anything, soft power is based upon what a country is, its kind of essence, its attractive power, its ethical and its cultural characteristics. It is not about what we do to the world or what we produce. To the extent that it can be instrumental, either for state or government purposes, it needs to be based on that message, which is credible, coherent and consistent with everything else that the world knows about the kind of people that we are and the kinds of institutions that the country has.

Let me say a little bit about the British Museum; an awful lot of what I am about to say is going to be strikingly similar to what we have heard from my colleagues. As many of you may know, over the last 10 years or so the British Museum has sought to describe itself, and really be, a museum of the world, for the world. In some senses, there may be thought to be some sort of contradiction or tension between our name, British Museum, and the notion that what we are in fact is a museum of the world for the world. This is a transformation in our own understanding of ourselves that my director, Neil MacGregor, has managed to

create within the museum and also broadcast effectively to audiences within Britain and around the world. He has done that by taking us back to our Enlightenment origins. Here I am going to sing the praises of Parliament, taking us back to the extraordinary way in which it has set up the British Museum as the original arm's-length cultural body upon which all other similar bodies, museums, galleries, opera companies and ballets throughout the communal world have since been modelled; setting the museum up as a trustee institution, incorporated as an independent legal personality, empowering it to act on behalf of beneficiaries, beneficiaries not defined as citizens of this country but left entirely open. I think this is the extent to which the debates around soft power, if not soft power itself exactly, have begun to have an effect and real impact on the way in which we have seen ourselves and understood our role as a museum: over the last 10 years we have increasingly actively identified the beneficiaries of the British Museum's Trust as the citizens of the world. What Parliament did in 1753 was to take a unique collection of things—books, antiquities, fossils, everything—from all over the world and make them publicly accessible for free—and we still are free to this day—for the benefit of the whole world, with the intention of creating a new kind of global citizen. That was Parliament's vision 260 years ago, and it is that vision that in partnership with our colleagues in the BBC and the British Council and many other museums and galleries around London and around Britain we have been increasingly re-excavating and reviving in order to make a reality of our claim that we are a museum of the world for the world, founded by Parliament for the benefit of a global audience, 260 years ago. That is a vision Parliament provided us with, which we have been seeking to make a reality of in the 21st century.

While I do not think my museum or other museums would see themselves as instruments of soft power, it is clear that the debates around culture and its role in the global conversation have had a significant impact on the way in which museums and galleries such as mine and



other major British public institutions have shaped their self-understanding, particularly over the last 10 years or so.

**The Chairman:** Thank you very much indeed. That is very comprehensive from all three sources and authorities. I know my colleagues would like to question, in particular, the many points that have come up, but they are going to come up anyway in our further discussion. Lord Forsyth would like to come in.

**Q66 Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** I have a question. Mr Davidson, when you talked about the attractiveness of Britain—you mentioned our culture and everything—you did not mention science, engineering, the City of London, financial services, any of those aspects. Was that because the list would have been too long?

**Martin Davidson:** I did mention the scientific research, which I think is a critically important element. There are many different aspects, and I suppose that issues around banks and so on at the moment do not make that the most popular attractor around the world. But I would agree with my colleagues who said that it is really about credibility. In what areas is the UK seen as both a global leader but also a credible leader? Thailand has recently announced that it wishes to brand itself as “the kitchen of the world”. I am not sure we would do terribly well branding the UK as the kitchen of the world, but there unfortunately—

**Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** Forgive me; London is a major financial centre.

**Martin Davidson:** Absolutely.

**Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** The City of London is not just about banks. It is a major contributor to our economic well-being. It is recognised throughout the world and we are in firm competition with New York. It is a bit surprising that it is not top of your agenda. Or do you not think that because there has been some adverse publicity surrounding the banks it should be something that you are trying to correct?

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** Edinburgh is also quite a big financial centre, and none of you mentioned Scotland at all in any of your presentations.

**Martin Davidson:** I have been having conversations with the Lord Mayor, both the present and the future one—

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** The Lord Mayor of London?

**Martin Davidson:** The Lord Mayor of London, precisely about this area of how the work that we as an organisation can do can support the City as a financial centre, so we do absolutely see the consonance there.

The other point about my organisation—and indeed shared by my colleagues—is that we are all UK bodies. We see ourselves as responsible to the Governments in Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff just as much as we do to the Government here in London, and we put a significant amount of effort into talking to those Governments about what their soft power agendas are, just as much as we do here.

**Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** Lord Chairman, may I just add one other question, which is to Mr Horrocks?

**The Chairman:** Yes.

**Q67 Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** I have always been a great supporter of the BBC World Service because I felt that it provided a British perspective on what is going on in the world, and with that the values associated with impartial news and so on. I have been quite surprised by this doctrine that says you do not use the word “Britain” and that you have to operate as a global organisation because, paradoxically, that would make you less credible. The licence payers in Britain expect you to be promoting Britain and its values. As for the idea of dropping the name “Britain” or the “UK” from the news bulletins, is that not something that you think might put you at risk, in terms of getting support and funding from British taxpayers or licence payers?

**Peter Horrocks:** No, I do not believe that, and if that is how you understood what I was saying, I may have mis-described it. Everything is BBC-branded, of course, and everyone knows that the BBC is the British Broadcasting Corporation.

**Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** No, you said the news service—

**Peter Horrocks:** Yes, and the BBC Trust has said that we should take a global perspective in the way that we deal with the news. But we absolutely reflect British values, and British values of fairness and impartiality are absolutely the bedrock.

If I can go back to your point about economics and the way that Britain's role in the global economy is communicated to the world, the fact that London is such an open financial centre, you will hear of course far more British experts on all of the BBC's airwaves, both on radio and on television. We will be talking to UK politicians, including many people in this room. So, a British understanding of global issues is absolutely something that we are communicating, and British culture plays a very significant part in that global offer that we have.

**Q68 Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** But why is it not branded as global news from the British Broadcasting Corporation or from London?

**Peter Horrocks:** Well, it is. If you look at "BBC World News", for instance, it uses a skyline showing London. I can talk about last year. Our marketing and our editorial campaign around the Olympics, which we did not have the sports rights to, were under the label "London Calling". It was all about how London is a wonderful, diverse and open city. That was extremely attractive content to our audiences around the world. The reason we do not put Britishness and British as the hallmark of it is that other countries have services that are explicitly about reflecting the national political agenda—we can perhaps talk later on what the Chinese and the Russians and the Iranians are doing in this regard—and their services are regarded as being propaganda, and that is not effective in terms of attracting people

around the world. So, we can have that proper even-handed global perspective but reflect British knowledge, British expertise, British culture and British values, so being impartial, but also being an attractor to Britain. That is the logic of our editorial offer.

**Q69 Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne:** It seems to me that traditionally the huge cultural institutions that you represent have always seen their task as promoting the cultural values of the United Kingdom, yet more recently there has been an obligation placed upon you all to try to earn a bit of a living for Britain as well, not just to promote our values. Is there an understanding in these institutions, and others, that that is now at least a part of the obligations placed upon you by the taxpayer? Or is there still a feeling inside the institutions that perhaps this is a little bit something they do not want to touch; that somehow this is a step too far and cultural values will dwindle if there is something commercial and some quantification of helping Britain earn a living more effectively through your work than before? As a side question to that, with the rise of some pretty dominating and maybe narrower values in parts of the globe at the moment, are you going to put a bigger push behind cultural values from here, and can that be quantified in any way at all? It does seem to be a difficult time that we are going through in some regions at the moment, very contradictory to our particular value system. What are you doing about that? Would you define it as soft power or not?

**Martin Davidson:** First, around the financial environment, there are two aspects to that. One, of course, is the internal financial environment of each of our organisations. We in the British Council are now required to find something like 80% of our total turnover through our income generated from non-governmental sources.

**The Chairman:** Is that 80% of your turnover or 80% of your revenue?

**Martin Davidson:** 80% of our turnover.

**The Chairman:** The turnover, okay.

**Martin Davidson:** So, that is about £780 million of turnover. The Government grant is now just over 20%. That again drives a significant cultural shift within the organisation. We have to have very effective commercial income-generating individuals within the organisation, but it is absolutely vital that we also see ourselves as a public service: not either/or but both those things at the same time. Sometimes it is difficult to persuade publics overseas, who are not used to the mixed funding model that is usual in this country, to see that. But that is one of the reasons why in our case, for example, as well as teaching for income we also put in a huge amount of effort into providing English language materials for public education systems right around the world free to the user. That is a very important balance.

Of course there is also recognition that different bodies within the UK will use for particular purposes the long-term trust and influence created by the work that we do. At the moment, those purposes will include the prosperity and long-term health of the British economy just as much as the wider cultural influence of the UK. I do not think that my colleagues see that as a problem in any sense whatever. Indeed, I think we all recognise that if you are going to draw public money, then you actually have to be able to demonstrate a public good that flows from that. But I think the danger comes if we are pushed into a very instrumental approach, which suggests that you do X in order to raise the income flowing to a particular institution or a particular business environment. For example, at the moment we have done some very useful work, I believe, with DCMS and with colleagues here and others, in looking at the range of cultural events that will be taking place in 11 countries around the world over the next three to five years, including India, China, Brazil and other countries. We are asking the question, “Well, how do we use those big cultural events that are taking place, which are taking place because the British Museum, the V&A, the British Council and other organisations want to do them? How can we use those and ally them with other areas of work?” We are having a conversation with the UKTI—for example, there is an idea of a very

substantial design exhibition in Mumbai in about 18 months' time—on how can we put a British design marketing agenda around that and, indeed, a design education agenda around that, so we actually make the most of these events that are taking place. I think that that approach of using what is already happening and what is already planned, but using it in a way that can support the wider commercial and prosperity agenda, is something that, certainly in my case, my colleagues are very comfortable with.

**Q70 Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts:** One question about the focus: the British Council produces a wonderful map of dots and stuff, and there is a lot in Mr Horrocks's stuff on the BBC. Is our role of soft power to do a little everywhere or a lot in the biggest countries?

**Martin Davidson:** I suppose my answer to that would be that it is a rather standard 80:20 principle—you should put 80% of your effort into 20% of the places—but that it is important for the long term for the UK that we are engaged with other parts of the world. Two or three years ago a lot of questions were being asked about whether or not we should continue in North Africa. Now, nobody would say that we should not be involved with North Africa. It clearly is critically important. We never know quite where the agenda is going to move. So, that 80:20 principle seems to me to be broadly right, but the UK is well served by having the capacity, not just from my organisation but more widely, to operate on a global basis. That does seem to me to be very, very important.

**Q71 Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts:** Could I just ask Peter Horrocks this? In your letter circulated to us about the World Service, you had a category in there of languages of particular need.

**Peter Horrocks:** Yes.

**Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts:** Some of them seemed to me to be quite marginal in terms of numbers. I wondered how you reached that and how you saw that fitting into our soft-power plans.

**Peter Horrocks:** There are two categories in terms of the non-English languages: the larger languages, which I think you were referring to in your first question; and then the languages of need. For instance, services to Somalia or services in Arabic that would be seen by people in Darfur are services that are quite substantial to audiences in Afghanistan. Most of those are delivered cost-effectively through radio, which is a very cost-effective way of getting to large numbers of people. That urgent need, in countries where there is no other credible news source at all, is a very important part of what the BBC does. However, languages that go, for instance, to the BRICS countries I believe are increasingly important for us. So that is the way in which the BBC can gain trust for Britain through the editorial approach that I set out earlier. Professor Nye has spoken to us about this and says, “The BBC plays an important part of that strategy, a point of entry that is not mistrusted, a point of entry to British influence. If you are a citizen in Brasilia or Beijing, you want to know what is true about a certain event, and the BBC is the gold standard”. So, we are focusing greater resource on those major languages. Of course we cannot cover every one of the world’s languages—we reduced from 32 to 27 languages two years ago—and in order to be effective in broadcasting terms you certainly do need to have focus.

**Q72 The Chairman:** I would love to move on to this question. You have mentioned several times Beijing and the wider world and the fact that your audience is 250 million out of 6.5 billion, so you could say it is wonderfully large for one country, but it is pretty small in the world scene. Baroness Morris, would you like to pursue this theme? Are other people taking over the airwaves? Are we still where we were?

**Baroness Morris of Bolton:** The marketplace in global soft power is becoming increasingly competitive, and I wondered if you saw yourself losing ground to the likes of Al Jazeera in the Middle East or China Central Television in Africa. Then, to slightly widen that out from just television, we have also seen a huge increase in government-sponsored cultural activities such as the Confucius Institute. So where exactly do you see that with regard to the British Council? Then, generally in all of this, how do you intend to carve out a distinctive position for yourselves that enhances our cultural values and helps the UK's soft power?

**The Chairman:** I can see how the British Museum has done that just off the back foot, and amazingly has carved out a fantastic global niche. But for our other two colleagues here perhaps there is a doubt in the air as to whether we are quite what we were. Are we losing out in the cyber-dominated, totally connected world, or are we still carrying weight? Just reassure us on this.

**Peter Horrocks:** I would not want to downplay that threat.

**The Chairman:** Sorry, can you think of the answer to that for a few minutes? We have to go and vote.

*The Committee suspended for 10 minutes for a Division in the House.*

**Q73 The Chairman:** Apologies for that break. There was a question hanging in the air: is this the world we knew, where the BBC was the voice of freedom in the world? Since 1934, the British Council seemed to have the field almost to itself, but suddenly it is getting a bit crowded. Are we still where we were?

**Peter Horrocks:** We certainly are not where we were and, although I am proud of the strong performance that the BBC World Service in particular has had, I would not be in the slightest bit complacent; in fact, I would probably be the most worried person in the room about the fragility or potential fragility of our audience position. As you say, it is largely



because of the competition that we are now seeing from other state providers in particular. Let me give a couple of illustrations of that. The Chinese, through their efforts, are using their vast financial resources. A few years ago, a \$9 billion budget for Chinese international broadcasting was announced, a multi-year budget, but still a vast budget in comparison to the resources that we have. In Africa, for instance, that is being used to support the change to digital television, paying for the infrastructure, helping to organise the frequencies and then using China's financial muscle to pay for access to the airwaves, including in some cases squeezing out BBC output. We provide our output for free for local broadcasters to be able to transmit on their television or radio stations. The Chinese pay people to take that, so although those broadcasters may well believe—I am sure they do—that the BBC's quality and impartiality are greater, they will sometimes choose to take the Chinese content because the Chinese are paying them. That is not something we can afford or that we choose to do. The Iranians are getting into this. They have even launched a Spanish language channel from Iran. There are also the Russians, of course. Then there is Al Jazeera, which is really a state-funded organisation.

You asked how we can still maintain a strong position and be distinctive. We can be creative, we can draw on all of the resources of the BBC and our colleagues across the BBC, using the technologies, especially digital, and we are particularly proud of the success we are having in digital. But the most important thing is to stay true to our editorial values. That is why I talked about impartiality as being the absolute bedrock. Of course most audiences around the world realise that news from China or Russia is news that comes with a Chinese or Russian flavour. Al Jazeera has had some recent experience where the commentators believe that Qatar's foreign-policy interests in terms of supporting Islamists in a number of countries has had an impact on Al Jazeera in Arabic and its editorial agenda, and that has created a backlash around the Middle East. So it is absolutely crucial that you modernise,

that you use the resources as effectively as you can, but you stay true to your values, and that remains our distinctive position.

**Q74 The Chairman:** What about the British Council going strong since 1934?

**Martin Davidson:** There are many new players on the block. China is obviously one and the Confucius Centres have set up 350-odd centres in the last 10 years. It is very difficult to know exactly how much money the Chinese are spending on this. The best published number that we have been able to find is US\$200 million, but my guess is that a multiple of that is being spent. In Africa, China is applying a very, very large number of scholarships, certainly in the tens of thousands, for African students to study in China. So these are big, competitive players, but China is not alone. Turkey has launched the Yunus Emre Institute, developing its soft power especially into the Middle East. South Korea is a very substantial player in this space; Taiwan has started similarly. So it is a much more crowded space, but I think it is important not to pretend that there has not been competition in the past: the Germans, the French, the Italians and the Spanish have all been substantially significant players in this space for a very substantial period of time.

We have to always ask the question: are some of these new players doing things that are interesting and that we can learn from? I think some of the approaches that the Confucius Institutes have taken to teaching Chinese are interesting, and indeed we are not ashamed to have a look at them and copy them where there are good ideas coming through. But we also have to understand that the UK's approach does have some very real and substantial advantages, not least, we would argue, the arm's length. I think the Chinese have a significant problem in that the fingerprints of government are very clearly on the activity and that raises substantial suspicion. Of the areas that we have advantage in, first of all is the approach towards mutuality: that we are quite explicitly interested in what other people have to say as well as trying to project ourselves. The Chinese approach and the approaches of most of the

other players are very one-way. Second is the range of functions that we have available to us and the sheer strength of the UK's institutions in this area. Thirdly, frankly, we get an enormous amount of benefit for really very little money compared with what other countries are spending in this space.

**Q75 Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** Martin Davidson, I thought you were going to be helpful for a minute when you were talking about learning from the Confucius Centres, but then you went back into mode—if you will excuse me saying so, each of you sounded like three male members of the British establishment saying what a wonderful job you are doing, which does not help us with our study. What we want to look at is how we can do it better. Have each of you never sat down with your staff and said, “How could we learn from France or from China or from Germany? What can we do? What other things ought we to be doing? How can we collaborate with other bodies?” You do not sound innovative. You do not come up with good ideas. You always just seem to be saying what a wonderful job you are doing.

**Martin Davidson:** Well, it is a challenge. First of all, I think you cannot turn yourself from an organisation functioning with more than 50% of government grant to one functioning with 20% unless you are innovative. It requires you to go out and do things in a completely different way. One of the big challenges for us is how we deliver something that people are prepared to pay for. This is not simply big, rich companies; these are individuals, 350,000 or more young people around the world, prepared to spend their own money on learning English with us because we do it better than other organisations. So I think we have a significant agenda around innovation and we certainly do not pretend that we have it all right. I think we look at the Confucius Centres and ask the question: what do they have to teach us?

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** What conclusions have you come up with?

**Martin Davidson:** We have come to a number of conclusions, not least in establishing our new teaching platforms in Pakistan, in Iraq and in extending them in Sri Lanka to Jaffna, where we are copying a number of the approaches that the Confucius Centres have taken, particularly using local teachers, which is something that we have not done before. We work very closely with the French and we have launched a new series of cultural seasons, which is very much drawing on the French example. Unfortunately, we do not have the amount of money that France puts into it, so we have to rely very heavily on non-governmental funding to do that.

**Q76 Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** You have said that twice now, about reductions in funding. Do you just accept that? Can we help in going to the Government and saying, “The British Council could do a great deal better if you gave them more money for scholarships”? Do not accept things as they are. We are not here to accept things as they are. We are looking at what they might be.

**Martin Davidson:** Absolutely, and of course we would like more money, but, to be absolutely frank with you, for me the biggest agenda over the last five years has not been to tilt against the windmill of government cuts but to transform the organisation so that it can not just live with those cuts but expand and develop against that background. I hope that as we move forward we are going to move into a position where the Government will invest in scholarships, particularly investing in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly investing in supporting those countries wanting to develop themselves, particularly investing in how society has organised itself. I believe those are critically important areas, and I would want the British Council to be part of that, although not the sole recipient of that, because there are many other organisations.

**Q77 Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** Do you argue that that could save our Government money elsewhere, deploying troops to difficult areas in which problems might not arise if we were doing more in terms of scholarships and cultural activities?

**Martin Davidson:** It is enormously difficult always to prove the negative, but certainly our belief very strongly is that soft power, well utilised and well deployed, is a substantial and significant saver of other forms of intervention.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** Because this Committee has been set up to look at it, I would have thought each of you would have thought, “Hey, this is an opportunity to put our case”, and then we will report to Government. That is what Select Committees are about.

**Peter Horrocks:** Can I have a go?

**Q78 The Chairman:** Mr Horrocks, just to speak to Lord Foulkes’s question, bear in mind the world is now totally connected up on iPads and iPhones and everything else. How are you going to cope in this entirely new electronic landscape?

**Peter Horrocks:** I appreciate Lord Foulkes’s question, and it is the kind of question I would like World Service presenters to be asking to get the debate going. Accepting that these organisations need to change, the World Service had to make some really difficult cuts a couple of years ago. We swallowed that, we got on with it and we have bounced back. Sometimes these organisations can be seen through rather a sepia-tinted view of what they may have been some years ago. The competitive world that we have just been discussing is going to require us to make choices. Under the BBC Trust’s strategic control, I hope that politicians and those who are concerned about organisations like the BBC World Service will accept that those decisions need to be made in the broadcasting interests of the audience and not through an over-political prism. So, that might mean if there are services, for instance, that are too small at some stage in the future, we may have to close some services in order to maintain our effectiveness. We will need to innovate and change, and

that might mean changing the balance between radio and television and online. Our real competitors are going to be—already are—Google and Facebook and mobile providers, not so much the Voice of America or indeed Iranian broadcasting, because that is the way that audiences in Africa and Asia are going to be getting their news. So we must understand that we might need to make choices that will reflect that different way.

In terms of the funding, clearly the responsibility of the funding of the World Service is now moving to the BBC, and the BBC Trust will need to make those decisions. But there are ways that Government can help the BBC's international activity in a supplemental way. For instance, the Department for International Development does some excellent work through the BBC's development charity, BBC Media Action, to support programming in places like Somalia and Afghanistan and providing a place for debate, where politicians can be challenged by their publics in a way that does not happen in those societies.

Then the last thing—and this is looking ahead to the future of the BBC in the debate that will happen around the BBC's charter over the next few years—is that for the first time the publicly funded global part of the BBC, the World Service, will be part of the licence fee, and there will be a discussion about the appropriate level of activity. Clearly the political debate around the BBC in the UK is often influenced by views about the BBC's role—whether it is too large, and how it affects competition in the UK. From a global point of view, in relation to the BBC as a national champion that can help others in the creative sector—for instance, the independent production sector benefits hugely from the activities of BBC Worldwide—I think politicians, as they debate the future of the BBC, considering its UK role and its global role together, may see things that could be helpful there.

**The Chairman:** I am going to ask Baroness Hussein-Ece to follow up on this particular point.

**Q79 Baroness Hussein-Ece:** Thank you very much. Just following on from the questions that you have had from Lord Foulkes as well on this subject, do you not think that social media—because you have touched on that now—has become much more influential, particularly in parts of the Arab world that you mentioned and other places like that? People are no longer passive recipients of packaged, presented news tied up in a bow: “This is the news”. It is much more instant with social networks, with Twitter. We saw the in the Arab spring what was called a Twitter storm. We and all the world were getting instant news about what was happening on the ground and not having to wait for news bulletins or programmes. Do you not think that particularly the BBC is losing out on this? I am questioning the media outlet. The BBC is not really keeping abreast of these changes.

**Peter Horrocks:** That is not fair, I am afraid. No, that is not fair.

**Baroness Hussein-Ece:** Because if there is an appetite for more around the world now, if, as the Lord Chairman said, the world has become much smaller now and news is very instant, do you not think that the BBC could potentially lose out if they do not keep abreast of these major changes?

**Peter Horrocks:** Of course we could potentially lose out, but our audience is at its highest level ever; our digital audience is growing substantially. But it absolutely does change our role in exactly the way that you say. It is no longer people in London saying, “This is how the world is”, to people around the world. It is a dialogue; it is a debate.

Let me give you an example of what is happening in Turkey. The BBC’s Turkish service broadcasts in television, not in radio. We have decided not to broadcast any more via television, because the distributor kept interfering with reports that they regarded as being controversial. So, we are now only available online. But what the team can do is to help the Turkish society to know what is trustworthy news and to host a debate about the future of Turkey, because through social media you have one group of people who have one set of

fierce opinions and another group of people with separate fierce opinions that they do not discuss with each other. So the BBC's service in Turkey is conducting programmes, discussions, that talk about the future of Turkey and which judge which news is reliable. People are coming to the BBC Turkish service in vast numbers because we are modernising and changing our role. It is not a one-way role. It is a two-way role and one where the BBC is trusted by audiences around the world to host that conversation.

**Q80 Baroness Hussein-Ece:** I just want to respond on that. Obviously I follow the Turkish news and what was going on there, and that is the case. But there are parts of the world where perhaps they do not have that embedded in the same way, so they are relying on their own people on the ground to get the news and information from. There were probably traditionally ways with trusted commentators from their own background and community. I just want to make one comment. I think obviously we are all big fans of all three institutions, particularly of the BBC, but do you not think the BBC did lose a bit of trust in the aftermath of Operation Cast Lead, showing a bit of bias there in refusing to broadcast the appeal for Palestinians in that way? It lost a lot of credibility and kudos. Certainly I have heard a lot of people in the Arab world say that you showed some bias when you did that. That is just one example.

**Peter Horrocks:** I do not particularly want to go through all the ins and outs of that. All I would say is—

**Baroness Hussein-Ece:** It is an example of how easy it is to lose some trust.

**Peter Horrocks:** No, absolutely, and I appreciate that some members of the audience did lose trust. That trust in the Arabic world has come back. Our audience levels in the Arabic-speaking world are the largest component of the increase in the BBC's audience that we announced only a few weeks ago. It was because of our commitment to being even-handed. We knew that running that campaign, that promotion of aid support for one side in that



conflict, could be seen to compromise our impartiality. That is why we took that difficult decision. I appreciate that not everyone agreed with it and it did have a detrimental effect in the short term, but the long-term benefit of being impartial counts, and that is why our audiences have come back up.

**Q81 Lord Ramsbotham:** My question is stimulated by a remark of yours, Martin, when you talked about the fingerprints of Government, because all three of you have outlined how you see the role of your organisation in projecting British values, which you have arrived at individually. But at the beginning of our deliberations, we were told that the 2010 Foreign Office business plan includes the development of a long-term programme to enhance UK soft power, co-ordinated by the National Security Council. Are you conscious of that, and do you welcome the fact that the National Security Council is the organisation trying to co-ordinate the project of just the things that you have been outlining to us?

**Martin Davidson:** I am aware of the involvement of the National Security Council around some of these areas. I think it bears on what is the role of Government and what is the role of other organisations in this whole area. I can see that there is a role for Government—indeed, would welcome a role for Government—to grow soft power, which for me is around putting more resource in some of those areas that Lord Foulkes talked about and what I was talking about a few moments ago. It would be around helping define where the UK's wider interests sit. But I think if the Government then seeks to deploy that soft power, it is going to fail along the way. I would draw a distinction between creating the conditions that allow that soft power to be grown and the attempt to deploy it. My organisation's view is very clearly that we have to be of the UK, not of the Government of the day, and that overseas target audiences are extremely conscious of and very clear in drawing the distinction between the two.

**Q82 The Chairman:** Can I bring Dr Williams in again, because my own experience with the British Museum is that you and your director, Neil MacGregor, have been expanding enormous influence worldwide without, I suspect, referring very much to the National Security Council or anybody else. Have you had any conscious guiding principles in the way in that the British Museum has now become, as it were, the museum of the world?

**Dr Williams:** These are conscious guiding principles that the trustees have drawn from their statutory obligations laid down by Parliament. They have an obligation to make a reality of global ownership of the collections for which they are responsible. Those are the kinds of basic principles, and from them flows everything that we do, to make those collections available both here in London and throughout the world through a series of physical loans of things—4,000 objects lent last year alone—and also increasingly in the digital world, with 27 million visitors to our website last year, and that is continuing to increase. So, the guiding principle is that this is a collection that the trustees hold in trust for the world and that they have to take every new opportunity that each new generation offers to make a reality of that obligation.

**The Chairman:** Have you run into a lot of historical baggage problems? We were warned in earlier evidence that Britain has invaded practically every country on the planet and we have one or two slightly awkward incidents in the past to live down.

**Dr Williams:** What that means is that Britain has a long and rich and complicated series and nexus of relationships with countries all over the world. The British Museum and its collections are one of the legacies of those many different relationships. What that provides us with now in the 21st century is an opportunity to revisit those relationships and refashion them for public benefit, both in this country and in the country concerned. One example: just now we have finished the second year of a leadership training programme for young museum professionals in India, a programme supported by the Indian Government. The

Indian Government came to the British Museum to ask us to assist them in putting together a high-level leadership programme to enable Indian state museums to partake in the global conversation around collections and cultures, and that has been a great success so far.

**Peter Horrocks:** That baggage of history need not be a problem. It is an editorial opportunity. So, for the World Service, Commonwealth countries form by far the largest single component, and the World Service is a place where those problems of the past are worked through. For instance, with the revelations over the last few years about what happened in Kenya with the Mau Mau, the World Service of course has investigated that and given a substantial amount of airtime to hearing from Kenyans who expressed concern about what happened. It is the fact that it is discussed openly and without any fear or favour that makes our output attractive to people in that part of East Africa.

**The Chairman:** Thank you. Lord Janvrin, would you like to come in?

**Q83 Lord Janvrin:** I think it is more of the same. It is around this whole question of the independence of your organisations and retaining that independence yet still being in need of public funding support. My question is that if you are arm's length cultural bodies or arm's length institutions, are you not at arm's length from all the key decisions that really affect how you can operate? I am thinking in terms of within the British Government, whether it is over visa policies or tertiary education or whatever. Do you have any input into those kinds of discussions, and how can we improve that kind of joined-up Government in the future to ensure that those kinds of decisions that may be taken in a domestic context have huge repercussions for you and indeed the country in trying to deploy soft power?

**Martin Davidson:** I think, for the British Council, critical to this is that we see ourselves as operating in partnership with a wide range of organisations. Of course we have an extremely long history of discussion with the Foreign Office, as an NDPB of the Foreign Office, as well as being a chartered organisation and a charity. So, the conversation that I have with the

Foreign Office is around the nature of where are the major foreign policy objectives and what it is that the British Council can do in order to support those, but not in how we do it and the way in that we do it. We regard that as being the operational independence of the organisation, and critically important for our credibility across the world. But we obviously have to have conversations with UKTI, with DBIS, with the universities, and with the great institutions, all of which have to be part of the discussion about how we do things.

We do indeed have conversations with the Home Office around issues like visas. We are working very closely with the universities around student study visas, for example, because these are vitally important aspects of how the UK is perceived overseas. You only have to look at how the Indian press reacted to the idea of a visa bond to see how extremely negative the overseas perceptions are of this country from the way that we deal with visa applications. I cannot think of any senior discussion I have had over the last couple of years that has not started from the position of visas. It is critically important for us, so we do have to have those. Some of those conversations take place below the radar and some of them take place in a rather more public place, and I think it is effectively a question of what is going to be the best way of having those conversations at particular times.

**Peter Horrocks:** It is not the BBC's role, of course, as an editorially independent organisation, to be advising or inputting to Government on those broader policy questions. The BBC World Service has always been editorially independent. One of the great advantages of the structural change that will happen next April when the funding moves from the Foreign Office to the BBC licence fee is that one of the charges that, for instance, the Iranians and the Russians have periodically made against the World Service is that it is in the pay of the Foreign Office, therefore it must be dancing to the UK Government's tune. It will be even easier to dismiss that because of the change in funding. However, another thing that we are altering editorially, partly as a result of licence fee funding, is that we want to show

to people who are paying in the UK the benefits of the World Service—not just around the world, but coming back into the UK. So, increasingly you may be hearing and seeing on the BBC's airwaves in the UK our international correspondents, the ones from the language services, who are delivering bilingually much more than they used to. For instance, with visas, increasingly that is reported around the world by people from India or Kenya or wherever it might be, who will have a very direct understanding of that. Of course we reflect the other side of the story as well in terms of the need for those restrictions from a UK Government point of view, but reflecting the world back into the UK through our editorial activity can also help people to be more aware of the international dimension of UK policy decisions.

**The Chairman:** Lord Forsyth, would you like to say something?

**Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** I wanted to change the subject slightly.

**The Chairman:** I think time is going by, so go ahead.

**Q84 Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** I wondered if you could give a specific example of a project undertaken or something that you have done that has directly contributed to the UK's influence abroad? Supplementary to that is: how do you measure this? Dr Williams talked about hits on the website. That need not necessarily indicate success in achieving British influence. This concept of cultural value: I do not understand what "cultural value" means. How is it measured, and can you relate that to a specific example? That is for all three of you.

**Martin Davidson:** I could kick off. I think one programme that we are very proud of is our *UK Now* season in China. That ran last year from April to October, specifically looking at the cultural relationship between the UK and China in the Olympic year. We had something like 800 artists performing in 29 cities to 4 million people across the country with very, very substantially greater media coverage. It cost us about £1 million to put together. We gained

a further £3.5 million from British business in order to put it together and about £10 million of input from the Chinese side. So, that was a very specific piece of activity, which was to explore the UK with China in this very important year.

Direct impact is always very difficult to be able to identify, but we have talked to the commercial sponsors of the activity—and those included companies like Jaguar Land Rover, Diageo, Burberry—and they have all identified a specific increase in interest in their brands in China as a result of that. The British Ambassador has also reported that he has seen a significant shift in the way in which the Chinese look at the UK as a creative hub rather than simply financial or interesting but rather faded part of the world. So, there are those sorts of outcomes. But I think one of the problems we had with this is that it is extremely difficult to be able to identify a causal link between a particular piece of activity and a shift in—

**Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** Sorry to interrupt you. If my addition is correct, you spent £20 million on this project in total in China. In measuring the effectiveness of that, comments by sponsors and comments by the British Ambassador are very useful, but normally if you are spending that kind of money you would be expecting to have more quantitative information as to whether or not you want to do it again, for example.

**Martin Davidson:** Clearly there is the anecdotal and the quantitative. For example, we measure the quality of the comments that appear in public through media and so on, so there is a well-founded mechanism for doing that and identifying the value. We look at the numbers of people who have attended and so on.

But I think I would like to just move on to the second part of your question, which is around, “What is the value of all this cultural activity?” A piece of work that we have done has identified specific value very clearly. We have asked that question in 10 countries: “Are people more interested in working or doing business with the UK as a result of having been involved in an event of that kind?” On average there is a 30% increase in willingness or

interest in doing business with the UK. The largest increase comes from some of those countries where we have the greatest interest. For example, in Turkey, it is something like a 30%, 35% increase. In Russia it is nearly a 50% increase. In China it is about a 20% increase. So, there is, across the board, quite clearly a linkage between people's willingness to do business with the UK and the experience that they have had through these types of activities. That is what I would argue has been the cultural value of the sorts of events that we are doing.

**Q85 The Chairman:** Dr Williams, your turn; tell us about a project and how you think it has had an impact and helped.

**Dr Williams:** Perhaps I can talk about what, for us, was a fairly remarkable project and I think interesting given the context of our conversations around international relations: the loan of the Cyrus Cylinder to Tehran in 2010. Iran, as we all know, is a country with which Britain has limited international contact and no diplomatic representation, as I understand it, and fraught context and difficult international conversations. The Cyrus Cylinder, just to fill in a little bit, is a really remarkable object, not from Iran, interestingly, but originally found in Iraq. It is an inscription recording the great deeds of the ancient Persian King Cyrus and his restoration of the various rights and temples and peoples within his empire. For many years, this has been a national icon in the Iranian context. It is the kind of object that every Iranian schoolchild learns about. It has appeared on Iranian stamps and coins; it is a really important thing in the Iranian public conversation. For that reason, the trustees decided that it was important that they share this object, which is entrusted to them, with their beneficiaries in Iran.

Because of longstanding relationships with the national museum in Tehran, sustained by colleagues in our department of the Middle East, we were able to have a kind of conversation that other bits of the British public sphere has perhaps found more difficult to

have and that enabled this unique thing to be lent for a period of some months to the national museum in Tehran, where it was seen by about 1 million people. That is just a number of people, rather like my 27 million hits on the website. But the very fact of the achievement of this loan and, equally as important, its return—the object, by the way, is now on a five-venue tour of museums across America, where it is stimulating a very interesting series of conversations around the value and the significance of Iranian and Middle Eastern cultures across America, and next year we are going to be lending it to Mumbai, where it will coincide with the World Zoroastrian Congress—is just an indication of the kinds of projects that the trustees are clear that they want to undertake. It was absolutely not without risk. It was a risky thing to do, but they felt that they had an ethical obligation to do it. If the Greek Government were ever to ask for a loan, then the trustees would consider such a request.

**Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** Forgive me for appearing to be negative—I think it was a great thing to do—but my question was about an example where you could demonstrate that attitudes towards Britain had been improved. I have no idea how this was received in Iran, but I can equally imagine people saying, “What on earth are these people in London doing with this article, which they took as an Imperialist power with no idea with what its history was?” That was a good thing to do and 1 million people went to see it, but what is the evidence that that has made people more inclined to take a positive view of Britain, and how do you measure that?

**Dr Williams:** We do not have that evidence, and to be honest the British Museum’s primary interest in lending things around the world is not in order to further public understanding or Iranian sympathy for or understanding of Britain, as such, as an entity or an international state actor.

**Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** So, how is that related to soft power, then?



**Dr Williams:** It is related to soft power insofar as the loan of this extraordinary object from a great international institution in London to the national museum in Tehran achieved a level of communication between the public sphere in this country and Iran that is very, very difficult in other aspects of public life. It is not really about soft power, but what it is, at the very least, is maintaining a channel of communication within the public sphere around the area of culture, which is otherwise clearly rather difficult to sustain at this moment in history.

**Peter Horrocks:** Can I give one specific piece of evidence, again relating to 2012? The BBC's audiences consumed a lot of Olympics content, as you would expect, but, as you say, just consumption does not prove the point. We have an online panel of those who use the BBC around the world, and when we asked them after 2012 two-thirds of them said they found the BBC coverage improved their perception of London and the UK in general and more than 80% of them said they were now more interested in visiting London or the UK as a result of it. Of course that is not just the BBC's coverage; that is the whole effect. But there was a demonstrable effect, and those were people who have consumed through the BBC. As I referred to earlier, the surveys that we have done relating to people who consume the BBC—their positive perceptions of the UK are significantly higher than those who do not. I can share that data with the Committee. As I said earlier, that is not our primary intention. Our primary intention is to inform audiences through the global perspective, but it has the effect of creating those benefits for the UK, and we have comprehensive evidence in relation to that.

**The Chairman:** With time running out, I have two quick questions from Baroness Nicholson and Baroness Hussein-Ece, and then I want to ask Baroness Armstrong to lead on the final subject; as brief as you can, please.

**Q86 Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne:** Thank you very much. It is a follow-up to Lord Forsyth's question. Rather hesitantly, I am wondering if you should not, perhaps collectively or individually, look at more sophisticated and further-reaching analyses of the impact of what you are doing. For example, the Iranian example is so easy to quantify, but you did not touch on the obvious points, which is that there is a vast, highly-wealthy Iranian diaspora globally. We only have a proportion of it here. We would like to attract far more, and certainly as soon as sanctions go we want Britain to be in there first of all. Those things can be quantified, and you could have been analysing who came and perhaps a sample of it—who saw, who talked, who wrote and all the rest of it. If you take the World Service, Britain is *primus inter pares* globally, for example, on music. The World Service, the BBC, is one of the biggest promoters of UK music—probably of any nation's music ever. We have been *primus inter pares* with in music for the best part of 30 years. Are we going to last on that? Are you analysing that? Are you seeing what your input is, what is the impact of the Proms, for example; and Martin Davidson's contribution on music in the British Council? Are you in fact not perhaps, as I was suggesting in the beginning, a little bit too hesitant, perhaps a little bit embarrassed, about thinking about money, other than earning a living, other than running the show? You are not really using the quantification that you could be using.

Could you not look in a much more sophisticated way at quantifying what you are doing and its impact for the UK, which should lead to bigger investment from the UK into the institutions? We are looking into the past. The British Museum was largely filled with its wonderful products—wonderful items—a long, long time ago. We are not making huge investments now. You have spoken already about a smaller budget—I think somebody did—at the moment. If you want to get more, then I would suggest far more sophisticated analysis, which could answer so quickly the sorts of questions that Lord Forsyth has properly put.

**The Chairman:** A brief comment on that.

**Peter Horrocks:** Certainly the BBC's cultural role is absolutely crucial, and of course Lord Hall, as the new Director General, with his background, is very focused on that. The BBC has a section of the BBC website around the world called BBC Culture. It covers the stories of the British Museum and the Tate Gallery. It has a huge amount of British cultural content on there. That is growing very rapidly. It gets advertising support. It is commercially supported rather than through public funding, and it is doing very well, because Britain's culture is attractive, it fits with the BBC's editorial values and it brings a commercial return as well. We have that information, and we can share that with you. So, in digital, it is much easier than in some of these broader activities to be able to survey. The costs of surveying around the world are substantial, so I would suggest that looking at digital performance as one indicator, and a proxy for some of these activities is quite useful in terms of assessing cost-effectiveness.

**Q87 Baroness Hussein-Ece:** Mine is just a quick follow-up from the Cyrus Cylinder, from what Dr Williams was saying, and it also part of what Lord Forsyth was saying—that you had such success when you lent it. Over a million Iranians went to see it. It is going round the world. But then has that been followed up? It seems to me that you have these programmes of lending artefacts that came from those countries in the first place and are of great significance to those countries. They go and see them. They all go home again. What happens after that? Is there any follow-up? Is there any sort of programme? Are there any exchanges? It seems to me that once you have made that contact—as you said, you have made a very good contact; you have communicated—what do you do with afterwards?

**Dr Williams:** That loan transaction was based on a pre-existing very long-term relationship, and that relationship continues. We have ongoing academic programmes together with the national museum in Iran, and that will absolutely continue. We are all about long-term

relationships. The British Museum has been around for 260 years, and it is going to be around for an awful lot longer. We will only be able to be the museum we can be for Britain and for the world through developing rich relationships with partner institutions all over the world; absolutely.

**Baroness Hussein-Ece:** Does it develop into anything else? I know we are talking about partnerships and relationships and what you did was obviously very significant and very important for the people of Iran who arguably are saying, “Thank you very much for letting us have a look at something that was originally ours and it is very important to us—more important than it is to the British”. But what do you do with it afterwards? Do you develop some sort of exchange programme? Do Iranian young people come here perhaps? What do you do with that relationship?

**Dr Williams:** Absolutely. We have Iranian scholars working with the British Museum. We would not be able to do what we can do with our collections without that input. Of course, that will continue. We will be constantly looking for opportunities with that museum and with museums across the world for loans and exchanges. We are a very porous open-ended and collaborative institution. Just to repeat myself, we are nothing without the relationships and that relationship in Tehran is a pretty unusual relationship within the British context, and it really adds another dimension to what we can do with our fantastic Iranian collections. Clearly we need to reflect the Iranian perspective on the collections that reflect upon and come from the Iranian past. But we also want to create a global conversation so that we get the Chinese perspective on the Iranian past or the American perspective or whatever it may be. That role of being a cultural junction box I think is a role that all three institutions before you today would like to see themselves playing, and at our very best we do that pretty successfully. I cite that particular instance, because it is a really unusual one within the

context of the British Museum. We have relationships in every continent, but that one is really special to us.

**The Chairman:** Would you like to add anything on this?

**Peter Horrocks:** Just to respond a little bit to Baroness Nicholson's question and challenge, there are two publications that we will share with the Committee. One is called *Trust Pays*, which looks at the extent to which people's trust in the Government of the UK and in the people of the UK is changed as a result of the broader cultural work that we are all engaged in. It shows a very significant shift in both of those indices. I hasten to say that is done not by us but by an external agency.

The other one is *Culture Means Business*, which looks at the impact on people's willingness to do business with the UK as a result of this work. Again, as with the World Service, this does show a significant and real shift in people's willingness to do business, to visit the UK and to study in this country as a result of this work. I do think it is important that we are able to demonstrate that sort of impact from the sort of work that we do.

**The Chairman:** That does lead well into Baroness Armstrong's question.

**Q88 Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top:** It certainly does. We are interested in the level of co-operation between you as partially publicly funded bodies and other partially publicly funded bodies. And if I can also ask a supplementary, as we are coming to the end, is there one thing that that you think this Committee should be recommending in terms of its overall remit of the role of the British Government in improving soft power?

**Peter Horrocks:** The level of co-operation and partnership: I think probably from the BBC point of view it is editorially opportunistic because of the need for us to be providing a separate editorially-based judgment and because of what I set out a number of times in my evidence. If we did it simply because there is a campaign and therefore it needs to be on the World Service, our audiences would see through that. It has to be an editorial judgment. We

can do a lot more in terms of the co-ordination, but with the British Museum, for example, all the things that we have heard about were reflected. Martin and I were in Egypt a couple of years ago with a fantastic event that the British Council laid on looking at Darwin's legacy and debating evolution in an Islamic context. That made fantastic programming for the World Service. We can do those kinds of bi-lateral collaborations. When the Public Diplomacy Board existed, the World Service was an observer on that. Anybody that brings more information together that allows us to be able to make editorial judgments on behalf of our audiences around the world will be welcome. There is already a cultural diplomacy group that does some good work. The Council takes a very significant role in that—and I am sure Martin can talk to that—and the BBC can be supportive of that.

To your second question, in relation specifically to the BBC and looking ahead, I would say that the most important thing would be proper understanding of the weight to be attached to the global role of the BBC and how that influences the overall political perspective towards the BBC in terms of the long-term future of the World Service and its ability to be able to act as a magnifier for all of the other aspects of British soft power.

**Martin Davidson:** We work closely with the BBC, with the British Museum and with a wide range of other institutions. As an organisation, while we have direct ownership of our English-language work, in the other areas of work we can only deliver anything of value by working in partnership with other organisations, whether those are the great museums and galleries or the great universities or organisations like the BBC. As Peter has said, we have already identified a number of areas in the past where we have worked closely with the BBC, including for example around the Olympics where we did a great deal of work on using the Olympics as an education link between the schools in this country and schools overseas. We are working with the British Museum at the moment on taking their Pompeii exhibition, *Pompeii Live*, around the world to something like 50-odd countries.

**Dr Williams:** 1,000 cinemas.

**Martin Davidson:** 1,000 cinemas. So, finding ways of working together is absolutely critical. Could we do it better? Yes. I am quite certain that we could, and that is one of the reasons why we have brought together this cultural-diplomacy group to ask the question “How do we share knowledge about what is going on already and find ways of creating links and contacts?” Part of the problem is that there is a vast amount going on between this country and other countries, and simply understanding the quantum and understanding what is happening, looking at how we can bring that together, is a really important agenda. That is why we have worked with the organisations on the cultural calendar. There are admittedly only 11 countries, but the amount of work that has gone into that has been considerable.

The question now is: so what? What are we going to do having found out that this work is going on? That is where we are having the conversations at the moment of the kind I described a little bit earlier. How do we use the design exhibition, to do a trade show around that or to do an education exhibition around that? If there were two things that I would ask the Committee to consider—if you are giving me the chance for one, then go for two—I think they are, first of all, to reinforce that this area of work is important. It matters to the UK. It is something we are extremely good at but there is significant competition arising around the world. The second one is also to encourage this greater exchange of knowledge about what is going on so that we get some of the connections—the cohesion, the co-operation—which I think would make a great deal more of what is already happening than we do at the moment.

**Q89 The Chairman:** You slightly pre-empted what I was going to wind up with. I was going to ask each of you to answer a simple question. We are a Parliamentary Committee, and we should be reporting to the Government. The question for us will be: what have we learnt from these spearhead organisations such as yours which you believe, and I think it is

widely recognised, are doing enormously powerful and influential work? What more would you expect? Or what less would you expect of the Government in terms of getting out of your way rather than into your way? To complete this session could each of you give us a few minutes on what you would like to see of Government and Government Departments and the Government structure in furthering your work? Let us start with Dr Williams.

**Dr Williams:** Thank you. Just to answer Baroness Armstrong's questions around collaboration, I guess the best example I have of collaboration, particularly with the BBC, is the History of the World project. The latest figure on that is that 32.5 million people around the world have downloaded podcasts relating to that project, and the book has been translated into 13 languages and not just the usual European languages. It has gone into Chinese and Turkish, and it has become a global phenomenon. We could not have done that without the collaboration and the platform that the BBC have provided us with. Neither would we be able to have made what will become such a global success of our *Pompeii Live* broadcast without working together with the British Council. That said, we can all do much more, and we can all do it much better. But the support that we get from embassies throughout the world and from UKTI—we would not be able to grow what is becoming an increasingly important part of our global presence, our international commercial touring exhibition programme, without the kinds of support we get from other arms of Government that allow us to go and talk to new potential partners and venues across the world where we can stage exhibitions in order to both generate revenue for the museum, for Britain, but also fulfil the trustees' mandate of sharing their collections.

Making friends and partners and building the museum's reputation in countries around the world is then of course what drives inward tourism. One in four visitors to London comes to the British Museum, and one in 10 visitors to the UK comes to the British Museum. Add all the other museums and galleries to that, and you have a significant proportion of people



coming to Britain largely because of our cultural offer and our cultural attraction. So, driving that inward tourism is an important part of the cultural benefit that a very active and vibrant cultural sector brings to the country.

I am sure my colleagues will agree with this: one of the things that we would most benefit from is Government looking again at questions around visa restrictions. It is clearly a very important matter for the future. There are huge opportunities. We see them from my own sector—for the UK benefiting from burgeoning audiences in China and India and around the world, and a different kind of visa regime would allow the UK to capitalise on that.

**Martin Davidson:** I suppose I have already spoken about a number of the areas which I think are important. I would echo the issue around visas. I think Government has to recognise that in addition to all the digital work, and there is a huge amount that goes on digitally across all our organisations, the exchange of individuals matters hugely. Creating the conditions that allow that exchange to take place is vitally important for the long-term health and prosperity of this country. So, encouraging movement and exchanges of people is critically important. I do think that as a country we have underestimated the importance of scholarships, especially, I would suggest, in some of the newly emerging parts of the world. That is both encouraging those countries who already wish to spend their money on spending people to this country as well as helping others come.

The final thing would be creating the conditions that allow organisations to make more of the expertise we have in this country but particularly helping to focus that into areas that are of greatest importance to the UK. So, I would suggest, as I said a little earlier, helping British institutions engage with sub-Saharan Africa and the capacities of those countries to develop themselves is a vitally important aspect of this. So, it is not simply something you do in the developed and wealthy world. It matters hugely in the developing world as well.

**Q90 The Chairman:** Mr Horrocks, you sounded as though you are happy in your new locality separate from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Are you happy in it, and do you want that to be developed more? What is your shopping list from Government?

**Martin Davidson:** I think it is going to work for us. The BBC Trust and the BBC chairman, Lord Patten, are extremely supportive of that international role. We clearly do not know what will happen in a few years' time when the BBC's charter comes up for renewal. But I believe that if we can show that we are taking the UK's values to the world, and crucially that we are bringing the world back to the UK in the way I was describing—the way that we are using our language service teams to be reporting back to the UK, because it is about that mutuality, that exchange, that network, that the digital technology can provide—I would ask the Committee and hopefully Government to understand that to be effective in that world we are talking about being competitive with the Googles and the Facebooks and the Twitters. Those are all US companies.

For the UK to be able to punch above its weight versus the Chinese, the Russians and the American technology companies, we are going to need to have scale; we are going to need to have creativity, and that is a crucial thing that is required here. It is not always Government that can be creative itself. It can create the conditions for that. The Creative Industries Council, in which the BBC is playing an important part in terms of its international role, I think can play a part. And the Government can help to create the conditions for brilliant content that we can then take to the world. So when the Olympics is organised brilliantly, and it was amazing material, the BBC can then take that around the world. It is creating the people who act as the exemplars. I was thinking who they are from the BBC's point of view: John Simpson in news; Sir David Attenborough in factual programming; maybe Jeremy Clarkson—not necessarily everyone's choice—as a cultural representative. But that triumvirate and having the strength of the creative organisation which can then take those

kinds of emblems of Britain to the world is fantastic for all of us, and we need Government to create the conditions for that to be possible.

**The Chairman:** Two final questions: Lord Hodgson and Lord Foulkes.

**Q91 Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts:** I would ask Martin Davidson one very quick question. You stressed the importance of scholarships and access to our educational facilities. We get quite a bit of feedback about the unsatisfactory nature of UK undergraduate education; about the way that UK students are not finding it all that they hoped it was going to be. Do we do checks on people who have come here as to how satisfactory they have found it and how well it has worked for them? If it is bad, we ought to be learning about it.

**Martin Davidson:** There is a range of satisfaction surveys of students done both at undergraduate and postgraduate level. On the whole the results of those are very good. I have to say that the students are becoming increasingly demanding as we go forward.

One thing perhaps we have not touched on that I do think is important though is to what extent are we supporting young people from this country going elsewhere. A critical issue for me is that we have something like a 20:1 mismatch between the number of foreign students coming here and British students going overseas. So if we do want to engage properly with China, then we need people who can speak Chinese, who have been to China, worked in China; and the same with India and the same with Brazil. So, one of the big issues in exactly the same way as Mr Horrocks has talked about—talking in Britain about what we understand about the rest of the world—is that we need young people also going overseas; that soft power has to be seen through that lens as well.

**The Chairman:** That is a very important invention now that the Far Eastern universities are getting to the top of the world university league. It is our generation that needs to learn from them.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** You have very kindly come to give evidence before we have put out the official call for evidence. I wonder if you wanted to go away and consult with some of your excellent staff, the young ones and the women in particular, and come up with some ideas about things that you are not doing or other people are not doing, that you might do and we might do. Could you do that, do you think?

**Peter Horrocks:** I would be delighted to.

**Martin Davidson:** Yes.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** Would you?

**Dr Williams:** Yes.

**Q92 The Chairman:** I have one final, final question that I am going to give myself the freedom to ask. Is it a help or hindrance to all three of your magnificent networks that we are part of the European Union network ourselves; that we are rather close to Washington and the United States; that we are members of the Commonwealth network? They are three identifying labels stuck on Britain today. Do they help or hinder?

**Peter Horrocks:** I think they intersect. But it is the fact that the UK and this city have a global perspective that is the most important thing—that overarching view that Britain, because of its history, the Empire, the spread of the English language, can have cultural institutions that are global before they are British. But by that help, the Britishness of course can each take advantage of those, whether it is the Commonwealth or the EU or the transatlantic relationship. But it is only by staying resolutely global, I believe, that these organisations can be successful.

**The Chairman:** Do you have a word on that?

**Martin Davidson:** I would echo that. I think that the fact that we are as globally connected a country as any is a huge advantage to us. I would also say that London is without question

one of the most attractive aspects of this country: not alone, but this city has an extraordinary attraction around the world, and people come here because of it.

**The Chairman:** Dr Williams, final point.

**Dr Williams:** I think from the British Museum or the museums' and galleries' perspective the Commonwealth and the American context are very beneficial to us because we are working as we do in both areas very extensively with partner institutions, national museums, that are set up in exactly the same way as we are with a similar arm's length relationship to Government. We have a relationship with the national museum in Zimbabwe, which is governed by trustees. We have relations with similar trustee bodies all over the communal world. We speak the same language. We have the same understandings of what the role of these cultural organisations is within our particular countries but also globally.

As for the European context, that is extremely important for us. Many of our great things are from European countries. Next year we are doing a major show on Germany and German history and culture. We have talked a lot about building cultural understanding in this country and across the world of countries in the Far East and south Asia, but there is also a job to do to build cultural understanding in this country of some of our nearest neighbours. Right now we have a partnership ongoing with the national museum in Denmark to reflect upon an aspect of a history common to all the nations of these islands, and also northern Europe—on the Vikings. The largest Viking ship is going to be visiting London early next year.

So, in that sense the British Museum absolutely finds the American and the Commonwealth context in which to work very benign, because we speak the same language and we have the same premises. But we also feel there are big opportunities and big needs for us to build cultural understanding of some of closest European neighbours as well.

**The Chairman:** I think that is an excellent note on which to end, with the Vikings, and I would like to thank you all three very much for coming on this hot afternoon and answering all our queries and questions with great expertise and learning. Very many thanks to all three of you; most grateful.

**Martin Davidson:** Thank you.

**Peter Horrocks:** Thank you.

**Dr Williams:** Thank you.