

## **BBC Learning: languages online**

In August 2013 ALL wrote to the BBC Trust in response to a public consultation as part of the Trust's service review of BBC Online. ALL expressed its concern about the lack of any specific commitment to languages as part of BBC Learning's remit specified in the draft Service Licence.

The final Licence included a commitment to developing resources in key subjects for schools and to essential skills for adults, with languages as one example. (We would like think the latter was in response to our comments!) The Trust stated that it would subsequently review the performance of BBC Learning.

So ALL wrote to the Trust again in December 2014 asking about the results of this review and expressing concern that very little seemed to have happened in the languages area. The Trust replied that a review had been carried out but was not being made public and that they would forward our enquiry to BBC Learning.

We have now received a response from BBC Learning (below). As can be seen, BBC Learning is in the course of creating new content for schools languages, though it has no plans for the adult sector, despite its remit from the BBC Trust.

We hope that navigation on the schools website will improve the visibility of the new and archived materials, as some ALL members have had difficulty finding them!

---

### **Email from ALL to BBC Trust**

*Dear Trustees*

*The Association for Language Learning wrote to the BBC Trustees on 12th August 2013 in response to the consultation on the proposed merged service licence for Red Button and Online.*

*In our response, we welcomed the BBC Trust's recommendation that languages should be included as an essential skill for adults. We also welcomed the declared commitment to providing resources for school learners, as well as their parents and teachers. Although languages were not specifically mentioned, the BBC Trust and BBC Online will be well aware of the renewed importance of languages in the secondary curriculum and the introduction of languages as compulsory in maintained primary schools in England at KS2 from September 2014.*

*The Association for Language Learning, as the UK's main professional association for language teachers and associated professionals and the body most closely and regularly involved in consultations with the government on language education, also offered to contribute to BBC Learning its experience and the views of members in our extensive network in the development of new content by BBC Learning as and when required.*

*As the Association attaches great importance to the BBC's continuing provision of materials for language learners at all levels, we have now reviewed what has been done to implement the Trust's recommendations regarding languages since the licence was published.*

*We are very disappointed to find that almost no new materials appear to have been created.*

*The Bitesize section has been updated - but this is only for exam preparation, so targets a very specific purpose and age group.*

*The primary language site is still very basic and minimal at a time when there is huge demand for resources and guidance for teachers since languages became compulsory in maintained primary schools in England at KS2.*

*We note that a large number of video clips have been removed from the Learning Zone Broadband Clip Library. We can only hope this is because they are being archived as part of the initiative to move BBC Online content to a new home, as outlined by Neil McIntosh on 6th November 2014. However, in the meantime, teachers are likely to be disappointed that there is no indication on the webpage of where these familiar and much used resources are.*

*The languages site for adults ([bbc.co.uk/languages](http://bbc.co.uk/languages)) continues to display a notice that it has been archived and is no longer being updated. So no change there for the past couple of years.*

*The Association's offer of consultation and support has not yet been taken up by BBC Learning.*

*In short, we feel that almost nothing has yet been done to implement the BBC Trust licence's recommendations in as much as these include languages. We understood that BBC Learning's implementation of the Trust's licence would be reviewed by the Trust after 12 months. We would be most interested to know whether this review has taken place and if the results will be published.*

*The BBC has made an enormous, unique and highly valued contribution to language learning in the UK for many decades and we would be most dismayed to see this disappearing.*

*Yours sincerely*

*David Wilson  
Trustee, Association for Language Learning  
University of Leicester  
University Road  
Leicester LE1 7RH*

---

**Response from Gareth Stockdale, Head of Operations and Public Affairs, BBC Learning**

*Hi David,*

*Your e-mail to the Trust on the 31st of December has been passed on to BBC Learning.*

*As I'm sure you're aware, there is a balance between the available resources that we have for online formal learning content and ensuring that we meet all the requirements set out in the BBC Online service licence.*

*Our main focus has been on formal learning resources for KS1-KS4 and therefore there has been and there are no current future plans to create new adult language provision. This means that the languages site for adult learners has been archived but is still available to be used by the audience*

*In the KS1-KS4 space we're in the process of updating our resources for Key Stage 2 MFL and moving them over to the new Bitesize site. The go-live date for these resources is likely to be the autumn.*

*We currently offer in the primary space a range of video, interactive and text-based resources for the two most commonly-taught languages, French and Spanish. Last March we added a number of*

games and topics to the Mandarin resources to bring them up to a similar volume of content to French and Spanish. For each language we cover 10 topics, introducing the key vocabulary with audio for each word, plus videos, interactive games and storymakers, songs and links to other relevant resources.

The Learning Zone Class Clips has indeed been switched off but clips have been migrated over to their new home in Bitesize, where teachers can find collections organised by topic for French, German, Italian, Mandarin and Spanish.

To offer more support to non-specialists teaching MFL in primary schools, Learning Zone made three brand-new 30-minute series this year called *Virtually There*: short, fun films and catchy songs for KS2 pupils learning Spanish, German and French. These will be added to the clips collection on Bitesize in the coming months.

Finally, in response to feedback from teachers we are exploring the possibility of making a new School Radio series to support the teaching of languages at KS2.

We thank you for your continued offer of consultation and support. If you have any further questions please let me know.

Best,

Gareth