

Preserving profit for the public service

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Channel 4's [audience](#) share is up – it's [revenue](#) is up – it's bosses [pay](#) is up by 13% – but it's [profits](#) are down 70%. That paradox can be explained by rising costs. It can also be explained by the fact that much of Channel 4's audience and advertising income has been bolstered by the launch of new digital channels like [More4](#) (I should declare an interest – I launched [More4 News](#)). But where does all this leave the public service remit of the channel? Come 2012 Channel 4 could effectively lose its spectrum subsidy so

Chief Exec Andy Duncan is already pleading for taxpayers' cash to fill the gap. I don't know if that is the answer but I certainly sympathise with his case. If we don't have Channel 4 then we lose Big Brother! OK, so no great loss there but there is a raft of news and current affairs which I do care about (plus a whole lot of other programming that I don't) that keeps the BBC honest and provides an alternative to the mono-cultural output from BBC White City. I am biased – I used to work on Channel 4 [News](#) – but I also worked at the BBC and [still do](#) make programmes for them. What we don't want in this country is a situation like in the US where there is only one public broadcaster. With the New Media revolution upon us I think it is time for a radical review of the whole idea of public broadcasting that opens up the public funds to a new range of 'broadcasters' from local community websites to the big players like Channel 4. Let a thousand flowers bloom, but we have to plant seeds.

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