



Meeting of the BBC Four Nations Committee MINUTES

Wednesday 6th December 2023

BBC Central Square, Cardiff

ATTENDANCE

Members:

- Elan Closs Stephens, Non-Executive Director, Interim Chair of BBC Board (Chair)
- Muriel Gray, Non-Executive Director (Member for Scotland)
- Robbie Gibb, Non-Executive Director (Member for England)
- Michael Smyth, Non-Executive Director (Member for Northern Ireland)
- Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director, Nations
- Steve Carson, Director, Scotland
- Jason Horton, Director, Local Production
- Rhuanedd Richard, Director, Wales
- Adam Smyth, Director, Northern Ireland

With:

- James Holden, Director, BBC Marketing and Audiences (item 2)
- Prof Richard Wynn Jones, Director, Wales Governance Centre, School of Law and Politics (item 4)
- Jac Larner, Wales Governance Centre, School of Law and Politics (item 4)
- Mark Grinnell, Executive Lead, BBC Nations (secretary)
- Chris Sandford, Head of Governance, BBC Secretariat

Apologies:

- Nick Serota, Non-Executive Director

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- 1 Chair's welcome
- 2 Audiences
- 3 Nations Director report
- 4 Political report
- 5 AOB

Meeting of the BBC Four Nations Committee Minutes

1. Chair's introduction

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Nick Serota, Non-Executive Director, sent his apology for absence.
- 1.3 The Chair and Committee discussed some general expectations for the Committee and a desire that the meeting would complement the work of the Committees in the four Nations.

2. Audiences

- 2.1 The Committee heard about the BBC's performance across the UK and while linear use is in decline, there is on-target growth in digital consumption, including via the BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds.
- 2.2 The Committee heard a summary of combined audience figures in the Nations for the year, and compared those with BBC performance overall. The Committee noted growth and development areas.
- 2.3 Titles such as *Steel Town* in Wales or *Blue Lights* in Northern Ireland has a stronger than average performance within the area in which the content portrays.
- 2.4 The Committee heard about the impact of big events which drive audiences to digital products. Audience performance in the Dundee area is improved since the BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend event.
- 2.5 The Committee heard the BBC News at 1830 remains the most consumed news product in the UK.
- 2.6 There is a significant uptake of news consumption due to increased prominence of local content on the BBC News app.

3. Director, BBC Nations, Report

- 3.1 The Director Nations outlined the brand perception challenges for the BBC outside London in audience 'chosen often' and impartiality scores. .

3.2 The Committee heard how the Nations Division connects every other part of the BBC.

3.3. The Director noted the biggest challenge and opportunity for Nations in the future is the delivery of content on digital.

3.4 22 million people (50% of uk adults 16+) consume BBC Nations and Local content weekly.

3.5 The prominence of Nations content on BBC iPlayer remains a key piece of outstanding work.

3.6 The Chair thanked the Nations Director and Local leadership in England for the work modernising the BBC in England for a future digital footprint.

3.7 The Director noted the biggest challenge for maintaining and growing high impact television content is ensuring a strong supply of independent producers.

3.8 The Nations Director praised the investment in talent pipeline in Northern Ireland via the Hothouse scheme.

3.9 The Chair noted the importance of a continuing discussion about the prominence of Nations content-in future Board meetings.

3.10 The Director outlined content spend within each Nation including the provision for indigenous language content.

3.11 The Committee heard about future Across the UK plans and discussed the merit of senior Leadership of the BBC being based largely outside London.

4. Political briefing

4.1 The Committee noted a presentation on the UK political landscape

4.2 The Committee heard how voting in each of the Nations has skewed historically and predictions for forthcoming elections.

4.3 The four territory comparison heard by the Committee is the first attempt at a piece of work such as this in the UK.

4.4 The Committee noted that national identity is a good predictor of voting behaviour in all four nations.

5. AOB

5.1 The Chair thanked the Committee members.

5.2 Date of next four Nations Committee meeting: December 2024.

Meeting ends.