



Meeting of the BBC Northern Ireland Committee

MINUTES

Thursday 20th March 2025

BBC Broadcasting House, Belfast

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- 1 Chair's introduction
- 2 Director, Northern Ireland, report
- 3 Director, Nations report
- 4 Legal Update
- 5 BBC Belfast Transformation Project
- 6 Audiences
- 7 Finance
- 8 AOB

ATTENDANCE

Members:

- Michael Smyth, Non-executive Director, Member for Northern Ireland (Chair)
- Nick Serota, Non-Executive Director
- Adam Smyth, Director, BBC Northern Ireland
- Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director, BBC Nations

With:

- Mark Adair, Head of Corporate and Community Affairs, BBC Northern Ireland
- Fiona Campbell, Channel Controller, BBC Three
- Eddie Doyle, Senior Head of Content Commissioning (*item 2*)
- Mervyn Middleby, Business Operations Director (*item 5*)
- Jeannine Kelly, Lead Project Manager (*item 6*)
- Lesley Farquharson, Head of Audience Research (*item 7*)
- Jeremy Ankers, Finance Business partner, Northern Ireland (*item 8*)
- Mark Grinnell, Executive Lead, BBC Nations (Secretary)

1. Chair's introduction

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the Committee.
- 1.2 The Chair thanked Non-Executive Director, Nick Serota for his contribution to the Northern Ireland Committee. This would be his last Northern Ireland Committee during his term of office.
- 1.3 The Chair outlined meetings and stakeholder engagement which he had undertaken since the previous Committee. He reported on the meeting held the day before with the NI Economy Minister.
- 1.4 The minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 1st August 2024 were approved with no conflicts.
- 1.5 The Chair noted positive feedback from the attendees of the Four Nations Committee meeting which had been held in Belfast in December 2024.

2. Director Northern Ireland report

- 2.1 The Committee noted the Director's written report.
- 2.2 The Head of Commissioning reported on BBC Northern Ireland's drama, comedy and factual development slates. The Committee reviewed details of recently commissioned and co-commissioned content.
- 2.3 The Committee received an update on the *Hot House* scheme run by the BBC in Northern Ireland for the independent production sector.
- 2.4 The Committee heard about the Impartiality Champions training scheme being run in Northern Ireland.

3. Director Nations report

- 3.1 The Director updated the Committee on the sports portfolio, including recently secured broadcast rights for Men's International Football in Northern Ireland and the recently agreed extension to the Six Nations rugby coverage.
- 3.2 The Chair thanked the Director Nations for his work on sport acquisitions.
- 3.3 The Committee heard about 'buying model' plans for portrayal of Northern Ireland to ensure alignment between Nations and Network commissioning teams.

- 3.4 The Committee discussed editorial control in the Nations for approving high risk/profile News output.
- 3.5 The Committee heard about the work the Nations division is undertaking in the run up to Charter.

4. Legal update

- 4.1 The Committee noted a forthcoming defamation claim in which the BBC would be defending an episode of *BBC Spotlight* at trial to be held in Dublin.

5. Belfast Transformation Project

- 5.1 The Committee reviewed images of the latest installations for studios and production spaces in Broadcasting House in Northern Ireland.
- 5.2 The Committee heard about risk management during the five-year long development project.
- 5.3 The BBC Board will visit Belfast to review the work in progress.

6. Audiences

- 6.1 The Committee reviewed audience consumption of BBC content in Northern Ireland in the previous quarter.

7. Finance

- 7.1 The Committee reviewed the latest accounts and forecast for spend and headcount in BBC Northern Ireland.
- 7.2 The quota set by the regulator, OFCOM for out of London targets will be met in this financial year for hours and spend in BBC Northern Ireland.

8. AOB and close

- 8.1 There were no other matters arising.
- 8.2 The draft text on Northern Ireland in the BBC Annual Plan was noted.
- 8.3 Date of next meeting, June 11th 2025.