



**Meeting of the  
BBC Scotland Committee  
MINUTES**

27<sup>th</sup> February 2024

BBC Glasgow

**ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

- 1 Introduction and minutes of previous Scotland Committee
- 2 MG ALBA Partnerships
- 3 Director Scotland Report
- 4 News
- 5 Market Report
- 6 Building occupancy
- 7 Director, Nations report
- 8 Finance report
- 9 AOB & close

**ATTENDANCE**

*Members:*

- Muriel Gray (Chair), Non-Executive Director
- Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director, Nations
- Steve Carson, Director, Scotland
- Luke McCullough, Head of Corporate Affairs and Policy

*With:*

- Lesley Farquharson, Head of Audience Research, Scotland (*item 7*)
- Gail Capaldi, Senior Finance Business Partner (*item 8*)
- Mark Grinnell, Executive Lead (*secretary*)
- Jon Petrie, Commissioning Director, Comedy
- Gary Smith, News Controller, Scotland (*item 4*)
- Geraldine McCartney, Business Operations Director, Scotland (*item 6*)
- Samantha Sing, Finance Director, Nations (*observer*)

*Apologies:*

- Elan Closs Stephens, Non-Executive Director, Acting Chair of BBC Board

## **SCOTLAND COMMITTEE MINUTES – Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

### **1. Introduction and minutes of previous Scotland Committee**

- 1.1 The minutes of the last Committee meeting (14 November 2023) were approved and no new conflicts were presented.
- 1.2 The Chair offered the Director congratulations on the 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the Scotland Channel.
- 1.3 The Chair welcomed Jon Petrie to attend the meeting as a guest from Content Division and to Samantha Sing to observe the meeting as part of the induction to her role as Finance Director.

### **2. Audiences**

- 2.1 The Committee discussed the latest audience consumption data within Scotland and pan BBC.
- 2.2 The Committee noted there had been significant growth in BBC Sounds consumption in Scotland.
- 2.3 There would be pilots on the iPlayer to aid discovery of Scotland content.
- 2.4 The comedy series Two Doors Down is one of biggest performing comedy series, with equal impact within Scotland and across the UK.
- 2.5 TV viewing trends over the festive period continue to decline across the UK, but with a rise in iPlayer viewing for Hogmanay output.
- 2.6 Successful audio content during the festive season was driven by audience consumption of football and Good Morning Scotland.

### **3. Director Scotland report**

- 3.1 The appointment of the new Head of Audio had been completed.
- 3.2 The next issue of iPlayer would include better personalisation. Before then, the 'new and trending' rail will be controlled locally to promote Scotland content.
- 3.3 The funding paper for the content investment plan will go to the Executive Committee and BBC Board for approval.
- 3.4 The renewal of the MG ALBA partnership had been approved by the BBC Board.

- 3.5 Scotland teams had successfully completed a pilot training programme called 'Impartiality Champions'.
- 3.6 Following a successful BBC Wales pilot, a bespoke training course for team leaders in Scotland continues to be rolled out.
- 3.7 There would be more support for staff networks in Scotland with representatives given time away from desks to co-chair the groups.
- 3.8 There had been an improvement in the diversity and inclusion statistics for BBC Scotland in the latest report.
- 3.9 The Committee heard that the BBC Editorial Complaints Unit had not upheld a complaint relating to news content about the company Brewdog.

#### **4. News**

- 4.1 The Committee heard about plans for a new news and current affairs visualised podcast, expanded *Reporting Scotland* programme, new half hour channel news at 7pm, expanded (30 episode) *Debate Night* and increased website resource.
- 4.2 The resources for the above new content would be remixed from the existing funding for *The Nine*.
- 4.3 The Director outlined action plans for responding to issues raised in the BBC annual staff survey.
- 4.4 BBC Scotland performance for news is better across the day while the teatime bulletin on STV outperforms *Reporting Scotland*.
- 4.5 *Reporting Scotland* remains the most watched programme on BBC one in Scotland.
- 4.6 There would be a consultation with trades unions and staff followed by an OFCOM submission and, assuming successful, the piloting and audience research for branding and editorial content.
- 4.7 The team are aiming to close *The Nine* and launch the new channel news bulletin in September.
- 4.8 Risks which could impact on delivery of the project include the potential for an early election in May or regulatory challenges.

#### **5. Market Report**

- 5.1 The Committee heard highlights from the report including an update on engagement with the regulator, OFCOM.
- 5.2 The BBC would challenge the Children (Care and Justice) Bill, which would impact on ability to report on the circumstances of those who find themselves caught up in criminal activity, along with witnesses and those who wish to talk about their experiences as a child.

- 5.3 The Chair was thanked for her attendance at the Dundee Museum which hosted an exhibition marking Radio 1's Big Weekend.
- 5.4 The Committee heard about a recent successful Dr Who event.
- 5.5 The Committee heard about the new Scottish languages Bill which would give official status for Gaelic and Scots languages which might have obligations on those who fall into the freedom of information Scotland Act.
- 5.6 The Annual Plan draft copy for BBC Scotland would be circulated.

## **6. Building**

- 6.1 The committee reviewed the increased occupancy futures for the BBC Glasgow Pacific Quay building.
- 6.2 The new BBC hybrid working policy would be released soon and commit workers to be in the building between two and three days a week as a minimum.
- 6.3 There is an agreement with the National Film and Television School to use part of the BBC PQ estate.

## **7. Nations Director report**

- 7.1 The Executive Committee of the BBC would continue to commission developments and innovate Product such as iPlayer and Sounds. This will work to unify and personalize the BBC's brand.
- 7.2 The Committee heard work is underway to develop news prominence on the app and enhancement to iPlayer, audiences will be able to see more local prominence to content on the iPlayer.
- 7.3 The Executive Committee would continue to review the financial forecast for the BBC's content plans and present to the BBC Board.

## **8. Finance**

- 8.1 The Committee noted the finance report, including an increase on drama and entertainment spend with shows including *Traitors*, *Vigil* and *Gladiators*. Comedy successes include *Mrs Brown's Boys* and factual successes include *Sky at Night*.
- 8.2 It is anticipated that a new Children's drama called *Lagging* will be produced in Scotland.
- 8.3 Local spend has increased due to the impact of the most recent standard BBC pay award for staff.
- 8.4 The financial forecast includes the proposed changes in news from linear to digital.
- 8.5 The Committee discussed the 2023/24 forecast spend and headcount.

8.6 The Committee noted Scotland is ahead of the 'out-of-London' OFCOM targets.

## **9. AOB and close**

9.1 Date of the next meeting, to be confirmed.

9.2 There were no other matters arising. Meeting closed.