



**Meeting of the
BBC Scotland Committee
MINUTES**

Wednesday 8th May 2024

BBC Edinburgh

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- 1 Introduction and minutes of previous Scotland Committee
- 2 Director, Scotland Report
- 3 Market Report
- 4 Impartiality Reviews
- 5 Market Report
- 6 Director, Nations Update
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- 8 Finance
- 9 AOB & close

ATTENDANCE

Members:

- Muriel Gray, Non-Executive Director (Chair)
- Samir Shar, Chair, BBC Board
- Sarah Calcott, Acting Director, Nations
- Steve Carson, Director, Scotland
- Luke McCullough, Head of Corporate Affairs and Policy

With:

- Gail Capaldi, Senior Finance Business Partner (*item 7*)
- Richard Crook, Private Secretary to the Chairman
- Mark Grinnell, Executive Lead (*secretary*)
- Peter Johnston, Director of Complaints and Editorial Reviews
- Jon Petrie, Commissioning Director, Comedy
- Elaine Wallace, Audience Research Manager, BBC Scotland (*item 6*)

Apologies:

- Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director, Nations.

SCOTLAND COMMITTEE MINUTES – Wednesday 8th May 2024

1. Introduction and minutes of previous Scotland Committee

- 1.1 The minutes of the last Committee meeting (27th Feb 2024) were approved and no new conflicts were presented.
- 1.2 The Chair outlined the publication of the Migration Review and noted the BBC Board Chair's involvement in the project prior to his appointment.
- 1.3 The Annual Report and Accounts draft was approved.
- 1.4 The Chair congratulated the BBC Scotland news team on their coverage of recent political developments.

2. Director, Scotland Report

- 2.1 The Committee heard about the delivery of the 'BBC for the future' plans. The BBC Scotland Executive team held an all-staff meeting with follow ups to come in all staff bases.
- 2.2 The Committee noted how the phrase 'backing British content' is better framed within Scotland as 'homegrown'.
- 2.3 The BBC Director General had held a joint staff meeting with BBC Scotland and MG Alba teams.
- 2.4 The BBC Board and Executive Committee had held their most recent meeting in Glasgow.
- 2.5 The BBC Edinburgh centenary was marked with an event in May, following on from last year's events in Glasgow and Aberdeen. There would be another event in Dundee in November to mark 100 years of the BBC in the City.
- 2.6 The Committee heard about the sad deaths of a number of high profile Scotland presenters and staff.
- 2.7 The plan to increase staff diversity at BBC Scotland would continue to develop, with a particular focus on disability.
- 2.8 The Committee heard about new content titles in commission, including *Granite Harbour*, *Dinosaur* and *Shetland*.
- 2.9 The BBC Scotland team won a Gold Aria audio award for UK News coverage of *Shiny Bob*.

3. Market Report

- 3.1 The BBC had successfully challenged the Children (Care and Justice) Bill, which would have impacted on media reporting 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. While the challenge to this Bill had been successful, the Committee noted that there may be similar provisions in either the Victims Bill or Promise Bill which may require a similar challenge.
- 3.2 The Committee discussed a follow up to recent meetings with Independent film makers in Scotland, after meetings with PACT, UK screen sector trade and Screen Scotland.
- 3.3 Screenings of future BBC Scotland commissions could be held in Pacific Quay and other sites around Scotland.

4. Thematic Review

- 4.1 The Committee noted key elements of the Migration thematic review, particularly the need for news to speak to experts outside the 'central belt', finding a range of voices and a push to find new information each time the story is covered.
- 4.2 The Committee noted the complexity of the story, which requires care and attention in words and context.
- 4.3 BBC Scotland would begin the socialising of the report amongst staff with roll out via *Impartiality Champions*.
- 4.4 BBC Scotland would request staff sessions with the report author and the Director of Complaints and Editorial Reviews.
- 4.5 The Chair thanked the report author for the depth and clarity in the paperwork.

5. Director, Nations report

- 5.1 The Committee heard an account of the priorities for the Nations at the start of the financial year.
- 5.2 The Acting Director had met with independent content makers in Scotland.
- 5.3 The Committee heard about the outcome of the internal Full Year Performance Review (FYPR) within Scotland which would be represented in the Divisional FYPR with the Executive Committee.
- 5.4 The Committee discussed the savings plans for the Nation which are under discussion.
- 5.5 Staff survey results show significant improvements in participation and engagement, along with an understanding of the need for impartiality amongst staff in Scotland.

- 5.6 The Committee heard that the BBC Scotland Exec would address lower scoring areas of the survey, including demonstrating that action would be taken as a result of the feedback.
- 5.7 'My Conversation' staff appraisals would be undertaken across the Division.
- 5.8 BBC Scotland is now be able to manually curate 'new and trending' content which is age appropriate to Scotland audiences on the BBC iPlayer. This has already demonstrated an increase in click-through rates amongst users.
- 5.9 The Committee discussed *Freely* as a significant development in the prominence of BBC content for viewers purchasing new products.

6. Audiences

- 6.1 The Committee noted the audiences report which included a positive final quarter for the BBC Scotland channel which remains the digital channel with the highest weekly reach in Scotland.
- 6.2 Despite overall declines in viewing and perceptions across the UK, Scotland and Northern Ireland continue to exhibit the lowest approval ratings of the BBC scores amongst audiences.
- 6.3 New content is driving audiences into BBC Sounds, with Radio Scotland retaining its position in the market. RAJAR data for radio would be released in the next month.
- 6.4 BBC Scotland watching (excluding news) was slightly ahead of target for full year 2023/24. Strong performing programmes in 2024 include local commissions such as *River City*, *Jules and Greg's Wild Swim* and *Sportscene*.
- 6.5 The BBC Board would learn more about path to audience targets.

7. Finance

- 7.1 The Committee noted the finance report, with an reduced revenue raised from the license fee in Scotland.
- 7.2 The spend in Scotland has increased due to increased volume of network activity and the annual pay award for staff including in continuous output areas.
- 7.3 The Committee noted a reduction in spend at BBC Radio Scotland as a result of the Value for All strategy which moved money into digital content.
- 7.4 There is a significant increase in spend in network TV in Scotland, including the drama *Vigil 2*, comedy including *Mrs Browns* and factual including *Sky at Night*.
- 7.5 BBC Alba had increased the amount of hours broadcast.

8. AOB and close

8.1 There were no other matters arising.