



**Meeting of the
BBC Scotland Committee
MINUTES**

Wednesday 9th Oct 2024

BBC Aberdeen

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- 1 Introduction and minutes of previous Scotland Committee
- 2 Director, Scotland Report
- 3 Market Report
- 4 Director, Nations update
- 5 Commissioning
- 6 Audiences
- 7 Finance
- 8 Rural Affairs reporting
- 9 AOB

ATTENDANCE

Members:

- Muriel Gray, Non-Executive Director (Chair)
- Samir Shar, Chair, BBC Board
- Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director, Nations
- Geraldine McCartney, Acting Director, Scotland
- Luke McCullough, Head of Corporate Affairs and Policy

With:

- Gail Capaldi, Senior Finance Business Partner (*item 7*)
- Mark Grinnell, Executive Lead (*secretary*)
- Jon Petrie, Commissioning Director, Comedy
- Lesley Farquharson, Audience Research Manager, BBC Scotland (*item 6*)
- Kevin Keane, Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs Correspondent (item 8)
- Nadine Lee, Director, Landward/BBC Studios (item 8)
- Laura Mitchell, Series Producer, Landward/BBC Studios (item 8)
- Helen Needham, Senior Radio Producer, BBC Scotland Productions (item 8)

BBC BOARD - SCOTLAND COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday 9th October 2024

1. Introduction and minutes of previous Scotland Committee

- 1.1 The minutes of the previous Committee meeting (8th May 2024) were approved and no new conflicts were presented.
- 1.2 The Chair put on record her thanks to Steve Carson for his seven years as Director of BBC Scotland and wished him good luck in his new role in the industry. The Chair also thanked Geraldine McCartney for her role as Interim Director until the newly appointed Director, Hayley Valentine takes up post.

2. Director, Scotland Report

- 2.1 The Committee heard a summary of the General Election coverage and viewed a video of highlights.
- 2.2 The Director General visited BBC Scotland just before polling day and met the teams and crews working on content for the General Election.
- 2.3 The *Disclosure* team have been nominated for a BAFTA.
- 2.4 The Director General was joined by the incoming BBC Scotland Director in a staff visit in Glasgow.
- 2.5 The staff survey results were released in May, with 83% of the staff in Scotland taking part. A summary would be captured in a document as best practise for the rest of the BBC.
- 2.6 The BBC strategy is clear with staff and external stakeholders. The BBC Scotland team would review how the current workforce connect this into their current roles.

3. Market Report

- 3.1 The Committee discussed the regulator Ofcom's *Media Nations* report.
- 3.2 Ofcom have approved the BBC's request to reduce the number of hours of news broadcast on the BBC Scotland Channel, in line with the BBC's request to change the Operating Licence.
- 3.3 Further dialogue with Ofcom has centred around the launch date for the BBC's new News programme on the Scotland Channel.
- 3.4 Screenings of future BBC Scotland commissions could be held in Pacific Quay and other sites around Scotland.

- 3.5 Following previous reports to the Scotland Committee about risks to freedom of expression posed by the Children (Care and Justice) Bill, and ultimately success in having the relevant clauses removed from the draft legislation, similar concerns have now been raised by BBC Scotland via a separate consultation ahead of a future potential bill.
- 3.6 *An t-Eilean (The Island)* is a new Gaelic drama series being made in partnership between the BBC and MG ALBA. The Committee discussed how this drama could be promoted across BBC platforms.

4. Director Nations Report

- 4.1 The Director gave an overview of current bids for big Sport titles including Rugby and other sport for BBC Scotland.
- 4.2 The Committee discussed the current savings challenge at BBC Scotland and the numbers of staff seeking voluntary redundancy.
- 4.3 The Committee discussed portrayal performance of BBC Scotland programmes and representation of Scotland to the rest of the UK.

5. Commissioning

- 5.1 The Head of Business, Commissioning gave an overview of BBC Scotland's multiplatform commissioning strategy and the partnership options with Network for portrayal content.
- 5.2 The Commissioning strategy continues to include the growth of audiences on iPlayer and Digital and maintain linear in the context of a declining market.
- 5.3 The Committee heard about titles in development, including Comedy pilots.
- 5.4 Network expenditure across the devolved Nations is dependent on content plans for that year. The spend therefore varies across the Content and Nations divisions based on the programme schedule for the year.

6. Audiences

- 6.1 The Audience Research Manager reported on viewing figures for recent iPlayer consumption and sporting events.
- 6.2 Improvement in the audience 'for me' scores in the first six months of the year are related to the Portrayal pieces in particular in high performing drama pieces including *Night Sleeper*.
- 6.3 The Committee discussed *Mrs Brown's Boys*, *Traitors* and *Gladiators* which trend well with audiences in Scotland.

- 6.4 The Committee heard about audience trends in the General Election coverage, including consumption growth on digital platforms and a slight decline in TV viewing compared to previous years.
- 6.5 The Committee discussed the footprint of primary shows on the network and how that might impact on Scottish audiences.

7. Finance

- 7.1 The Committee heard the latest accounts and finance forecast.
- 7.2 The Committee heard that the percentage of Licence Fee spent verses money raised is likely to change at the end of the financial year when compared with 2023/24 due in part to inflation changes.
- 7.3 There are some changes to how finance is reported per genre. This includes a decrease in spend in Children's where the accounting period is now over four years, not on first transmission, this allows for iPlayer consumption to be captured.
- 7.4 The 'Out of London' target of network spend in Scotland is forecasted to increase in the next financial year.

8. AOB

- 8.1 There were no other matters arising.

9. Lunch meeting

- 9.1 The Committee met with internal stakeholders and discussed work from the Aberdeen site across the rural, environmental and energy portfolios and opportunities, issues and challenges in local rural, environmental and outdoor issues; including News reporting and the *Landward* and *Out of Doors* series.