Meeting of the BBC Scotland Committee

MINUTES

Monday 23 April 2018
Pacific Quay, BBC Scotland

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Minutes from 19 September meeting
3. 17/18 Year End Position and Draft Annual Report
4. 18/19 Ambitions, Priorities, Annual Plan overview
5. Audience Performance in Scotland
6. The Market Place and External Environment
7. Update on the Scotland Channel
ATTENDANCE

Members:
- Steve Morrison  Non-executive director (Chair)
- David Clementi  Chairman
- Ken MacQuarrie  Director, Nations and Regions
- Donalda MacKinnon  Director, Scotland

With:
- Phil Harrold  Company Secretary
- Alice Dickerson  Senior Adviser (Secretary)
- Ian Haythornthwaite  Chief Finance and Operating Officer, Nations and Regions
- Ian Small  Head of Policy and Corporate Affairs, Scotland
- James Holden  Director of Marketing and Audiences, News
- Gail Capaldi  Senior Finance Business Partner (item 3)
- Lesley Farquharson  Research Manager (item 5)
- Steve Carson  Head of Multi-Platform Commissioning (item 7)
- Hayley Valentine  Senior News Editor (item 7)
- Louise Thornton  Commissioning Executive, Digital, Social and Youth (item 7)
1. **Welcome and introductions**

1.1 The Chair thanked Ken MacQuarrie for chairing the previous Scotland Committee held in September 2017.

1.2 The Chair noted that Ofcom had recently announced that they provisionally approve the BBC Scotland Channel proposition, recognising that it will deliver public value for audiences and contribute to the BBC’s public purposes, whilst not having a large-scale market impact. Ofcom will now consult further with stakeholders and will reach a final decision by July 2018.

1.3 The Chair explained the annual cycle for the three Scotland Committee meetings. The first session, including this meeting, will consider the performance of the BBC in Scotland in the previous financial year and will consider the draft narrative and financials for the Annual Report. The second meeting of the year will focus on audience engagement. The third meeting of the year will look forward to the delivery of our strategy in Scotland.

1.4 The Committee agreed that it may need to spend more time considering stakeholder engagement in Scotland. In particular, it may be worth considering how the 17/18 Annual Report has been received amongst stakeholders during the next meeting of the Scotland Committee.

2. **Minutes from 19th September 2017**

2.1 It was acknowledged that most matters arising from the last Scotland Committee meeting on 19th September 2017 would be considered during the course of the meeting.

2.2 The minutes from the last Scotland Committee were approved.

3. **17/18 Year End Position and Draft Annual Report**

3.1 The Committee discussed some of the highlights in the draft 17/18 Annual Report narrative, including: the success of BBC Scotland Investigates; the enduring popularity of Still Game; the 10th anniversary of BBC Alba; and strong viewing figures for Reporting Scotland during the recent bad weather.

3.2 The Committee also discussed the financial information which is due to be included in the 17/18 Annual Report. It was noted that, whilst the numbers were not yet finalised, they aren’t expected to change materially. There was some discussion regarding the
final spend figure which should be attributed to the Scotland Channel, taking into account the value of BBC One and BBC Two opt outs.

4. 18/19 Ambitions, Priorities, Annual Plan overview

4.1 The Committee discussed BBC Scotland’s 18/19 strategy and discussed some of the highlights, including: recruitment for the Scotland Channel is progressing well; the new BBC Alba studio in Inverness is nearly completed and once completed all Gaelic news will come from there; BBC Scotland’s new radio commissioner Gareth Hydes is reviewing all existing radio content in light of changes to Ofcom's regulatory framework; and it was noted that a new MOU will soon be agreed with Creative Scotland.

4.2 The Committee then discussed diversity at BBC Scotland, including the recruitment of a BBC Scotland Next panel, drawn from a diverse range of young people. The Director of Scotland also referred to the work that she is doing on behalf of the whole BBC, considering culture and progression for women at the BBC.

5. Audience Performance in Scotland

5.1 The Committee considered an audience report on the recent performance of the BBC in Scotland. It was noted that UK-wide audience trends in TV and radio are reflected in the performance in Scotland.

5.2 The Committee discussed audience expectations for the Nine o’clock News. Audiences want the programme to feel different to Reporting Scotland and network news and welcome the fact that a Scottish lens will be applied to all news stories (local, regional, national and international).

5.3 The Committee then looked in depth at the performance of Shetland and the continued success of BBC Scotland comedy.

6. The Market Place and External Environment

6.1 The Committee noted BBC Scotland’s recent appearances in front of the Scottish Parliament Culture Committee’s inquiry into the screen sector in Scotland, and Westminster’s All-Party Parliamentary Group on Scottish Sport. It was noted that BBC Scotland witnesses can expect to be called to give evidence to the Scottish Parliament Culture Committee and the Westminster Scottish Affairs Committee later this year.

6.2 A number of other market developments were noted, including the fact that Simon Pitts, the new STV CEO, has set out a new strategy for STV. Channel 4 has also announced that it will establish a new national HQ outside of London, in addition to
three new news bureaux, and Glasgow City Council is leading a bid for one of these to be located in Glasgow.

7. **Update on the Scotland Channel**

7.1 The Committee once again welcomed Ofcom’s provisional decision on the Scotland Channel.

7.2 The Committee then viewed and discussed a number of presentations related to the Scotland Channel. The first of these was a presentation on BBC Scotland’s digital and social strategy, which emphasised the importance of developing formats which appeal to younger audiences, developing new talent and learning from the success of The Social when commissioning digital content.

7.3 The second presentation was on the Scotland Channel’s news proposition, including the success of a recent recruitment event which attracted a high number of people who don’t have traditional media backgrounds or experience. Whilst the channel’s news proposition is still in development, the Committee discussed the fact that its style of filming and story-telling will feel different to existing news programmes.

7.4 Finally, the Committee were given a presentation on the overall proposition for the Scotland Channel. The Committee noted that BBC Scotland’s multi-platform commissioning team are in the process of commissioning exciting comedy, factual, drama and news programmes. It was noted that it will be a channel ‘of’ Scotland not ‘about’ Scotland.

8. **AOB**

8.1 There were no items of other business.