Meeting of the BBC Scotland Committee

MINUTES

Wednesday 31 October 2018
Dundee

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Minutes from 23 April 2018 meeting
3. BBC Scotland Overview
4. Update on the Scotland Channel
5. Finance Report
6. Audience Performance in Scotland
7. The Marketplace and External Environment
8. BBC Content’s out-of-London strategy
9. AOB and date of next meeting
ATTENDANCE

Members:
- Steve Morrison  Non-executive director (Chair)
- David Clementi  Chairman
- Ken MacQuarrie  Director, Nations and Regions
- Donalda MacKinnon  Director, Scotland
- Ian Small  Head of Policy and Corporate Affairs, BBC Scotland

With:
- Alice Dickerson  Senior Adviser (Secretary)
- Steve Carson  Head of Multi-Platform Commissioning
- Ian Haythornthwaite  Chief Finance and Operating Officer, BBC N&R
- James Holden  Director of Marketing and Audiences, BBC News
- Hayley Valentine  Senior News Editor (item 4)
- Lesley Farquharson  Research Manager (item 6)
1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 The Committee discussed the stakeholder lunch that had just been held with representatives from Dundee’s creative, academic and business sectors. It was agreed that the Committee would aim to hold a stakeholder lunch whenever it visits a new location in Scotland.

2. Minutes from 23 April 2018

2.1 The minutes were approved.

3. BBC Scotland overview

3.1 The Director of Scotland updated the Committee on the gender career progression and culture review which she had been asked to undertake on behalf of the Director-General. This had resulted in the publication of the ‘Making the BBC a great workplace for women’ report in July 2018. Work is now underway to implement the report’s recommendations. The Committee welcomed the review and discussed how best practice across the organisation could be magnified.

3.2 The Committee was updated on the opening of the National Film and Television School’s first out-of-London hub, based at Pacific Quay. The Committee welcomed the BBC’s partnership with NFTS.

3.3 It was noted that 60 new Design and Engineering posts had been created in Scotland. The inter-disciplinary conversations that have been facilitated by this move, and by the open-plan nature of BBC Scotland, were welcomed and there was some discussion about how more of this could be achieved. It was also noted that the BBC’s new premises in Dumfries had opened.

3.4 The Committee was updated on the internal review into the BBC’s ‘take-down’ policy’. It was noted that the outcome of this review was due to be discussed at the BBC’s Executive Committee.

3.5 BBC Scotland had had a busy summer, having broadcast from the European Championships, the European Young Musicians Festival, and the Edinburgh
Festival. The Committee discussed the potential opportunity for the 2019 Edinburgh Festival, which will be the first year with a Scotland Channel.

3.6 It was noted that 2018 represented the tenth anniversary of BBC Alba. The Committee welcomed that BBC Alba was transforming its offering for children through re-versioning CBeebies and CBBC content into Gaelic, recognising that it will help the next generation learn Gaelic. It was noted that MG Alba is due to hold a reception to mark its tenth anniversary in London in November.

3.7 It was noted that the Chair of the Scotland Committee, Director of Scotland and Deputy Director-General were due to give evidence to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee of the Scottish Parliament in November. The Director of Scotland and Head of News and Current Affairs for BBC Scotland were also due to give evidence to Westminster’s Scottish Affairs committee in due course.

3.8 It was noted that the First Minister has pulled out of the EBU News Xchange conference and that editorial responsibility for the conference sits with the EBU.

3.9 The Director of Scotland gave a summary of audience research on Radio Scotland. It was agreed that the Head of Multi-Platform Commissioning would report back to the Committee on Radio Scotland in due course.

4. Update on Scotland Channel

4.1 BBC Scotland’s Head of Multi-Platform Commissioning informed the Committee that 24 February 2019 would be the launch day for the new Scotland Channel. The Committee discussed the schedule for launch night and for the first few weeks, acknowledging that it was still being developed. There was also some discussion regarding the promotional material and marketing for the Channel and agreement that audience in Scotland needed to know that it is a channel for all. It was also recognised that it would be important to have premieres of some returning series debut on the Scotland Channel in order to bring new audiences to it.

4.2 The Editor of The Nine provided the Committee with an update on how preparations for the launch of The Nine were developing. Over 50% of staff had been recruited, many of whom were already working and securing stories
for BBC Scotland. Early pilots had been completed and further pilots were due to be carried out in December now that the presenters of The Nine had been appointed and the set designed. The importance of the new political team was recognised, given that the Channel was due to launch a month before Brexit.

4.3 The Committee discussed in detail the promotional strategy for the launch of the channel, including promotion via BBC One and Reporting Scotland.

5. Finance report

5.1 The Committee was updated on forecast spend in the 18/19 financial year.

5.2 There was some discussion on spend on sports rights across the Nations and Regions and it was agreed that it was a subject that the Committee might return to in the future.

6. Audience Performance in Scotland

6.1 The Committee considered an audience performance report, including the BBC’s performance in Scotland outside of the central belt.

7. The Market Place and External Environment

7.1 The Head of Policy and Corporate Affairs provided an update on discussions with Ofcom regarding how out-of-London (OOL) Network quotas are applied to the new BBC Scotland Channel. Conversations with Ofcom were ongoing.

7.2 It was noted that Ofcom had published its Annual Report on the BBC and its thematic review of Representation and Portrayal on the BBC.

7.3 It was noted that the former BBC Scotland Joint Head of Programmes & Services and MG Alba Chair, Maggie Cunningham, has been appointed as the new Scotland Content Board member. Liz Leonard, formerly of BBC Scotland, has been appointed as Ofcom Scotland Advisory Committee Chair.

8. OOL

8.1 The Committee considered a presentation on BBC Content’s Out-of-London strategy, including consideration of the new Ofcom OOL quotas for Network TV. It was noted that the focus in Scotland is on strengthening the pipeline in Drama, Factual and Comedy.
9. AOB

9.1 There were no items of other business.