

BBC Trust

MINUTES OF THE BBC TRUST MEETING

Held on Saturday 10 November (1430 hrs)
By telephone conference

Present:	Lord Patten	Chairman
	Diane Coyle	Vice Chairman
	Sonita Alleyne	Trust member
	Richard Ayre	Trust member
	Anthony Fry	Trust member
	Alison Hastings	Trust member for England
	David Liddiment	Trust member
	Bill Matthews	Trust member for Scotland
	Aideen McGinley	Trust member for Northern Ireland
	Elan Closs Stephens	Trust member for Wales
	Suzanna Taverne	Trust member
	Lord Williams	Trust member

In attendance from the Trust Unit:

Nicholas Kroll	Director, BBC Trust
Alex Towers	Deputy Director, BBC Trust
Phil Harrold	Head of Governance
Fran O'Brien	Head of Editorial Standards
Peter de Val	Head of Legal
Hannah Bailey	Deputy Head of Communications

In attendance from the Executive:

George Entwistle	Director-General
Jessica Cecil	Chief of Staff, Director-General's office

I 46 NEWSNIGHT APOLOGY

- I 46.1 The Chairman thanked Trust members for making themselves available for an extraordinary meeting. The meeting had been called to discuss developments linked to the *Newsnight* report of Friday 2 November and the new revelations that had come to light on Friday 9 November.
- I 46.2 The Director-General explained that he had first become aware on the previous evening that allegations linked to a particular individual in the *Newsnight* report were without foundation, and he had immediately spoken to the Chairman. Since then he had taken various actions, including the establishment of an urgent review by BBC Scotland Director Ken MacQuarrie, due to report the following day.
- I 46.3 Trust members expressed their dismay at developments on the *Newsnight* report of 2 November and the apparent errors of journalistic practice and failures of communication that appeared to have led to the baseless report being broadcast. They urged the Director-General to take decisive, radical and rapid action in the light of the MacQuarrie report. In their view, serious issues of trust in the BBC had now arisen which went beyond the *Newsnight* programme itself. It was acknowledged that action was for the Executive, but Trust members regarded the situation as very serious.
- I 46.4 In response to concerns expressed by Trust members, the Director-General outlined his thinking on possible options that could follow the MacQuarrie report, depending on the final conclusions. If these did not go far enough to meet Trustees' demand for radical action, he indicated there was another option available which he would prefer to discuss with the Chairman privately.
- I 46.5 Trust members agreed that they would meet further with the Director-General the following afternoon, by when he would have received the MacQuarrie report and would be in a position to outline his planned action.
- I 46.6 The Director-General left the call.
- I 46.7 Trust members expressed concern that the Director-General could be directly implicated in the flawed *Newsnight* report, for example if he had failed to ensure that the *Newsnight* team was fully supported, or that the chain of command within BBC News was clear enough. It was clear to Trust members that the Director-General's authority had been severely dented by poor recent media performances and serious doubts were expressed about his ability to survive this crisis.
- I 46.8 Members agreed that the Director-General's response to the MacQuarrie report would be critical. In the event that the Director-General offered to resign, the Chairman stated that it would be unkind to dissuade him or to drag matters out.
- I 46.9 In concluding the call, Trust members discussed the Chairman's forthcoming appearance on *The Andrew Marr Show* on BBC One, scheduled for the following morning.