MINUTES OF THE BBC TRUST CONFERENCE

Held on Tuesday 2 and Wednesday 3 October 2007
at Durrants Hotel, George Street, London, W1H 5BJ

Present:
- Michael Lyons Chairman
- Diane Coyle Trust Member (141 only)
- Dermot Gleeson Trust Member
- Alison Hastings Trust Member for England
- Patricia Hodgson Trust Member (except 140)
- Rotha Johnston Trust Member for Northern Ireland
- Janet Lewis Jones Trust Member for Wales
- David Liddiment Trust Member
- Richard Tait Trust Member (except 140)

Apologies:
- Chitra Bharucha Vice Chairman
- Mehmuda Mian Pritchard Trust Member
- Jeremy Peat Trust Member for Scotland

In attendance from the Trust Unit:
- Nicholas Kroll Director, BBC Trust
- Sally Kendall Head of Secretariat and Governance (except 142)
- Phil Harrold Senior Adviser, Secretariat and Governance (except 142)
- Tina Stowell Head of Communications
- Fran O’Brien Head of Editorial Standards
- Christopher Woolard Head of Finance, Economics and Strategy
- Penny Young Head of Audiences
- Mark Wakefield Head of Performance
- Sarah Thane Independent Adviser to the Trust

For items:
- Mark Thompson Director-General
- Will Hutton Chief Executive, Work Foundation
- Kip Meek Managing Director, Ingenious Consulting
- Mark Byford Deputy Director-General
- Jessica Cecil Head of Director-General’s Office
AGENDA

140.  Review of Trust Operations

141.  Future of Public Service Broadcasting

142.  Editorial Issues: Update

143.  Delivering Creative Future: Six-Year Strategic Framework

144.  Trust Committees and Operation
The BBC Trust met over two days in October outside of its regular schedule of meetings to undertake a review of its operations and discuss issues of longer-term strategic importance.

Tuesday 2 October

140 REVIEW OF TRUST OPERATIONS

140.1 As part of its annual cycle of performance review members assessed the operation of the Trust and progress in implementing the structures and systems which underpin the model.

140.2 Members agreed that the Trust’s focus on evidence-based decision making and a greater understanding of audiences was delivering benefits for licence fee payers and the Corporation more generally. Members noted the importance of effective communications with the Executive Board, including the non executive directors.

140.3 The Trust agreed that the work it undertakes on behalf of licence fee payers should, where possible, provide measurable benefits and be as accessible and understandable as possible.

140.4 Members agreed that it was necessary for the Trust to extend its direct communication with licence fee payers over some aspects of its work. The Trust noted that the outcome of the Audience Engagement consultation – about how the public wanted the Trust to seek their views – was due for consideration at the next Trust meeting.

140.5 The Trust agreed that where possible, it needed to be able to demonstrate the value of its work to licence fee payers, and to this end documents needed to be accessible and easy to understand.

Wednesday 3 October

141 FUTURE OF PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

141.1 The Trust held a broad ranging discussion on the challenges and opportunities facing public service broadcasting.

141.2 The Trust agreed that as the principal public service broadcaster in the United Kingdom it was necessary for the BBC to have a clear view on the key issues within the public service broadcasting debate.

141.3 Members agreed that the Trust was in a unique position to lead an open discussion with licence fee payers, other broadcasters and stakeholders on many of the key issues.

141.4 As one part of the discussion the Trust welcomed some external perspective from two invited guests, Mr Kip Meek and Mr Will Hutton. Mr Meek and Mr Hutton presented to the Trust on the trends and challenges confronting public
service broadcasting in the short- to medium-term.

141.5 Members noted the terms of reference for the Ofcom review into public service broadcasting and agreed that many of the areas covered by this review were also of interest to the Trust. It was agreed that further work should be undertaken by the Trust Unit to develop a strategy for engagement with the Ofcom review, and more broadly participate in the debate regarding public service broadcasting in the UK.

142 EDITORIAL ISSUES: UPDATE

142.1 The Director-General updated members on the emerging conclusions of the inquiry by Will Wyatt into the events surrounding footage shown at a press launch for the BBC One Autumn season relating to Her Majesty the Queen.

142.2 The Trust discussed the draft findings and recommendations with the Director-General and the Deputy Director-General.

142.3 Members noted that the findings and recommendations would be finalised later that week and that the Director-General planned to publish them as soon as possible following finalisation. The Director-General explained that the Executive would accept the recommendations in full and outlined his proposed actions which would also be published on the same day.

142.4 Members agreed that before the proposed publication the Chairman and the chair of the Editorial Standards Committee would consider the finalised report with the Director-General. It was agreed that the Trust would make a short statement following publication. It also agreed that the Trust’s Editorial Standards Committee would review the final report at its next meeting.

143 DELIVERING CREATIVE FUTURE: SIX-YEAR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

143.1 Members reviewed progress to date on developing the final conclusions of the Strategic Framework.

143.2 The Trust agreed areas where further information was required from the Executive. These included: impact of the changes by genre; impact on the Nations and a strategy for mitigating any negative consequences; and further clarity on the initiatives outlined in Building Public Value that would no longer be progressed. It was agreed that these issues would be considered when the final Strategic Framework was presented to the Trust for approval at its 17 October meeting.

143.3 It was agreed that the emerging conclusions should appropriately safeguard the core values of the BBC at a time of accelerating change.

143.4 Members noted the importance of clearly communicating the approach the Trust
took in assessing the Executive’s proposals.

144 TRUST COMMITTEES AND OPERATION

144.1 The Trust reviewed the operation of its committee structure and support.

144.2 The Trust approved the continuation of the committee structure for the remainder of the year and agreed minor amendments to the terms of reference for each committee. Amended terms of reference would be published on the Trust’s website. Members requested that the Trust Unit continue to ensure that the Trust’s processes were as simple as possible whilst still enabling delivery of the requirements contained within the Charter and Agreement. They agreed in principle to merging the work of some committees in 2008 should this be possible.

144.3 The Trust agreed that it would continue to seek its European policy advice from the BBC’s Head of European and International Policy, who would advise the Trust separately from the Executive under a formal agreement. The Trust also agreed that the BBC’s Group General Counsel would continue as its primary legal adviser on pan-BBC matters. The Trust would also continue to use independent legal advisers when conducting its regulatory responsibilities. Members requested that the Trust Unit provide a proposal to the Finance and Strategy Committee on cost effective methods for such independent legal advice, including the possibility of some element of in-house provision.

144.4 It was also agreed that the Trust should regularly review its performance and that a formal performance review process would be undertaken annually and reported in the Corporation’s Annual Report and Accounts.