MINUTES OF AUDIENCE COUNCIL NORTHERN IRELAND MEETING

Held on Friday, 15 February 2013
Broadcasting House, Belfast

Present:
Aideen McGinley  National Trustee and Chair, ACNI
Elaine Hicks  ACNI member
Richard Hill  ACNI member
Aidan Langan  ACNI member
Steven Law  ACNI member
Niall McCaughan  ACNI member

Items 4-16
Paul McMenemy  ACNI member
Paul Mullan  ACNI member
Beverley Todd  ACNI member
Mahendra Varma  ACNI member

Apologies:
Mark Glover  ACNI member
Joan Shine  ACNI member

In attendance from the Trust Unit:
Phil Harrold  Head of Governance
Carrie Matchett  Chief Adviser, Northern Ireland
Anna Kealey  Analyst, Strategy
Jhoanna Sto. Domingo  Team Assistant and PA to National Trustee for Northern Ireland

From the Executive:
Item 10  Stephen Wright  Head of Drama, BBC Northern Ireland
Items 10-16  Peter Johnston  Director, BBC Northern Ireland
Items 10-16  Mark Adair  Head of Corporate and Community Affairs, BBC Northern Ireland
Items 10-16  Kathleen Carragher  Head of News and Current Affairs, BBC Northern Ireland
1 **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

1.1 The National Trustee, Aideen McGinley, welcomed Council to the meeting. She also welcomed Phil Harrold, Head of Governance, and Anna Kealey, Performance Analyst, BBC Trust.

1.2 The National Trustee noted apologies from Mark Glover and Joan Shine.

2 **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

2.1 The Council approved the minutes of its meeting on 14 December as an accurate record of proceedings.

2.2 There were no matters arising.

3 **PAPER FOR NOTING**

3.1 **Chief Adviser’s Report:** Council noted the Chief Adviser’s report. Carrie Matchett drew attention to the recruitment drive for new members which would be widely publicised. She asked Council members to help to raise awareness of the opportunity through their own networks.

4 **NATIONAL TRUSTEE REPORT**

4.1 The National Trustee updated Council on Trust and Audience Council business since Council’s December meeting.

**Audience Councils’ Day:** Aideen McGinley thanked Elaine Hicks, Paul Mullan and Mahendra Varma for representing Audience Council Northern Ireland at the annual meeting of the four Audience Councils with the BBC Trust.

Representatives agreed that this had been a very useful opportunity to engage the whole Trust in discussion about issues of importance to audiences around the UK.

**The Pollard Review:** The National Trustee informed Council that the evidence for the Pollard Review was due to be published soon.

**George Entwistle Severance package:** Aideen McGinley noted that the Trust had agreed, based on legal advice, that there were no grounds for seeking recovery of some of former Director-General, George Entwistle’s, severance package. The Trust had published its response to the Public Accounts Committee report on the package, and this included a recommendation that the National Audit Office carry out a comprehensive review of severance payments across the BBC.

**Sexual harassment review:** The National Trustee reported that the Trust had
received an interim report on the BBC Executive review on sexual harassment and bullying, child protection and whistle blowing. She noted that the full report was expected in March 2013.

**Service reviews:** The Trust had announced that in 2013/14 it would review BBC television and network news, as part of its rolling programme of service reviews.

It was agreed that ACNI would form two subcommittees to take forward its work for these reviews.

**Review of distribution:** The National Trustee noted that a value for money review of BBC distribution had been announced by the Trust. The BBC spends a significant amount of its licence fee income on distribution, with added cost and complexity because of the need to support both new and legacy channels. The review would seek to ensure that the corporation made best use of its resources and secured value for money in meeting its obligations to audiences.

**Director-General:** The Trust had met with Tony Hall, the incoming Director-General, who would take up his appointment on 2 April. Aideen McGinley noted the changes that Tony Hall had announced to his senior team.

**Television network supply:** The National Trustee noted that concerns around the progress of the BBC’s TV Network Supply Strategy in Northern Ireland had been raised at the Trust, particularly in regard to the aim of contributing to a sustainable creative centre in this part of the UK. She informed Council that she would meet with members of the Executive within BBC Vision and BBC NI to discuss this. The National Trustee continued to engage directly with stakeholders in the creative industries, meeting most recently with the CEO of NI Screen.

The Council welcomed the Trust’s focus on TV network supply from Northern Ireland, noting the quality of the programmes produced in Northern Ireland and the importance of developing a sustainable creative centre.

5

**BBC TRUST SERVICE REVIEW: CHILDREN’S SERVICES AUDIENCE COUNCIL ADVICE TO THE TRUST**

5.1 The National Trustee thanked Council and, in particular, the subcommittee of Beverley Todd, Joan Shine and Paul McMenemy, for their work on the review of CBBC and CBeebies.

5.2 She summarised feedback from her discussions with stakeholders, working with or on behalf of children, on 17 December.

5.3 Beverley Todd introduced the draft submission to the Trust service review, drawing Council’s attention to main themes. The Chief Adviser, Carrie Matchett updated Council on the recent engagement event with parents of primary children in Moira, Co Armagh, so that feedback could be incorporated into the final submission.
5.4 Council discussed the draft submission, drawing on the range of audience engagement activities and discussions with networks. It agreed the submission with minor amendments.

6 IMPARTIALITY REVIEW: BREADTH OF OPINION AUDIENCE COUNCIL ADVICE TO THE TRUST

6.1 Council discussed the paper and raised a number of additional themes as well as further developing others. It was agreed that a summary of its informal advice would be prepared and fed into the Trust Impartiality Review project.

6.2 It was also agreed that the National Trustee would seek a meeting with the author of the impartiality review report, Stuart Prebble, to discuss further the themes which Council had raised on behalf of local audiences.

7 AUDIENCE COUNCIL BUSINESS PLANNING 2013/14

7.1 Chief Adviser NI, Carrie Matchett, gave a presentation on the Council’s business plan for 2013/14. It was agreed that further updates and detail would be provided in future meetings.

8 HOW THE TRUST ASSESSES BBC PERFORMANCE

8.1 Anna Kealey, Performance Analyst for the Trust, gave a presentation explaining how the Trust measures BBC performance. She described how contribution to the BBC’s Public Purposes was supported by the four drivers of public value—quality, reach, impact and value for money—and how these form the BBC’s framework for measuring performance. Anna Kealey outlined the various performance measurement tools available to the Trust, including industry standard tools, BBC management’s performance tools and bespoke BBC Trust research. She gave an overview of BBC performance in the different nations of the UK, with a particular focus on Northern Ireland. Anna Kealey completed her presentation with some case studies illustrating consumption patterns for BBC services in Northern Ireland.

8.2 Anna Kealey responded to a number of questions from Council relating to the different mechanisms for measuring BBC performance. She also provided a more detailed information pack to Council members for reference.

8.3 The National Trustee noted the importance of this solid evidence base in informing Council’s assessment of BBC performance in Northern Ireland.

9 ASSESSMENT OF BBC PERFORMANCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

9.1 Issues were raised under Item 14.
10 BBC NORTHERN IRELAND DRAMA

10.1 The National Trustee welcomed BBC NI management to the meeting.

10.2 Stephen Wright, Head of Drama, BBC NI, updated Council on the work of the BBC NI Drama department. He provided an overview of television output for the BBC’s networks, noting those dramas which would contribute to a broader portrayal of Northern Ireland for a UK-wide audience. Upcoming, locally produced television dramas include *The Fall*, *Line of Duty Series 2* and *Jamaica Inn*, all of which would or were to be filmed in Northern Ireland.

10.3 Stephen Wright explained BBC NI Drama department’s commitment to nurturing new writers and his ambition to develop new talent for network commissions. He talked about several initiatives that were underway to develop new talent in writing, as well as in a range of production roles.

10.4 Stephen Wright also described his department’s programming for network radio, including upcoming dramas by established and emerging writing talent. *The Barrytown Trilogy* and *Neverwhere* (both of which will begin transmission shortly) are series of significant scale and editorial ambition.

10.5 Council noted the range and quality of BBC NI’s drama output and its focus on nurturing new talent for the BBC’s networks. Members asked the Head of Drama about talent spotting outside Belfast, the broader portrayal of Northern Ireland on the BBC’s networks, and strategies to develop the production skills base in Northern Ireland.

11 DIRECTOR, BBC NORTHERN IRELAND’S REPORT (INCLUDING UPDATE ON CITY OF CULTURE)

11.1 The Director, Northern Ireland, introduced his report. Main themes included:

**NUJ strike:** The National Union of Journalists had informed the BBC of a UK-wide one day strike on Monday 18 February, as well as an ongoing work to rule. The strike was expected to affect news programming at local and network level.

**Industry awards:** *Sean Quinn’s Missing Millions* had won Best Current Affairs programme at the Irish Film and Television Awards. Donna Traynor and *Spotlight* had also received RTS nominations.

**Senior management:** Peter Johnston had briefed incoming Director-General, Tony Hall, on issues relating to BBC Northern Ireland. Acting Director-General, Tim Davie, and Chief Operating Officer, Zarin Patel, had visited Belfast on 25 January and taken part in a range of internal and external meetings.

**Digital One:** Digital One had applied to Ofcom to extend its DAB radio multiplex into Northern Ireland.
Stephen Nolan Show: The Director, NI reported that The Nolan Show on 16 January 2013 had attracted some press and audience reaction about the felt imbalance of the programme’s studio audience. He described the particular circumstances surrounding this recording and how the BBC had dealt with audience complaints.

11.2 The BBC and UK City of Culture

The Director, Northern Ireland outlined the BBC’s plans for programmes connected with UK City of Culture 2013.

The Sons and Daughters opening concert had been very successful on BBC NI television, Radio Ulster/Foyle and the red button. A diverse range of commissions have been made for local television. These will showcase the city and its history, culture and community events. City of Culture themes and events will also have prominence in the Radio Ulster/Foyle schedule and will be fully reflected on BBC NI News.

Peter Johnston said that several programme commissions had now been confirmed for BBC network radio and television. In May, the major event for the BBC would be Radio 1’s One Big Weekend, which would be extended over three days. It will be accompanied by BBC learning and outreach activities and BBC News School Report will come from the City in late March 2013.

11.3 The National Trustee welcomed this example of cultural leadership from the BBC, in line with its Public Purpose to stimulate creativity and cultural excellence. Council welcomed the range of network and local programmes and initiatives to reflect the creativity being showcased at the City of Culture. Members emphasised the importance of the BBC bringing this content to the BBC’s local and network audiences.

11.4 The National Trustee informed Council that Mike Edgar, Head of Events and Entertainment for BBC NI, would join them for further informal discussion about UK City of Culture after the meeting.

12 QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS REPORT

12.1 Council noted the report.

13 BBC INFORMATION AUDIENCE FEEDBACK REPORTS

13.1 Council noted the reports for December 2012 and January 2013.

13.2 Mark Adair, Head of Corporate and Community Affairs BBC NI, updated Council on key issues emerging out of local audience complaints.
COUNCIL FEEDBACK ON BBC PERFORMANCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Council provided feedback on BBC performance in Northern Ireland.

The Nolan Show: Council asked BBC NI management about The Nolan Show on 16 January, and the mechanisms for selecting studio audiences.

There was also discussion about the BBC’s news and current affairs coverage of the flag protests in Northern Ireland, at both network and local level.

The Arts Show: Council welcomed the new monthly arts programme and its contribution to serious coverage of arts and culture for audiences in Northern Ireland.

Father Brown: There was praise for this daytime drama. Council was pleased to note that this was one outcome of the strategy to develop more challenging content for daytime audiences. Members considered that there would be value in an evening repeat to reach a different audience.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Audience Council will be extended and will focus on Council’s annual assessment for the Trust of BBC performance in Northern Ireland. Council will meet from 1930–2200 on Thursday 21 March, and from 0930 to 1400 on Friday 22 March.