CONFIRMED
Minutes of Audience Council NI Meeting
15 October 2010
Broadcasting House, Belfast

Present:

BBC Audience Council for NI
Rotha Johnston, National Trustee and Chair, BBC Audience Council NI (For Items 110 - 121)
Doreen Bell
Amanda Faloone
Mark Glover
Niall McCaughan
Grainne McClean
Paul McMenemey (For items 114 - 123)
Alan Meban
Paul Mullan

BBC Trust Unit
Carrie Matchett, Head of Governance and Accountability NI
Trish Davey, Accountability Manager NI

BBC Representatives
Peter Johnston, Director, BBC NI (Items 118 - 123)
Andrew Colman, Head of News and Current Affairs, BBC NI (Items 118 - 123)
Ailsa Orr, Head of Programmes, BBC NI (Items 118 - 123)
Jane Cassidy, Managing Editor, Learning, Language and Social Action (Items 118 - 119)

Apologies:

Patricia Connolly, Audience Council NI
Elaine Hicks, Audience Council NI
Angela Matthews, Audience Council NI
Mark Adair, Head of Corporate and Community Affairs, BBC NI
110. Welcome and Apologies

110.1 The National Trustee welcomed Council members to the meeting. She conveyed apologies from Patricia Connolly, Elaine Hicks and Angela Matthews of the Audience Council and from Mark Adair, Head of Corporate and Community Affairs, BBC NI.

111. Minutes of Council Meeting on 10 September 2010

111.1 The minutes of Council’s meeting on 10 September were agreed.

112. Matters Arising

112.1 The Head of Governance and Accountability updated Council on actions from the previous meeting.

113. Papers for Noting

113.1 Council noted the following papers:

- 4.1 Council’s submission to the Trust Review of Radio 3, Radio 4 and Radio 7
- 4.2 Quarterly Audience Insight report April - June 2010
- 4.3 Head of Governance and Accountability’s Report
- 4.4 Dates of Audience Councils Meetings in 2011

114. National Trustee’s Report

114.1 The National Trustee updated Council on the following Trust developments:

**Strategy Review:** The Trust’s discussions on Strategy Review were ongoing. Final conclusions were expected to be published in November.

**Nations Radio Service Review:** The Trust had agreed the terms of reference for the review and the consultation had opened on 11 October. The National Trustee reported that a trail for the consultation was being broadcast on BBC Northern Ireland television, BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle and bbc.co.uk/ni. The National Trustee had taken part in interviews about the consultation on Radio Ulster and Radio Foyle and there was further promotion through press releases and Council’s website and e-newsletter.

**Editorial Guidelines:** The Trust had published the revised editorial guidelines for the BBC.
**National Trustee for Wales:** The government had announced the appointment of Professor Elan Closs Stephens as the new National Trustee for Wales. It had also announced that the position of Vice-Chairman of the Trust would not be filled until the next Chairman of the Trust had been appointed.

114.2 The National Trustee reported relevant Executive developments:

**BBC Executive Board:** The BBC had announced changes to its Executive Board as part of plans to simplify structures, reduce the senior management pay bill and deliver value for money.

**LGB Consultation:** The BBC Executive had reported its findings on the LGB consultation. The National Trustee had written to representatives of LGBT groups which had contributed to Council's work on portrayal in 2009.

114.3 The National Trustee updated Council on recent stakeholder meetings and communications on behalf of the Trust and/or Audience Council.

**Business Leaders Meeting:** The National Trustee and Director, BBC NI had met with a number of senior business representatives to discuss the BBC's coverage of business and the economy. The National Trustee summarised the main themes of the discussion and thanked Council members who had attended as observers.

**Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure:** The National Trustee reported that she had met with the Permanent Secretary for the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to discuss issues of mutual interest.

114.4 **Head of Governance and Accountability:** The National Trustee reported that this post would be advertised as a 12-month contract to cover Carrie Matchett’s career break in 2011.

**115. Joint Audience Councils Conference**

115.1 The National Trustee thanked the six members who had agreed to represent Audience Council Northern Ireland at this conference.

115.2 Council received an oral update from the subcommittee which had met to prepare for the conference sessions on BBC performance against the Public Purposes. It agreed the main themes it would wish to raise with regard to the purpose for Sustaining Citizenship and Civil Society.

115.3 Council discussed the main themes it would wish to be discussed at the conference session on the remaining Public Purposes.
116. **Audience Research and Engagement and Subcommittee Update**

116.1 The Head of Governance and Accountability briefly summarised the impact of the Council's e-newsletter and register of interest in Trust consultations. These continued to be useful tools alongside the range of other methods of engaging with audiences.

116.2 The National Trustee thanked members for their contributions to recent events with the audience. These included a small group discussion event on BBC radio in Belfast as well as engagement with visitors to Broadcasting House on Ulster Heritage Day.

116.3 The Head of Governance and Accountability summarised forward audience engagement plans. These included a discussion event focusing on BBC radio Ulster/Foyle in Magherafelt, engagement with audiences at the Making Connections Radio Festival and a meeting with Engage with Age, South Belfast.

116.4 Council discussed the Guidance for Audience Councils for the Radio Ulster/Foyle Service Review. It agreed to give further consideration to the performance data and key questions of interest when developing its advice to the Trust for this review.

117. **Assessment of BBC Performance in Northern Ireland**

117.1 Council expressed its interest in the impact of the editorial changes for BBC Foyle and agreed to consider this again at its December meeting.

117.2 Council noted a number of instances where BBC network reporting could have benefited from improved labelling and contextualisation with regard to the devolved nations, in line with the recommendations of the King Report.

118. **Director, BBC Northern Ireland’s Report**

118.1 The National Trustee welcomed Peter Johnston, Director, BBC NI, to the meeting along with his colleagues Ailsa Orr, Head of Programmes; Andrew Colman, Head of News and Current Affairs, and Jane Cassidy, Managing Editor, Learning, Language and Social Action.

118.2 The National Trustee invited Director, BBC NI to introduce his report to Council.

Peter Johnston paid tribute to Jim Dougal, former Political Correspondent for BBC NI, who died on 15 October. The National Trustee expressed condolences on behalf of Council.

Director, BBC NI introduced his report to Council, noting the following:
**BBC Executive Board:** Changes to the structure of the BBC Executive Board had been announced. From April 2001, Director, BBC NI would report to the Director General.

**Belfast Media Festival:** Peter Johnston updated Council on the positive impact of the festival, organised in conjunction with the BBC Academy and other partners for the wider creative industries in Northern Ireland.

**BBC NI Drama:** The Director, BBC NI updated Council on developments in BBC Northern Ireland drama, including progress on network commissions and a useful visit from the Controller of Network Drama Commissioning. He reported acting up arrangements while the Head of Drama post remained vacant.

**Sunday AM Live:** This network TV production from BBC Northern Ireland had been recommissioned. The new series was due for broadcasting the second half of 2011.

**Transmission failure:** On 5 October a transmission failure meant that for a time Freeview viewers received network rather than local programmes, affecting the transmission of BBC Northern Ireland’s In Cold Blood. Arrangements had been made to repeat the local opt for those who had missed it, and an investigation into the transmission problem was underway.

**Stormont Today:** Stormont Today had a new format and slot in the schedule after Newsnight on BBC TWO.

**Head of News and Current Affairs BBC NI:** Peter Johnston reported that Andrew Colman had decided to step down as Head of News and Current Affairs BBC NI. He paid tribute to Andrew’s considerable contribution to news broadcasting in Northern Ireland over many years and the strong legacy which he had left behind.

The National Trustee thanked Andrew for his significant contribution to news reporting, noting the value to local audiences and to wider society.

119. **BBC NI Learning, Languages and Social Action**

119.1 Jane Cassidy, Managing Editor, Learning, Language and Social Action, briefed Council on the work of her department. She provided an overview of learning provision for different sections of the audience including children, teens and adults through programmes, online content and campaigns. She highlighted the main themes of the new BBC Learning Strategy, announced in September 2010.

Jane Cassidy went on to describe current and forthcoming language provision in Irish, Ulster-Scots and Cantonese. She reported progress on delivery of content subjects in Irish, originally prepared for BBC jam and approved by the Trust for
release. She reported that six content subjects had been delivered and a further four were being progressed.

119.2 The National Trustee invited comments and questions from Council. The following points were raised:

There was discussion about the new Learning Strategy. Council was interested to understand how Learning would work with other services, such as major television brands and Children’s services.

Council asked why formal schools programming on Radio Ulster had been discontinued. Jane Cassidy explained that demand for radio content had declined significantly with schools preferring to access content on demand, for instance, online or by building a library of recordings. She noted that schools could still avail of the fulfilment service for recordings of previously broadcast radio programmes. BBC Northern Ireland continued to produce audio content as part of its range of curriculum focused assets which also included text, video, photography and interactive content.

Council noted the intention under Strategy Review to discontinue the BBC Blast service for teenagers. It wished to understand how this section of the audience might be better served in other ways and what local resource allocation would be available to support this.

Council asked how BBC Northern Ireland ensured that learning content was developed in line with the local curriculum. Jane Cassidy responded that the Educational Broadcasting Council provided professional guidance and the department also used mechanisms such as user testing with children.

Council expressed its interest in plans for provision for Irish and Ulster-Scots content post March 2011 when the current Trust-approved programme of investment would end. The National Trustee asked BBC NI management to provide details of plans.

**Action: BBC Northern Ireland management**

The National Trustee thanked Jane Cassidy for her informative briefing.

120. **BBC Information Audience Feedback reports**

120.1 Council noted the reports for May, June, July and September.

120.2 Council had expressed an interest in the process and turnaround times for complaints handled directly by BBC Northern Ireland. Peter Johnston noted that Mark Adair, Head of Corporate and Community Affairs, had written to senior editorial staff to remind them of the process for logging complaints. The National
Trustee asked for an update on reporting of these complaints at the next meeting of Council.

**Action: BBC Northern Ireland management**

The National Trustee, Rotha Johnston, left the meeting. Grainne McClean assumed the role of Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

**121. Audience Council Feedback on BBC Performance in NI**

121.1 No issues were raised.

**122. Any Other Business**

122.1 No further issues were raised.

**123. Date of Next Meeting**

123.1 The next meeting of the Audience Council will be on Friday, 12 November in Broadcasting House, Belfast.