Meeting of the BBC Northern Ireland Committee
MINUTES

Thursday 30th June 2026

BBC Broadcasting House, Belfast

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Chair's introduction
2. Savings and Finance Update
3. Director Northern Ireland report
4. Interim Director Nations update
5. Sport Production - Priorities and Challenges
6. Audiences
7. BBC Board visit to Belfast
8. Belfast Transformation Project
9. AOB

ATTENDANCE

Members:

- Michael Smyth, Non-executive Director, Member for Northern Ireland (Chair)
- Caroline Thomson, Non-Executive Director
- Adam Smyth, Director, BBC Northern Ireland
- Rhuanedd Richards, Interim Director, BBC Nations

With:

Mark Adair	Head of Corporate Affairs & Public Policy
Mark Truesdale	Senior Finance Business Partner *(for item 2)*
Samantha Sing	Finance Director *(for item 2)*
Neil Brittain	Head of Sport (*for item 5*)
Lesley Farquharson	Head of Audience Research *(for item 6)*
Mervyn Middleby	Business Operations Director *(for item 8)*
Non Tudur Williams	Executive Lead, Nations *(secretary)*

Apologies:

Fiona Campbell, Commissioning Director, Unscripted

1. Chair's Introduction

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2 The next meeting of the Northern Ireland Committee will be held on 20th October.

2. **Finance and Savings update**

2.1 The Committee noted the finance report which outlined the 25/26 financial position.

2.1 The Committee heard that the BBC has a significant savings challenge with Northern Ireland having been set a target of savings. The Chair noted the considerable scale and significant challenge of these savings.

2.2 The Committee discussed the recent savings announcement in this context. A voluntary redundancy scheme is now open as part of wider BBC Nations and Local savings plans.

2.3 The Finance Business Partner outlined potential areas of savings, with further detail to be developed. Tributes were paid to the team for their efforts thus far.

3. Director Northern Ireland update

3.1 The Director of BBC Northern Ireland gave an update on a very busy period for teams including a number of high-profile news stories which have garnered attention across the UK.

3.2 It was noted that there was considerable audience interest in the recent BBC Spotlight programme following the guilty verdict in the Jeffrey Donaldson trial along with digital and linear coverage of the case.

3.3 The Committee also noted the recent new series *Peelers* has engaged new audiences while *Springwatch* has also proved popular.

3.4 The Director updated on the BBC's potential use of a new studio space as part of Belfast Stories development.

3.5 It was noted that Rhona Burns, Finance Director would chair a proposed BBC/Ulster Orchestra Partnership Board, which was welcomed by the Committee. The Chair noted his thanks to everyone working on the new partnership initiative with the Ulster Orchestra.

4. Nations Director update

4.1 The Committee welcomed the recent announcement that the BBC has extended the deal to secure international football rights to include the UEFA 2028 men's qualifiers and paid tribute to negotiating team.

4.2 The impact of savings on budgets across Nations, News and Content as announced recently was noted, including for the BBC's work with the local independent sector. The Director, Nations, working with the Chief Content Officer, has written to independent producers with an online briefing session for the sector due in July.

4.3 It was noted that the CEO of Northern Ireland Screen is leaving his post. The Committee recognised the importance of the BBC's relationship with NI Screen and Richard Williams' contribution to local screen industries.

4.4 It was noted that following the appointment of Rhodri Talfan Davies as Deputy Director-General, Rhuanedd Richards would continue as Director, Nations for a further period.

5 Sport – priorities and challenges

5.1 The Head of Sport updated the Committee on the recent slate of Northern Ireland sport on the BBC and reflected on the breadth and reach of local sports output.

5.2 The Committee noted how the department has adapted over recent years to ensure the audience is served content on platforms of their choosing. He outlined recent content on and off BBC platforms.

5.3 The Chair asked for the Committee's thanks to the Head of Sport and his team be put on record.

6. Audiences

6.1 The Committee reviewed the latest audience figures for BBC Northern Ireland.

7.Board visit

7.1 It was noted that the BBC Board will be visiting Belfast in the autumn. Outline activities for the visit were discussed.

8. Property update

8.1 The Committee noted the development of the property strategy in NI and in particular the transformation of Broadcasting House, Belfast which remained on schedule. The Committee thanked Mervyn Middleby and his team for his comprehensive update and excellent work on the project.

9.AOB

9.1 The Non-Executive Director, Caroline Thompson asked for an update on Charter-related issues and developments as these relate to the BBC's work in Northern Ireland, and a brief discussion ensued.

9.2 There was no further business.