



HOUSE OF COMMONS

# Culture, Media and Sport Committee

## Oral evidence: The work of the BBC, HC 331

Tuesday 9 September 2025

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Culture, Media and Sport Committee members present: Dame Caroline Dinenage (Chair); Mr Bayo Alaba; Mr James Frith; Damian Hinds; Dr Rupa Huq; Liz Jarvis; Jo Platt; Tom Rutland; Paul Waugh.

Public Accounts Committee member present: Chris Kane.

Questions 99-216

### Witnesses

I: Tim Davie CBE, Director General, BBC, and Dr Samir Shah CBE, Chair, BBC.



## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Tim Davie and Dr Samir Shah.

Q99 **Chair:** Welcome to this morning's meeting of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee on the work of the BBC. Before we begin, a reminder that Members need to declare any interests before they ask their questions.

Today we are joined by Dr Samir Shah, the chair of the BBC, and by the director general, Tim Davie. You are both welcome. Thank you very much for joining us today. We last had you both in front of us in March of this year, when we spent much of the session talking about your handling of the BBC's coverage of Gaza and the middle east, your approach to impartiality, and the need for some urgent improvements in the workplace culture of the BBC, which I know you have spoken a lot about, Dr Shah. We heard a lot of the right words from you both back in March about the changes that needed to happen, but I think we can all agree that it has been a fairly bumpy summer. By July, that sense of crisis that seemed to hang over the BBC was growing again, with the findings of the review into the documentary "Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone", the results of the Lewis Silkin investigation into Gregg Wallace and Banijay, and the BBC's livestreaming of Glastonbury. So, today, as well as warm words, what we really want to hear from you is clarity and decisiveness about the action and the accountability that the BBC is going to deliver moving forward.

Mr Davie, I want to start the questions with you. I have barely had a conversation with anybody about the BBC this summer, whether with the media or with my constituents, that did not start with me being asked, "Should Tim Davie resign?" How much has that been on your mind this summer?

**Tim Davie:** Inevitably, this job—I have said this before—is not for the fainthearted. What has been in my mind this summer has been dealing with the issues; delivering the quality broadcasting we deliver day in, day out; getting a grip on some of the issues that you have referred to in your opening remarks, which are serious and which we have had to deal with; and ensuring that the BBC, to your point, is taking the right actions. I have been totally focused on that. For what it is worth, while dealing with those issues, I have also never been more passionate about public service broadcasting, our need for it, and the need for the BBC.

Clearly, the issues you refer to are very serious—they need management, they need grip—but I have also been focused on ensuring, day in, day out, that we deliver, for audiences paying the licence fee, great value from the BBC. That is what I have been focused on.

Q100 **Chair:** Even someone of your expertise and experience in the heat of the BBC must have been feeling the pressure this summer?

**Tim Davie:** If I said I was not feeling the pressure, I think I would be inhuman. In public life, public accountability is absolutely appropriate for people like myself. We have seen it in politics, and we have seen it in



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other areas of life. When you are in these public jobs, you should be held accountable—absolutely. I feel that; I know the top team at the BBC take it very seriously. We want to grip the issues, and that is absolutely at the forefront of our minds. We are accountable.

With regard to my position, that is one thing that is not in my gift. Look, the BBC is at the centre of national life and has never been more important or more needed, in my view. My job is to make the right decisions, get a grip and, when we make a mistake, be very transparent about it. If I may, one of the things we should celebrate is the fact that we have a free press, unrestricted. Even within the BBC, I often have pretty tough interviews, quite rightly, from BBC News. That process is really important.

My focus has been on navigating that through and just making the right decisions as a leader, with my top team and the rest of the very good staff across the BBC, of whom thousands are doing flawless work, day in, day out, and we should be very proud of them.

**Q101 Chair:** You have spoken to us a lot, in March and previously, about the work that is going on to try to change the workplace culture at the BBC. You said just a second ago that a lot of your summer was spent focusing on the changes that you want to see. Can you give us your categorical assurance today that, whenever we next have you in front of us, there will not be a scandal of BBC talent abusing their position which you need to apologise for?

**Tim Davie:** First, I think we are at an incredibly important point for the industry. Many of the issues that have come out have been historical, and some more recent, but we have talked about it. I take your comments that words are cheap. The issue is, what actions and what culture are we delivering on the ground in the BBC? I cannot remember exactly when we last met, but what I would say is that, over the last months, if you look at the actions that we have actually put in place on the Respect at Work review, I think we are at a moment where we are beginning to reset the industry.

There are very specific things that I can do, Chair, in terms of the actions and grip we have taken, to do that, with the learnings we have had from these historical cases where we have had to act. I can go through the report—if you look at the Respect at Work review—and we are implementing those rigorously, whether it is being very clear about the expectations we set when everyone arrives at the BBC, or making sure that our respond team joins up. With some of the cases we have had—this goes back quite a long way—we have not historically joined up all the information we have had, but that is absolutely gripped now.

Can I give a categorical assurance that I am never going to have someone abusing their power in the BBC, and that we do not face issues? No. Because culture is an ongoing work in all organisations. Even this week, with the work that we have seen in the legal profession and others, I think we are at a moment in society where—you will have heard our campaign—



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we are literally calling it out, flushing out the issues, dealing with them and being very transparent about that. As an organisation, we happen to be in the public eye and have high-profile individuals, and that causes an enormous amount of understandable interest and appropriate accountability. I think that the BBC needs to be at the forefront of it.

My last point, Chair—and I know you have spoken about this—is that I think it is really important that the BBC leads by example, but we have also had issues within independent companies. There are about 23,000 people in the BBC, but if you get all the freelancers working, you have risks with third-party companies. We have seen that in a number of our issues. We need to support bodies, like CIISA, that are now emerging; that is critical. We now have a process. I think things have changed since we last talked to the Committee. We are seeing people call it out, and that is a positive change. But it is ongoing work; I do not think you can change culture in six months and suddenly say, “Nothing’s going to occur.” We may see more things coming out because, in some ways, I am asking for it and being utterly transparent and running towards the problem—that is what we need to do.

**Dr Shah:** To add to that, as the Committee knows, I personally, and the board, are very committed to changing the working culture at the BBC. I would say that, in my first 18 months here, abuses of power have been in the headlines a great deal. As you know, we commissioned a review into it, which published in April. There were a lot of action points there, and I was very keen that they were actionable and would actually have an impact on the ground. I think that Tim and his team have responded extremely well.

In my view, there are two things. First, is it working? That is really the question. Does this actually work? I can tell the Committee that there have been very serious disciplinary actions, including dismissals, as a result of people calling this out. I think that is a system working, and some of the cases that you are talking about are actually a result of that, which is very good.

I have monthly lunch meetings with junior staff just to find out what the BBC feels like from their point of view. At each one since we announced it, they have discussed this and raised it. Very interestingly, they do feel that there is a real commitment from the top to call out bad behaviour in the workplace. I think that is good; I think it is good that they should feel that. One of the things that the review pointed out was that junior staff are kind of reluctant to speak out, because they are worried about their careers. I think that is a really big problem. So to have junior staff speak to me and say they now feel able to speak out is good. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. It is changing.

My view is that it does not matter how many policies and practices you put in place, you will never fully eliminate human misbehaviour. So, to your last point, I suspect—as Tim pointed out in a way—that this is evidence of the system actually doing its job. People will call people out, and because it is the BBC, if it is somebody famous, it will become news. But the way I



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would look at it, and the board would look at it, is that, finally, we are getting to grips with this; we are actually taking action. You should not underestimate the impact of that on the staff. Quite often people have said, “We raise it but nothing happens, so what is the point of raising it?” So it is really quite important that things do happen. And things happen that are not high profile—none of them have become high profile; they are just ordinary people.

**Q102 Mr Frith:** Good morning, gentlemen. Just on that point, it is great that Call It Out is taking hold. Are you currently, as we sit here now, aware of any emerging or brewing issues that are of an equivalent level of profile to those that we have sat and observed and scrutinised in recent times?

**Tim Davie:** I wouldn't comment on individual cases. We have a whistleblowing process. We have a respond team that are fantastic.

**Q103 Mr Frith:** Keeping anonymity, which I respect, are you aware of any—

**Tim Davie:** I do not think it is appropriate for me to talk about allegations that may or may not be coming to the respond team before they have been investigated properly.

**Q104 Paul Waugh:** Can you tell us how many you have got?

**Tim Davie:** All I would say—no.

**Paul Waugh:** Why not?

**Tim Davie:** In terms of—I think that is—

**Paul Waugh:** We need to know the scale of this problem and whether it still exists.

**Tim Davie:** Bear with me. Absolutely, you do. That is why, in the annual report, we publish the number of whistleblowing cases. In '24-25 that was 82. Upheld were 10. In '24-25, we have bullying and harassment—the numbers are all in there, and the time. So we will absolutely publish that. But you can understand that a running commentary of what is coming in every day—

**Q105 Mr Frith:** It is not a running commentary; this is a parliamentary sitting and you are being held to account.

**Tim Davie:** Of course.

**Mr Frith:** We are just trying to understand whether, as we sit here now, you are aware of instances or prolific people at the BBC, where, maybe in due course, you will be in front of us defending the action you have or have not taken. We are just asking whether or not you are aware of any emerging or brewing issues that are equivalent to those we have discussed before.

**Tim Davie:** Again, I do not think it is right for me to talk about the specifics of what the whistleblowing team and the respond work team are dealing with day to day. What I will do, immediately I am aware of anything, is take the action. The other thing I should mention, which has



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happened since we last sat down—to reinforce the chair’s point—is the consequences of actions: we have seen people leave the BBC. For some people, by the way, we are seen as being too tough. But, actually, we are not letting anything lie; we follow up any allegation.

We do have a number of active whistleblowing cases at any point in the BBC. That might not be high-profile individuals; it might be legitimate concerns—you know what a workplace is like. I think we have got very clear guidelines through the BBC now. We are fully proactive in dealing with that issue; I want it out of the BBC.

And, by the way, we are taking tough action. I know there will be talk about different accountability in different cases, but to echo the chair’s point, we have dismissed people who are not living our values; that is non-negotiable. You will have seen it with all the high-profile individuals leaving the BBC as well; we will take those actions. I don’t think I can go further in terms of—

**Dr Shah:** I would add—again, Tim has mentioned it—that we are working very closely with CIISA about the industry as a whole. Helena Kennedy, as you know, came to our launch, supported us; and recently CIISA has listed us as one of their trailblazers. I cannot tell you how much this is a real issue for us. I know it is an issue for other industries, but it is an issue for our industry—not just the BBC, but the independent sector. I have worked in the independent sector, and this really is something that we need to root out.

I am very proud—first to get the trailblazer, and to say that I genuinely think this time the BBC has shown real commitment to stopping this, and taking the tough action that is needed to stop it. As a board, we have asked the executive to report back to us on the outcomes and what the number is—someone was asking how many, and we are going to ask that. Once that process has been gone through, what has been the outcome, and how do the staff feel about working at the BBC? We measure this. It is important that the staff feel better and better about working at the BBC.

That is why I am so passionate about this. These are real, serious abuses of power. I do not know whether it is human nature or something, but it happens everywhere, and we have to stamp it out. We have to, as a leadership, say, “We are not going to tolerate it. It doesn’t matter how grand you are, how famous you are or how important you are: if you behave badly and abuse your power, we don’t want you working for the BBC.”

**Tim Davie:** The last point I would make is that we have to make it a fair process as well. We have seen in many spheres of life that you can put up an allegation. That does need to be taken seriously and properly. That is why I am sensitive about it, and I think we will be transparent—I am certainly not trying to not be transparent. But I do think we need to honour the process, which says, fairly, if someone makes an allegation about someone, “Are we doing justice to that?” Every institution—we all know that; you know that—needs to get about its business to reset the



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culture. I think the BBC is doing it; I honestly do. One of my legacies—I passionately believe we can reset the industry in a way. This goes deeper than just dealing with problems; it is also about accessibility—everyone feels welcome. I feel very personally fired up about it. But to the Chair’s earlier remarks, words are cheap. The issue is, what is the experience on the ground for every team in the BBC? That is what we are trying to fix.

**Q106 Chair:** Can we talk about “MasterChef” quickly? One of the participants edited out of the current series of “MasterChef” initially said that the show should not be aired because, “Prominent figures have been abusing their power. What message does that send out to women?” So what message are you sending out by broadcasting this series?

**Tim Davie:** As I said publicly, it was a very tough call; it was right in the balance, because obviously these chefs—the vast, vast majority, apart from two; 48, I think it is—wanted the show. We talked to all of them. We were very sensitive about it. The team said, “Do you want to air it? Are there any other concerns you want to raise?” And the vast, vast majority wanted it aired. So you did have that balance.

I think the consequences for the individuals who presented “MasterChef” have been very significant. They are no longer working with the BBC, so there are those consequences. The other thing in my mind is that people can choose to watch it or not, so there is an element of trust in the audience. In our research, overall people supported the decision, but I do not think it was an easy decision. I absolutely respect that view. I think it was, on judgment, the right thing to do. But you could see both sides of the argument very clearly.

**Q107 Damian Hinds:** Chairman, in your independent report on workplace culture and behaviour, there is a finding that there was some doubt, some cynicism, among some of the corporation’s employees about the ability of management to make the changes necessary in workplace culture and behaviour. Some things were recommended, and you agreed to do them all: the new code of conduct, the new disciplinary policy and the Call It Out campaign—we have seen the badges. I am guessing those things, or versions of them, have happened before. You said, in your response to the report, that you wanted to “dial up” the organisation’s “risk appetite”. I think, actually, it is about dialling down risk appetite, but doing necessary things to reduce the risk of wrongdoing. Candidly, those things that I mentioned—having a new disciplinary policy or a publicity campaign—do not sound particularly risky, so what does dialling up your risk appetite look like in practice?

**Dr Shah:** Very good. I do think that is a really important question, because I asked that question of Change Associates. I said, “We have done this. You have done it”—Change Associates had done a review earlier—“What are we going to do that is different? What is actually going to make a difference?” In the end, we have had these reviews and things appear to have continued—the stories have come out. My sense of it is that I do not recall—I did ask about this—having had such a strong



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commitment right from the top and very precise actions. In other words, people know who to call. People also know how it will be handled.

To me, the most important question for all of us is, is it working? Is it actually working? Is it doing its job? There is both quantitative and qualitative assessment of that. I have already mentioned a bit of the qualitative. I talk to junior staff during my lunches to see what they think: has it come down to them? Do they trust it? I understand the cynicism. Why wouldn't you be cynical? You are sitting there as a junior researcher, some extremely important person has kind of messed you around, and you think, "Well, I don't have any power here. I can't do anything." Is that changing? My sense, qualitatively, is that it is.

In quantitative terms, as I have already said, there have been consequences. That is so important, because one of the big things that Change Associates said was that, if you do pluck up the courage to complain, is anything done about it? There is quite a lot of feedback: "Well, nothing much happened; they are still there. Nothing much was done." As we drive this through, and keep driving it through, the sense that, first, this is a campaign that really matters and that we are concerned about—

**Q108 Damian Hinds:** I do not want to cut you off, but let me cut you off. You say there is confidence in how a complaint will be handled. In the Wallace case, one of the issues that came up in the investigation was that complaints made against him were not always put to him; he may not even have known about some of them at the time. Is part of the new system, which people can have confidence in and know how it works, that allegations are always put to the individual? Or is there a threshold beyond which an allegation is put to an individual?

**Dr Shah:** Can I ask Tim to answer on how it actually operates?

**Tim Davie:** The respond team take the information in. If there is anything substantive, it then gets appropriately put to the individual. Nothing gets left.

**Q109 Damian Hinds:** Who is deciding whether it is substantive?

**Tim Davie:** They are an expert team within HR—they are fantastic. They look at everything incoming, assess it and decide if there is a case, and then it goes forward. It is a fairly standard process. Your concerns are, almost verbatim, what we have been saying internally, which is: how many reviews do you need? How many bits of paper do you need? At the end of the day, what is substantively going to change?

I do think that the world has moved on. It is not as if nothing has changed. If you look at some of the terrible behaviour and the enormity of what was going on in organisations 30 years ago, we are in a better place. Having said that, these problems are very significant. Some are historical, but they need fixing.



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Specifically—I think your question is exactly what we are asking—there are, first, consequences, to echo the Dr Shah. People are seeing that we are not mucking around now. You have to be clear and—to the earlier point—you have to be fair, but if you are not living the values, it is clear that you leave the BBC, or there are consequences. You can see that among public figures, but that is happening internally as well.

It is not overwhelming. As the report says, we do not have a toxic culture. By the way, if you look at most reports about where in the media people want to work, the BBC gets probably the highest score, so let's get proportionate. But we need to deal with those individuals, and we are. That is a change.

**Q110 Damian Hinds:** I am going to come back to you, Dr Shah. On the question of high-profile people exiting the organisation, another thing the independent report talks about is succession planning. All organisations have to have succession planning. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the chair and the non-execs to make sure that the executive team is doing that, because the executive team inevitably has different interests when it comes to succession planning. But in your industry, it also applies to on-air so-called talent. Can you say, hand on heart, that nobody now is irreplaceable? If there is a reason to take earlier action than you would have in the past, would you be confident in doing so and will you always do so?

**Dr Shah:** Succession planning is very important for the board, right from the very top—from the director general to the top execs. We have obviously done succession planning, and Tim is aware of it. The notion of succession planning applies not just at that level but throughout the organisation. I am absolutely clear that no one is irreplaceable—absolutely no one. Seriously, no one is irreplaceable.

**Q111 Damian Hinds:** Is there a succession plan for your top level of so-called talent? For each individual, is there an alternative?

**Tim Davie:** We do not call them “talent”, by the way.

**Damian Hinds:** Good. You did, though.

**Tim Davie:** We did, but we changed it.

**Dr Shah:** Before Tim answers your question about succession planning, let me go back to your first point about how people know. We have talked about escalating right to the top, but one of the things Change Associates found is that when people object, they still want the individual to stop, so that it is resolved in the moment in the workplace and they know that what they have said or how they have behaved has gone down badly and it is resolved there, rather than, as it were, always being escalated to higher levels.

There is a whole world in which we are trying to encourage staff who feel that in a meeting somebody shouted and they did not like it, so that it is resolved there and then. The manager is there to resolve it on the spot,



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and that person is told. There is a level at which this change is constant. We are changing the culture. You cannot shout at people; you cannot misbehave. We try to solve that.

On the succession planning, I do not think we call it that—we call it “succession planning” at the very senior levels—but I will let Tim say how he is going to resolve things. My view is that there is nobody on screen who is irreplaceable.

**Tim Davie:** No one is irreplaceable; we are all dispensable. That is an absolute, unequivocal position being given to the whole BBC.

Q112 **Chair:** Just to expand on that a little bit, you clearly have this new approach, and you say that you are not mucking around anymore—which begs the question of whether you were before. For example, the fact that Jamie Borthwick has gone from “EastEnders” may be an indication of your new approach and that the BBC is taking this seriously. But can you make that claim for people who work for indies like Banijay? So much of your programming comes through independent companies.

**Tim Davie:** That is an absolutely fair concern. Can I just finish the technical point on succession, with two sentences? Exactly to Mr Hinds’ point, we have a well-versed process for executive succession—for presenters, not “talent”; everyone is talent. We are deploying that now in all the key areas, so that there is a planning process. We do not want to over-bureaucratise it, but there needs to be a clear signal to everyone that no one is irreplaceable and that we expect everyone to deliver. You can live without anyone; of course you can.

**Damian Hinds:** And what—

**Tim Davie:** I need to go back to the question—shall I go ahead, Chair? Sorry, I just wanted to log that specifically we are doing that work and it is under way. We are nearly there on the presenter side.

Q113 **Damian Hinds:** I need to draw something slightly more out of you, if I may, and then I am done. When you say, “we are doing that work”, how does that manifest? What is the output?

**Tim Davie:** Apologies for the phrasing, because I often do not accept that phrasing when it is given to myself. What we have committed to technically is that within 12 months every leader in the BBC goes, “Hello. You’re in charge of Radio 4. Let’s get to the wonders of ‘In Our Time.’” By the way, I should record that “In Our Time” is very safe in our hands and that intellectually we will keep raising the bar, which is very hard post Melvyn Bragg. We then say, “What have you got documented in terms of your thoughts on succession?” I do not want to over-bureaucratise it, but we will have that process everywhere. It is being deployed pretty much everywhere now, but we have committed in the actions within 12 months, and we are tracking them and reporting—

Q114 **Damian Hinds:** How does that manifest for presenters—for the people on screen?



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**Tim Davie:** As I have said, if you are, as an editor, in charge of an area of the BBC, whether that be your key strands or your key programmes, you would have a clear view on who you would have if you did not have that presenter. It is just the same. In my world, historically, that is how we have run executive teams. For all my top-tier people I know who the people are who could do their job, where they are, and whether they are three years away or one year away. This is a standard process for an organisation; we are just deploying it into the world of presenters.

Q115 **Damian Hinds:** On that 12-month process—

**Tim Davie:** It is not a 12-month process; we are having it done within 12 months.

**Damian Hinds:** Okay, but the question is the same: when do the 12 months end?

**Tim Davie:** It will be April this year—we are pretty much done. We will be recording that.

Now, in terms of the indies, that is a critical question, and I worry about the risk. I think the answer is that there are two broad strands of thinking that we need to change, one of which relates to the BBC process. Whether or not “mucking around” is the right phraseology, one of the one of the areas I am pleased about—this was a personal thing—is that sometimes it was a little confusing in terms of where you went for whistleblowing versus a bullying and harassment claim. For me, if you are a lower-level member of the team, you might say, “I just want to raise something.”

If you go to the BBC now, it is very clear about raising concerns—we can share that with the Committee. It is online and everything is very, very clear. That is alongside speaking up to your boss and all the things you can do otherwise. That is available. We can take freelancers through that and they can raise stuff. The BBC plays its part in being an open door for anyone working on any production, and then we raise that and deal with the indie.

But I do think it is a material change that we are now saying that every indie has to sign up to the CIISA standards and make they are committed to delivering the culture we are talking about. I talked to CIISA yesterday, actually—

**Chair:** We are going to come on to talk about CIISA in a minute.

**Tim Davie:** I will pause there then, but it is critical work. Within the BBC we have got work to do, but a central part of the answer is whether people have confidence. If you are a young freelancer joining a production with—let’s be honest—people in power who have been there for 10 or 20 years, what is the route where you can independently raise a concern without worrying about your career?

**Chair:** On that note, Bayo is going to ask you about freelancers.



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**Q116 Mr Alaba:** Good morning, gentlemen. Change Associates surveyed freelancers at the BBC and found that 30% had observed or encountered inappropriate behaviour, and 58% did not believe that the BBC would hold people appropriately to account for their behaviour. Do you recognise that sentiment within your workforce?

**Tim Davie:** Absolutely. When you say within our workforce, they are freelancers, so they are absolutely part of our workforce, but they are not employees. I think there is a worry that they feel more vulnerable. Remember, this is a broader issue in the creative industries, because you have often got people doing short-term work, and they are very worried about keeping their jobs. I recognise those issues.

We need, as an industry, to do a reset. It is a big moment for the industry to make sure that everyone is very vocal—and I think the BBC is getting there—that there are no consequences for raising concerns, in terms of people's careers. There are still personal consequences; it is still traumatic for anyone to raise a concern. You guys know that—you have worked with people who have raised concerns. That is why we are addressing it.

Substantive things have changed with the earlier challenges, including the formation of CIISA. I would like more production companies to sign up with CIISA and get talking to them and working on the standards. The BBC is absolutely leading at the forefront of this, but I think others could get on board.

**Q117 Chair:** Do you think Banijay should?

**Tim Davie:** It is not for me to say. I am saying that every production company—

**Chair:** Including Banijay.

**Tim Davie:** Every production company.

**Dr Shah:** You have raised a really important point. Having worked in the independent sector, I know there is another layer here. As an independent production company that is using people, you have a relationship with the BBC that you do not want to jeopardise. In the same way that I talked about junior staff not wanting to call out powerful people, as an independent you feel, "Oh, do I want to create trouble here?" It is a real problem.

We as the BBC have to say to independent production companies that we expect them to follow our standards, and if they do, we are not going to put grief on them—we invite them to do that. That is another job we have to do. To do the job internally we need to do the job externally as well. Again, I think that is why I rather like the changes—they actually hit upon those points. These are really important, definite things to do.

**Q118 Mr Alaba:** To that point, Tim, you mentioned your Respect at Work review. I know the panel asked you about that, and you have spoken about the seriousness of it. I want to go back to that: how serious and



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how robust is it? Is your system based around how high profile the production is? Do your freelancers feel lower down within your organisation? Do they feel that they have access to the same recourse?

**Tim Davie:** That is a great question and really important. I hope everyone has read the Respect at Work review. I want to emphasise, and I am not being defensive—

**Mr Alaba:** Sorry, I want to add a little bit so that you can answer fully. I want you to specifically state what you have been doing and what your organisation has put in place for freelancers to raise complaints.

**Tim Davie:** Very good. Just to go back, please do read the Respect at Work review. In the round, what it says—I emphasise this—is that there is not a toxic culture, but there are pockets where things are not right. In relation to the Chair's comments, I do think the risk around freelancers is higher. There is no doubt about it, because you are more vulnerable if you are worried about where your next job is going to come from. We recognise all the issues.

Quickly getting to your point, I think it is a really important principle and it links to the idea of, frankly, pandering to people in power. We have an equal process for all. Obviously, there are communications and press issues if you are dealing with a very high-profile individual, but in terms of the process, absolutely: we should be treating people equally and being fair and appropriate. To be fair to people in the public eye, that is also an issue in itself—they often face issues that are completely inappropriate. You will recognise that in politics, as well as at the BBC.

As to your comment, apologies for the repetition because I have mentioned them already, but we have done a couple of very specific things. First—I am happy to share this with you and we can look through it—there is a very clear hub for raising concerns. It is simple, clear and everyone can go to it. We can drive everyone to the same place and say, "This is where you raise concerns." We have been very clear about that. To me, that is basic, but we have tidied it up in a way that I think is very compelling and leading-edge.

Secondly, there is the idea of the response team and making sure we have the right resources to handle it. When that comes in, they are treated well and it is properly dealt with.

The third thing that is different, since we last talked, is CIISA. Someone may say, "Look, I don't trust a broadcaster. I am worried about the BBC—this, that and the other." They might want to go to CIISA—an independent body. How powerful is that? I think that is a big change to the industry. But we do need everyone to support CIISA, so that we all jump together and say, "There's a body for that." That is a massive change if you are a freelancer. You can go to a third-party body with a clear process, and the BBC is a full member. We will be working our way through with CIISA. We want to see everyone else doing that. So those are changes for the freelance community.



Q119 **Chair:** Is there anything you can do to compel the independent companies you work with to become CIISA members?

**Tim Davie:** We now say, within our contracts, "You have to meet the CIISA standards." I don't think that we can say in the contracts, "You have to join a certain body," but we can say that they have to meet the standards. I have made my expectations clear on that.

There is a final point, and it is softer but probably as material as anything we have talked about: at the beginning of a production, it is about making sure that executive producers and commissioners set the standard very clearly. Part of it, with my team, is: "This is what I expect. This is what I don't expect. On this production, this is what is acceptable." Part of the Call It Out campaign—I know we have discussed the softer stuff, and that this is a learning that continues, with the issues we have had that are significant—is that at the start of every BBC production you need to be very clear with everyone: "This is how we work around here."

**Dr Shah:** Can I just add—

**Chair:** We need to make some progress.

**Dr Shah:** Just to be clear, this is not just about production. We have talked a lot about that. About a month ago, I met one of Tim's senior executives—not in the editorial production area—in a routine meeting, and he talked to me about how, as a result of this review, one of his own team had been reported, and that person has now left the BBC. It is important to note that while our focus is on production, and that is important, it is actually throughout the whole organisation. We are not saying it is not an important part, but other bits are also important.

Q120 **Mr Alaba:** Thank you. Are your freelance staff part of your internal staff surveys?

**Tim Davie:** I believe they can respond to the staff survey. I will double-check, but I think they can. Sorry, I will come back to you on that.

**Mr Alaba:** Are they aware that—

**Tim Davie:** They are absolutely part of our team. I will take that away, because we may want to look at full-time staff and make sure we have got it right. It is an utterly fair point. I can give you an answer, but I haven't got it here, in terms of where exactly it stops and starts.

Q121 **Chris Kane:** In my dim and distant past, I was a freelance broadcaster. Do you have any data on the threshold at which a freelancer would feel comfortable reporting bad behaviour, compared with someone who was employed? Do you have any data on whether the length of tenure of a freelancer—or, indeed, the pay point of a freelancer—would impact the threshold at which they would feel comfortable reporting?

**Tim Davie:** I would love to see that. I have not seen the cuts you are talking about in detail. They are very valid points, and I would be



interested in seeing them—simple as that. I have not seen something that actually manages tenure and status.

**Q122 Paul Waugh:** Have you asked for that?

**Tim Davie:** I don't think so, not for that cut—I have asked for a lot of data—but I am quite interested in asking now. I think that is quite interesting, so we should think about whether we get that cut. It is clear from the Respect at Work review that if you are a freelancer, you are more worried about raising a concern, and likewise if you are more junior, so, to your question, it is not going to surprise us if those two factors do have an influence.

**Q123 Chris Kane:** I think it would be important to know. What assurance do you have that the people undertaking the surveys have an appropriate understanding of the mentality and motivators of freelancers, when I would imagine that the survey takers and survey makers are probably employed and less likely to be freelancers?

**Tim Davie:** Yes, we normally use world-class agencies. I have not got a worry about methodology. We could share a bit with you, but I do not think that would be an issue; to the other point, the issue is just getting the data. I am not worried about that.

**Q124 Mr Frith:** I want to focus on editorial standards, and I want to take us back to Glastonbury and the livestreaming of Bob Vylan. Tim, did you misread the situation when you were told about what had gone on? Were you then shocked when you saw the chants of "Death to the IDF" and the crowd being whipped up into what I would describe as an antisemitic frenzy? What was your response?

**Tim Davie:** I don't think I misread it. I heard about it at about 5 o'clock—the performance was well done by then—and at that point I knew absolutely that it was an antisemitic broadcast. My decision was to get it off on-demand—simple as that. It was not too complicated in my mind.

To your point, I do think it was deeply disturbing. Personally—I have talked to many people about this—I thought what happened was deeply disturbing. The BBC made a very significant mistake—very significant—in broadcasting that. The fact that those words were broadcast to that broad audience was, frankly—to your point—disturbing.

When I heard what had been said, at about 5 o'clock that day, it was very clear: "Get it off on-demand. We're not broadcasting this guy." By then, in some ways, with regard to what happened after that and all the issues around it in terms of the coverage and everything else, you have broadcast and it has been performed at Glastonbury—you are where you are. But I think I did the right things.

**Q125 Mr Frith:** Did people who report to you misread it as it went out? Do they need checking on what they consider to be antisemitic or not?

**Tim Davie:** Of course. That is absolutely what we have done in terms of the investigation and consequences for individuals that we are working



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through at the moment. We are in the midst of that, so I cannot talk about it. Look, we had very experienced individuals who had managed a lot of live output over many years, and they read it as harm and offence, they put warnings up, but they did not pull the stream.

**Q126 Mr Frith:** There were many things to be upset and disappointed about in that awful performance. With full candour, as an avid new music consumer, I have a Bob Dylan record, which I will not be listening to any more. But any level of due diligence by your broadcasters would have shown that they are prolific on matters of race and that they embrace a degree of anarchic punk. I would not have thought they would be capable of such appalling chanting and leading chants, but what due diligence was done? Soft Googling would have found some pretty obnoxious stuff.

**Tim Davie:** It certainly would. Those are absolutely the questions we have been looking at, and some of things we have fixed—I can go through the actions we have done, which would quite categorically prevent what happened. This is a grip issue. We have gripped it. There is a very specific thing we have done: essentially, if something is a high-risk act in the way you are talking about, we would now put it on delay. I say that with a slightly heavy heart, because we have always embraced live music. We like live—it works. We have many years—decades—of delivering it.

**Q127 Mr Frith:** You might have had a delay on that.

**Tim Davie:** We might have done. With the glory of hindsight, boy, I wish I had done.

**Mr Frith:** Well, the glory of foresight is the point I am making.

**Tim Davie:** Let me say specifically that the team did meet. They did talk about things, they looked at them, and they rated seven acts as high risk. There was only one act—Kneecap—that was put in a different category, which was, “Just because the risk levels are so sky high, they’ll have to go on-demand, with a delay”. To your point, they did do due diligence. They rated it as something where there might be—with music, you always ask, where does politics stop and start? Where does hate crime begin? All those things are difficult. In this case, by the way, it is not complex to say that this was an antisemitic broadcast, but they judged the risk and said, “Okay, we can put warnings up if this comes,” and they could pull the stream. What happened was that well-intentioned people made a mistake of not pulling the stream. What they did was put warnings up. In some ways, it is as damaging and as simple as that.

**Q128 Mr Frith:** You are being very candid, and I want to be fair. You have inferred that you might not be drawn on more detail, but in your 11 July letter to the Committee about Glastonbury, you said that you could not answer fully all our questions about accountability due to internal processes. What more can you tell us now?

**Tim Davie:** Just that we have done the internal fact-find and now there are consequences for individuals, and we are working that through.



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Honestly, it is not appropriate, if someone is going through that kind of action, to do a running commentary on that.

**Q129 Mr Frith:** So for a broadcast that went out at the end of June, the internal processes have not been expedited and people have not faced any consequences. Are the people involved in the decision whether to cut the livestream just back at work, or are they are suspended pending investigation?

**Tim Davie:** I have told you that there are people who are going through a process. That does take time, and you need to do it properly. Also, these are well-intentioned people who made a mistake, so I need to be proportionate, but there are consequences and it is damaging.

**Mr Frith:** Will you commit—

**Tim Davie:** Sorry, I want to say something else. You said that there are no consequences. Actually, for some of those individuals personally, with the press coverage and other things, there have been huge consequences. They have been huge. Do you think these individuals have not had consequences in terms of how they feel? These are good people who have worked for decades in the BBC.

**Q130 Mr Frith:** I get that. I would also want the BBC to show a level of empathy for Jews at Glastonbury who felt they needed to assemble a safe space because of antisemitic chanting going on in the West Holts field.

**Tim Davie:** I totally agree with you.

**Mr Frith:** I have sympathy with the professional crisis they might be facing, but it is not the same as hate-fuelled chanting from the stage at, frankly, the marquee event of the music industry.

**Tim Davie:** I totally agree with you. In fact, to be fair to the BBC, I have talked to many people—people who are dealing with security in the Jewish community and others—and it is horrifying what is going on. I feel deep empathy. To the earlier question about when I found this tough, I think that responsibility to the Jewish community and making sure we are listening and caring and doing the right things—we care about it desperately.

**Mr Frith:** I think—

**Tim Davie:** I just want to make a point. I will take the responsibilities, but what you have just outlined was not the BBC's responsibility.

**Mr Frith:** One hundred per cent.

**Tim Davie:** Broadcasting to that audience, and what that audience did, is not something I could control. We had a broadcast that went out on one stream. I am not diminishing it, because the way it went, it had enormous impacts.

**Mr Frith:** You have been very clear, Tim.



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**Tim Davie:** And we pulled the on-demand. I just want to be fair to the BBC in that.

Q131 **Mr Frith:** Absolutely. Colleagues will want to come in, I am sure, but I have two final things on this. Will you commit now to release findings from the individual internal reviews into the cultural failings, so that trust, particularly among the Jewish community, can be rebuilt? Colleagues will come on to the Gaza documentary and what it did to trust, which Dr Shah called a “dagger to the heart” of impartiality. That applies just as readily to the experience of this failing. Will you commit to disclosing those internal—

**Tim Davie:** Can I just be clear what you are asking me to commit to? We have done a fact-find and then we have agreed actions that directly relate to some of the challenges you quite rightly put to me. Some are technical, as I said. On high-risk acts, I have heard the argument from others, “Why risk this?” Well, too right.

Q132 **Chair:** All you have done is given a huge amount of publicity to this cause.

**Tim Davie:** Indeed, and there is deep regret about that. We have technical things. The other thing links to broader issues of culture and where we are as the UK. I worry about it. The BBC needs to be inclusive. It is about things like making sure we have training around antisemitism and Islamophobia across the organisation to understand: “If you hear this, this is clearly in this category.” This is best practice, by the way. We have seen it in other organisations. We are deploying it to everyone across the BBC. It probably relates to some of the discussion we may have later, on Gaza and other things.

We have got work to do. I do not think the BBC in any way intends to do things—often we have motives ascribed to us but, I tell you, most people at the BBC are deeply worried about this, they want to learn, and there are learnings. I can summarise that, and we have done the action steps; what I do not think is appropriate is for us to give a running commentary on any individual action.

Q133 **Chair:** It possible that you can write to us when the internal disciplinary process is completed?

**Tim Davie:** We can write to you. I will have to take the right legal advice on what I can say about that, but absolutely, we can write to you.

Q134 **Dr Huq:** Can I add something on the Glastonbury discussion? Of course these things have consequences—we see a rise in antisemitic incidents when these things are broadcast—but I had an email from a staffer in the corporation who said that staff are repeatedly asked to work for free as part of “development opportunities” and that this particularly happened around Glastonbury, which was advertised among people who were keen to do it for their CV. That means that the type of volunteers who come forward is inexperienced, poorly trained people working more than one job, and it leads to these kinds of slips. Do you have any comment on that? You keep saying that no one is irreplaceable. We saw *The Guardian*



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reporting in July that there will be 10,000 staff at risk of cuts in the back office, with AI replacing those roles.

**Tim Davie:** I would not put too much store by the last statement, but we can do that separately. I think they are different issues. If you have got any evidence that someone is unpaid—we pay people salaries, and if they want to work on Glastonbury—

**Dr Huq:** But—

**Tim Davie:** Bear with me. There is a very specific thing, if you read the reports, and we can make it clear that that was not the issue in this case.

**Chair:** You had over 500—

Q135 **Dr Huq:** But if it is being advertised a lot, “Cover these shifts”—

**Tim Davie:** I understand, but you asked me whether it was linked to the failing that happened, and I am telling you that we had enough senior people and it relates to the other questions in terms of accountability.

Q136 **Dr Huq:** You are going to publish the evidence, aren’t you?

**Tim Davie:** Well, I have said we will tell you what we can, but we have to stay strong in terms of respecting individual disciplinary processes—I do not want to keep saying that. But this was not the issue. I got the issue that you are raising. If you have any more evidence on that, do share it with me separately. I don’t think that was what caused this issue. I really don’t.

Q137 **Dr Huq:** Yesterday, our Chair was captioned with another MP’s name. I do not know how much of this is AI taking over and you guys sleepwalking on the job. Caroline Dinenage was captioned as Esther McVey. It is just sloppy.

**Tim Davie:** I can see that that would not be ideal, but I am not sure whether that was AI. I will double check that—thanks.

**Chair:** We need to move on, but I think the point is that you had 550 people working for you there, so relying on volunteers is not necessarily the issue.

Q138 **Mr Frith:** Continuing the theme of editorial guidelines, following Peter Johnston’s report on the documentary “Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone”, the BBC stated that it would take “fair, clear and appropriate action, based on the...findings to ensure accountability”. Can you give us a sense of what actions you have taken, please?

**Tim Davie:** Are you asking about individuals, the Peter Johnston recommendations or the whole thing?

**Mr Frith:** Specifically in response to the Peter Johnston report.

**Tim Davie:** Well, we are executing—I can go through it, but I expect that we are up against it on time. I have Peter’s recommendations in front of me. They are very robust. I thought it was a very good report, by the way.



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We had to sort the wheat from the chaff a little bit, in terms of all the various accusations around the programme, and I thought he did a good job. It took a bit of time, and I do not apologise for that, because there were 5,000 emails, financial trails and all of that.

Very specifically, we have more robust processes for when we are working with indies, to make sure that we have got the right BBC oversight. We are also making a leadership change, which I think is material: the appointment of a new director of news documentaries and long-form journalism. We are hiring for that now. We are also putting in what we call—forgive the jargon—a first gate process, so that you start with really being clear on all the risks. We have got new guidance on “Yahud” and “Yahudi”, as you may have read. We have executed the Peter Johnston recommendations, and we are in process on doing that.

With regard to individuals, we are in the same situation. We have a couple of issues in terms of dealing with one or two individuals in terms of not being at work, so we are working through those issues. But there are people who are facing consequences of what was a bad mistake. I think the report also says that HOYO Films not fully disclosing that information was important to us as well. I mean, read the Peter Johnston review; it is pretty clear.

**Q139 Mr Frith:** Dr Shah, do you feel that the BBC’s house is in order on this issue, having said the earlier quote I used—that it was a “dagger to the heart” of impartiality?

**Dr Shah:** I stand by that quote. I thought it was a real mistake. I think that what Peter found—that under the terms of accuracy, we were not open and transparent about the relationship of the narrator to a Hamas official—really does go straight to the heart of the BBC’s reputational risk, in terms of being impartial and trustworthy. I do think that was the case. I do not want to minimise what was the problem here. I think in this case it was a sin of omission, which are just as serious as sins of commission.

On the issue you raise, I talked to Peter about his report, and I asked him about impartiality. He said, and I think we agree, that he was looking at it in terms of very narrow, technical editorial guidelines. In other words, for example, were all points of view available, anti-Hamas as well as pro-Hamas? Because they were, he did not find, on that technical point, a breach of impartiality. But on the bigger point, which is the one I was making, that still stands. I thought it was a real mistake, as Tim has said. We have taken fully all of Peter’s recommendations, which I agree with, which were very detailed. People often say to me, “Why does it all take so long?” I was very concerned that no payment from the BBC went to Hamas. Now, try and follow that audit trail to make sure, as best as we can, that nothing went. It is really difficult, but we really went hard, and that takes time.

**Q140 Mr Frith:** It is still quite arresting to hear even that as a prospect, isn’t it?

**Dr Shah:** I know—completely. That is why we asked about it. It really is. I do think it was a very big issue for us, and a big mistake.



**Q141 Paul Waugh:** I declare my interest as a member of the National Union of Journalists. On the wider issue of editorial guidelines, gentlemen, obviously there have been clear and unacceptable failures when it came to Glastonbury, which made the Jewish community feel unsafe; and clear and unacceptable failures on "Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone". Director general, you said last time you came to us that you had tried to find a way to use some of the footage gathered for the film to tell the story in a different way. Many people—certainly my constituents, and many others—feel that Israel's failure to allow journalists, including BBC journalists, into Gaza is an utter disgrace, and that, as a result, we are having to rely on individual citizen journalism. This film contains some very powerful footage from children on the frontline. How are you trying to make sure that that complies with your own editorial standards so that you can reuse it and enable people to see the truth of what has been going on in Gaza?

**Tim Davie:** I welcome your words, because I think we should all say that not allowing journalists into Gaza is unacceptable. It really is. In my view, this is probably the toughest editorial coverage challenge we have ever had. I say ever—20 years I have been in the BBC, and this is as tough as it gets. We are finding the pressures on our journalists, security threats, buildings being attacked—it really is very demanding. I am not just looking for sympathy, but there is a technical point. I will get to the point you raise, but there is a technical point. It is really important that we all stand and say "Look, we need access."

We can look at a story like aid centres and hospitals, or whatever, but there is nothing like having a proper journalist with our standards on the ground doing the work. I would ask us to get access. The idea that we cannot go into warzones is patently absurd, because we have done that for years, and we know what we are doing. That is a point well made. It puts everything, in some ways, in a more difficult setting.

The second thing is that our appetite to give voice to, as I mentioned, medics or children in Gaza remains undimmed. One of the things I find most demanding—I am not looking for sympathy here—is attribution of intent from our side. "You are clearly pandering to that lobby"—I will be blunt; that is nonsense. We are trying to do our job journalistically. Now let's get to the point—

**Q142 Paul Waugh:** Precisely. Can I ask you, specifically on this, how you will achieve that?

**Tim Davie:** On this film, we do not know whether we can air it. I tell you why: that is to do with consent, going back, and doing all the footage on the rushes—the whole thing. The team are looking at it, but we cannot guarantee that we will air anything. What I can guarantee is that we will go after those stories, and we will be making sure we are not cowed to go after some of those stories—

**Q143 Paul Waugh:** What about when you see those stories yourself? I can do a quick edit job now and say, "Those stories are valid. They can be put together." Why has that not been done? How far away are you from doing



that? That would reassure a lot of your audience that you are committed to hearing those real voices on the ground.

**Tim Davie:** I take your point. I think there are real difficulties with airing bits of the film, in terms of due diligence. I will take it, and I can give you more a formal response from the newsroom and where they are. My biggest priority—I will be blunt—has not been to get that all back, but to get on the front foot and make sure we are telling those stories. Your points are absolutely well taken.

Q144 **Paul Waugh:** In that vein, can I move on to the other documentary, “Gaza: Doctors Under Attack”, which was not screened by the BBC because you feared it risked creating a perception of partiality as an organisation. How do you respond to the criticism that Channel 4 News had no problem fulfilling its duties? Do you not feel that you have been over-cautious, and you have swung the pendulum the other way?

**Tim Davie:** No. I think we made the right decision. I do not think it is news, by the way, from our point of view; it is current affairs—there is a slight difference in terms of a doc. It is fairly straightforward where we were; we were a little bit frustrated. We have given a lot of voice on our airways and news coverage to medics working in Gaza under extreme conditions and the terrible things they are having to face, which is horrendous. In this film, it is pretty straightforward—an admired journalist, but someone who does have a position on the issue with regard to what happened in the Gaza warzone. I take your feedback if you think we are being too cautious, but my view, and the view of the news leadership, was that we clearly had someone with a position, and we needed a narrator who was a BBC journalist making sure that we were not open to that. Otherwise, we could be in the same old problem.

Bluntly, I know this has frustrated filmmakers. Our intent is good, but if they wanted to air the film as they put it, Channel 4 can do that. We have the editorial guidelines of the BBC; it is different. We are making these decisions daily. I hope you can see that, overall—I hope this Committee back our journalists. We are not perfect; we make mistakes now and again. I have just seen the research that shows that the majority of people do not have a view that we are on one side or the other on this issue, and it is about equally divided on both sides. We navigate the course with some personal risk to individuals. I take some of your points.

**Paul Waugh:** There is serious risk to the individual journalists out in Israel who are being killed. That is for sure.

**Tim Davie:** Totally right.

Q145 **Dr Huq:** Your account of the medics under fire, or whatever it was called, seems to be quite different from that of the production company. It links to many things we have said. Freelancers or a small production company made it in good faith, covered the footage that autumn and passed the film to you. According to them, it went through all your internal checks. It was okay in February, and then it was sat on for months and months and dropped by July. I think you went on “Newsnight” saying that was because



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of comments from the people who made it or something. It just does not marry up.

**Tim Davie:** I do not think it was me on “Newsnight”.

**Dr Huq:** I think there is a clip of you on “Newsnight”—

**Tim Davie:** Oh, I see. Sorry, it was a Katie Razzall interview that went on “Newsnight”. The documentary did not go through all our processes to get aired. It is as simple as that. We can debate the ins and outs of—

**Dr Huq:** But they have said otherwise—

**Tim Davie:** With respect, at the end of the day, the BBC—

**Dr Huq:** Somebody is not telling the truth here, then.

**Tim Davie:** I understand, but with respect, at the end of the day, the BBC makes a final decision on whether or not to air. It made the decision I said. I understand the frustration. I respect the indie. We were mindful of the work they had done.

Q146 **Dr Huq:** They had won awards for their work with Bataclan before. They are a respected company.

**Tim Davie:** Of course they are a respected company. We work with respected companies, but I have told you there is a technical issue with this film that led it to not be aired.

Q147 **Dr Huq:** I’m sorry; what was that issue? We know, as Paul pointed out, that it was the perception of partiality—

**Tim Davie:** It was the perception of the impartiality of the narrator.

Q148 **Dr Huq:** The perception—that is not even partiality. It is a perception. What do you mean? Do you mean it could upset someone?

**Tim Davie:** No, if I was trying not to upset people I am probably in the wrong job. I was saying that it is very clear that if people feel the narrator of the film has a particular point of view and is on one side of the issue, then that is not—

Q149 **Dr Huq:** We are talking about the doctors one; we are not talking about the kid whose father was a—

**Tim Davie:** We are talking medics, absolutely.

Q150 **Dr Huq:** That is the first I have heard of that. It does feel as though you are bowing to some kind of pressure. This war is being reported very differently from, say, the Ukraine war. I don’t know why.

**Tim Davie:** It is a different conflict.

Q151 **Dr Huq:** Why are you so fearful?

**Tim Davie:** I do not think we are fearful. I want to defend the newsroom and the journalists. I do not think they are shaped by fear or individual bits of lobbying. They are shaped by our editorial guidelines. This is not a



criticism. I have to decide, with the news team, whether we think the film, if we air it, will be seen as an impartial piece of work. We had an issue. That is the decision we are making on a regular basis. I have to say, if you look at our overall coverage, the leading journalism we have done on Gaza—the voice we have given to medics in Gaza—I simply do not recognise the fact that—

**Q152 Dr Huq:** Channel 4 did not have the same issues. They aired it no problem. You talked about lobbying. Can you publish how many conversations you have had with pro-Palestinian voices and pro-Israeli voices—being lobbied by both sides?

**Tim Davie:** I will have to come back to you on what we publish. I can tell you I am talking to people on every angle of this conflict on a very regular basis.

**Q153 Dr Huq:** On Kuenssberg on Sunday there was a very one-sided interview with Mike Huckabee.

**Tim Davie:** I have not seen it, unfortunately.

**Q154 Dr Huq:** He was stating as fact that there is loads of food in Gaza. Every aid agency on the ground is saying otherwise, but there was no challenge to that and no person from the UN or Oxfam, or wherever. The only voice you ever see is Husam Zomlot. I do not think he has been on that show for about a year.

**Tim Davie:** If you look at our coverage of the UN, we have been absolutely clear on giving that voice. Honestly, in this conflict, we are not perfect. We analyse those things, but the incoming we are getting on both sides—I could show you—is that we are giving far too much voice to those people, whether it be the UN on one side or Israeli voices on the other.

**Q155 Dr Huq:** It is not an election. In some respects, you are treating it as something that—

**Tim Davie:** With respect, I am not saying that.

**Q156 Dr Huq:** We know certain people like Tzipi Hotovely and Mark Regev are often on these shows. I do not think we have the other side—the pro-Palestinian voices. I cannot picture some of the people you hear on the Today programme.

**Tim Davie:** I absolutely take your point and agree on what I would call equalisation, which is where you do 10 minutes here and 10 minutes there. Frankly, our journalists are better than that and our editors are better than that. They are thinking about the conflict in the round. I would take your concerns. We are absolutely trying to give all voices. I have to say, when people arrive on the BBC—we may talk about this another time—there is a cultural phenomenon where you are giving voice to people. It is important that we get people on the BBC and we interrogate them journalistically. These are not people coming in for a free ride. They are getting properly questioned.

**Q157 Dr Huq:** Have you seen the Centre for Media Monitoring's report?



**Tim Davie:** Of course.

Q158 **Dr Huq:** They painstakingly analysed this. They have got some statistics that a Palestinian death is not worth the same as an Israeli death, and all that. The fact is that there is always qualification. Nobody says, "Netanyahu, who is accused of war crimes—", in the same way. Do you see what I mean? For example, the ICC was not covered by yourselves; I think you said the Post Office was more important that day. Those kinds of things are absent from your channels.

**Tim Davie:** I do not believe they are absent, but I do recognise the concern. I have met the Centre for Media Monitoring. They do a lot of good work; we have a constructive dialogue with them. Have you read the Asserson report, which is from the other side in terms of a more pro-Israeli mindset and in terms of analysing our output? Both reports use AI. I will look at the data, but there are some methodological issues around just using AI, because it is contextual. You need to look at how the reporting was done. It does not include live output. Having said that, I have sat with and, quite rightly, I am very interested in hearing from the Centre for Media Monitoring to reflect on some of their feedback. In areas like giving broader context to the conflict, we can do more work. We are engaged in dialogue with those parties and absolutely we should be listening.

Q159 **Dr Huq:** Lastly, as a former BBC staffer myself, I would say listen to your staff, many hundreds of whom say they are ashamed and fearful of the way this is being reported. I know that at the recent all-staff meeting the medics under fire documentary was the most asked about thing. It is disrespectful to a small independent's work, done with integrity, that you sit on it for months, give some spurious reason and another channel covers it. I know there is real concern among your staff ranks.

**Tim Davie:** If you talk to different communities within the BBC staff, as with most organisations—

**Dr Huq:** It was the most asked about thing in your most recent meeting, and people do notice these things. They are tired and they are put through unnecessary hurdles. And you get slips, like at Glastonbury. They are tired and they are doing more than one job. A lot of them are being taken advantage of.

Q160 **Liz Jarvis:** Mr Davie, we have spoken about impartiality in political coverage. Turning to domestic political coverage, in recent months the BBC featured Nigel Farage's speech on asylum policy at the top of its website for an entire day. It published endless comment pieces on the rise of Reform, and even claimed that coming third in the Hamilton by-election made Reform the big winner of the night. How can this wall-to-wall coverage of Reform be justified for a party with only four MPs?

**Tim Davie:** It might be worth hearing from the chair initially, because we have discussed this at the editorial standards committee and talked a lot about this.



**Dr Shah:** I chair the editorial guidelines and standards committee, which examines these sorts of things. Routinely we have assessments of our news coverage and our news audiences. One of the things, as we all know, is that the political system here and the electorate are fragmenting. It is becoming a multi-party state. We want to know how BBC News will cover the new emerging situation, both in Parliament and in the country as a whole. We had a very interesting report about it. The reality is that BBC News's coverage reflects not just the party representation in Parliament, but also what polling tells us about how many people support one party or the other and what the actual numbers are. You are right, of course—the Lib Dems have 70-odd Members and Reform has only four. But Reform had 4 million votes—that is quite a sizeable thing. What we were concerned about, and what we want to know, is how BBC News is covering the changing nature of Reform support.

On what you are recognising, I do not think it is wall to wall. If you think about the recent Reform conference, the events of the Labour party and the Angela Rayner story took over, so I do not think they would agree with you. We do it in terms of both their representation of the country in Parliament and news judgments. That is how we approach it. Because Reform have risen in terms of their popularity and support, you might detect greater coverage of Reform and Reform stories, but that really reflects their own popularity in the country as a whole.

The important thing is to make sure that coverage is proportional, given all those factors, so that there is not overreach—it is not more and there is not less. And that is always a judgment. It is a judgment based on the general background of support and also on the individual day, in terms of news values. On the suggestion that we need to make sure that we are adequately reflecting Reform voters in our coverage, their views and their attitudes, as much as everybody else's, are important. That is the background and the context to the way the news has covered Reform.

Q161 **Liz Jarvis:** Are there equivalent plans to win the trust of supporters of other parties, including those worried by the disproportionate coverage that the BBC is giving to Reform?

**Dr Shah:** Indeed. We look at the interests and views of all parties on impartiality, what their concerns are and what we can do to try to meet them. We are not going to change our position of impartiality and telling all points. We are not going to change our own standards, but we need to make sure that the stories we cover address everybody's concerns, not just one party—we would not do that.

We have done this before. We have looked in terms of demographics: what do young people, and what do old people, think about our news coverage? How can we manage to maintain our standards but reach out to those groups as well? We are constantly looking at our news coverage and making sure that it is valued by all our licence fee payers, and not just one sector or another.



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**Tim Davie:** I think our only objective is to deliver fair and impartial coverage, and we are always listening when people think that we are not delivering that and the balances are wrong. I have talked to the leader of the Liberal Democrats a number of times. We have a challenge from a new landscape. The two parties were 80%; now they are 60%, as you know only too well. Meanwhile, it is appropriate that we look at the latest election results polling, and Reform have, I think, an estimated national share of about 30%. They got the councils and the mayoral contests. We are trying to get the balance right. I think it is difficult and, to your challenge, we need to keep reflecting.

I looked at my “Question Time” numbers before I came here, you will be pleased to hear. I have them in front of me, and I look forward to questions on them. There were more Liberal Democrats than Reform over the last period. We are trying to look at all those things and be fair. I take your concerns, but we are also a news organisation and when news is being made, things happen. That might be of any shape and size, so it is very difficult to be utterly proportionate in that. It is a very active discussion, because the landscape politically has changed fundamentally. There is more issue-based discussion. There are more parties in there, in terms of a scale. We just need to keep doing our work and make sure that is right. I want to be blunt: some of the reporting that we are trying to ingratiate ourselves with one party or lean one way or the other is, frankly, for the birds. We are trying to negotiate a new landscape fairly—that is it.

Q162 **Liz Jarvis:** You said a short while ago that you are worried about where we are in the UK. Would you accept that by giving undue prominence to one political party with a hyper-focus on divisive issues, the BBC is fuelling a toxic debate?

**Tim Davie:** I am worried; I will echo that. We will debate the BBC, quite rightly and accountably, here but have a look at social media—have a look at where some of the other media outlets are going. I do worry.

When it comes to our house—I am not pushing away the problem—I take the concern. I was in a university the other day and someone said, “How can you give voice to Trump?” I said, “I’m not giving voice to Trump. I’m journalistically covering the news and interrogating the story.” If you heard Nick Robinson, I think it was, interviewing someone from Reform the other day, it was a tough interview. I think that we are about journalistic interrogation, verifying, looking—to your point—at what is substantive, where policy is real, what is proven and what is happening in councils. Our local services—by the way, I think we need access to reporting everywhere—are part of the accountability. I am so fired up at the moment about the value of free press, and of that interrogation. I take the point on prominence, and just the balance, but I absolutely do not think that we should say, “Sorry, we don’t give voice to people.” I know you are not saying that, but it does come in quite a lot at the moment, and it is changing in society: “Don’t give voice to someone I don’t agree with.” We have to stay strong on that.



**Q163 Liz Jarvis:** I am not saying that, but I think it is really important that we hold everybody to account. Also, with your journalists holding people to account, I would say that there has been criticism in the past that, for example, Laura Kuenssberg has given quite soft interviews to the leader of Reform. Would you say that is true?

**Tim Davie:** I do not recognise that, and I get feedback from every side on that. I do not want to sound complacent, because we are debating this every day at the BBC. If you come to the editorial meetings with the editors of our main news strands, first, they do not lack appetite to put politicians and other public figures properly under scrutiny, and secondly, they have no desire to give anyone a so-called “easy ride” if proper questions are required. Everyone will have a particular view on one interview a bit one way or the other, but actually I think the BBC is doing a good job.

**Q164 Liz Jarvis:** On 10 July, your 6 o’clock news programme, watched by an average 3.3 million viewers, featured a package covering the Government’s announcement of a one in, one out migrant deal with France. The package included a segment of footage of Farage discussing the issue from a boat in the English channel, and the footage was clipped from an earlier programme by GB News. That is a rarity for the BBC which, when covering domestic news, almost always uses its own footage or a pool clip. Would the BBC go to the same lengths to cover another Opposition leader?

**Tim Davie:** I cannot say. It depends on the circumstances—it is such a hypothetical question. I would say that, if someone has footage, we will take it and we will credit it. I cannot see an issue, if it is properly contextualised, with the BBC taking GB News footage. We could debate the balance and length, but on the principle, the overwhelming output in the BBC is BBC output. Now and again, if someone has some footage and they are distributing, whether that be a press outlet or another outlet, we will put it in context—that is just standard journalism.

Your point about the running order is fair, but it is just a question of how you balance that. I would say that we have a fantastic team running the “Six” and the “Ten”; they know what they are doing and they are trying to get the balance right. You may or may not agree with some of their calls of an evening, and that is the nature of news. I want to set a little bit of perspective; in the round, in the annual report, trust in BBC News grew last year, and that is important. For all the slings and arrows we are facing, and all the pressures, how valuable is that in a society with disinformation?

We are losing a little bit of this in my view. The wood from the trees here is that the world is getting more polarised, and people are not listening to each other. I am very worried about it, so what can I do? I can make sure that the BBC’s editor-in-chief is trying to steer that course. I listen to the concerns, and I think there are challenges in a new political landscape. How do you cover that new reality within tight media formats? Will there be examples of an interview or a particular vlog where you go, “Look,



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that's evidence"? I would say that, if you look at in the round, the BBC is doing a pretty good job.

**Q165 Dr Huq:** If we are moving to this brave new world, or this new multi-party reality, that also includes the four pro-Gaza independents elected last time, and the Greens are growing four times more than they were in the last Parliament. How do you reflect all that in your coverage? Again, guess who Kuenssberg had on Sunday? Our old friend Nigel Farage. There is a risk of disproportionate coverage. How do you cover the whole lot?

**Tim Davie:** We have to work to make sure that we do. Sorry, it is a trite answer, but we are sitting there going, "Okay, so we have the new leader of the Greens. What is the right level? We have the conference coming. How do we cover that?" These debates are happening in the newsroom now to make sure that we deliver—this goes back to the Chair's challenge—fair and impartial coverage of the UK political landscape in the round. I take the challenges that we will be judged over a period of time by the data on how we did it and how we are perceived by the British public. The numbers are pretty good at the moment, but there is no complacency. To your point, we need to give voice to those parties that are—I do not know what the right expression is—on the edge of British politics. Absolutely.

**Q166 Dr Huq:** Also, it does not inspire loads of confidence when some of your senior people are known as being very partisan, like Robbie Gibb or Raffi Berg—I think he has been exposed on Twitter by some people. Robbie Gibb has a very long—

**Tim Davie:** Can I pull those apart and bite on that for a second, because I do not think that it is fair? We have reporters with a certain background who are doing excellent work. Forgive me, but I think it is unacceptable when people are attacking individual reporters.

**Q167 Dr Huq:** It is not reporters; it is people at board level who have very close links—

**Tim Davie:** I am talking about Raffi Berg—that is why I just pulled it apart. Raffi Berg is a reporter in the BBC.

**Q168 Dr Huq:** He is not a reporter.

**Tim Davie:** A journalist in the BBC.

**Q169 Dr Huq:** Anyway, what I want to know more is about Robbie Gibb, the brother of Nick Gibb, who was an MP—

**Tim Davie:** I am aware of Robbie Gibb—without being flippant. Then we get to the people on the board. I think the chair can speak for how the board works—

**Q170 Dr Huq:** Right, if they have little influence, that is one thing then. So you are saying that they are not making these editorial decisions? I know we are against the clock a bit—

**Chair:** Yes, we are against the clock; we need to move this on.



**Dr Shah:** Let me answer the Robbie Gibb point. The board consists of 14 directors. Robbie is one of 10 non-executive directors. He has no role—and nor do I—on anything before transmission. So there is no influence there whatsoever. We are, however, charged with reviewing the output and making sure that it conforms to the guidelines we have, which is what Robbie does, along with the nine other non-execs.

Q171 **Dr Huq:** Okay, point taken. Tim, you mentioned “Question Time”, and we have sparred over that for some years now. Every time we are here, I have figures, which are very different from your figures, about the selection criteria—the non-politicians, the people from GB News and other broadcasters, the people from *The Spectator*, the heads of supermarkets and those kinds of people, and then your one Labour. Maybe this time we can clear it up once and for all. What exactly are the selection criteria for being a “Question Time” panellist? It is your flagship programme. Is it based on opinion polls, representation in Parliament, or something else? Can you tell us?

**Tim Davie:** It is a balance of those things. I mean, honestly—

Q172 **Dr Huq:** Well, can you publish it and show us?

**Tim Davie:** We have had this dance a number of times and I think—

Q173 **Dr Huq:** Yes, because I say some numbers—“They’ve all been to Oxbridge,” or “They’ve all been to private school”—and you say it is not true. So could you publish, clearly, the criteria? Because every week it will change, do you know what I mean? On Thursday, we change the game. So can we have the selection criteria?

**Tim Davie:** Since autumn 2024, we have had 34 from Labour, 34 Conservatives, 14 Lib Dems, eight from Reform—

Q174 **Dr Huq:** That is not my question, because that is going to change on a weekly basis. We want to know how do you get on the show?

**Tim Davie:** It is a judgment from the editorial team to reflect the political landscape, but also those people who are—it is not just about party politics; it is about those people who have a voice and those people who represent different areas of the community. I am more than happy to offer that you go and meet the editors and meet the team, and they can talk you through how they do it. They are very good.

Q175 **Dr Huq:** I just want clear criteria published.

**Tim Davie:** Well, look, I have all the political positions and some non-politicians, who are up for debate. The split is as follows: left, 24; right 24; neutral 12. That is since autumn 2024. That is the team’s criteria. They look at it in the round and go, “Have we got balance?” I am getting equal incoming from the other side, by the way. I am more than happy to take this outside and you can meet the editor. Because we have done this three times, and I think we are in a really good—

Q176 **Dr Huq:** But that is not what I asked you, is it?



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**Chair:** We are asking if you would publish the criteria.

**Tim Davie:** We are not publishing fixed—

Q177 **Dr Huq:** When you are on a selection panel, there are desirable attributes, essential attributes, and things like that.

**Tim Davie:** Hold on. We have an editorial system; we do not have a tick-box system. What we do—

Q178 **Dr Huq:** So you're making it up as you go along.

**Tim Davie:** No. Hold on. That's—we haven't—

**Dr Huq:** I think that is pretty clear.

**Chair:** Let's move on.

**Tim Davie:** But that is not representative of what actually happens.

**Chair:** I think you two are always going to fall out over this, so I am going to move it on. Let's go to Jo, please.

Q179 **Jo Platt:** Tim, by what criteria did you choose to put Thomas Skinner on "Strictly Come Dancing"?

**Tim Davie:** That was not my decision; that was the production team. They have two criteria: those people who want to do "Strictly", and those people they think would be interesting to the audience. That was it.

Q180 **Jo Platt:** Okay. There is a claim that Narinder Kaur was deemed too controversial to be on "Strictly Come Dancing", so how are you evaluating this?

**Tim Davie:** I have never heard that. Simply put, I am not involved directly. That is not disowning it—it is just that, day to day, it is for BBC Studios to propose to the commissioner of entertainment, first, who will take part, because it is quite a commitment, with three months in full training, and, secondly, who they think would make a good balance in terms of the cast. My goodness, they have done a good job in terms of creating a phenomenal show.

We do not say that you have to agree, or that there will not be people with different views. Clearly, we would not take anyone whose views are just beyond the pale, or who we would see as completely unacceptable or unsuitable—racist views, and all of those things. We would not accept them. But that is not the case here, from what I know. I am not an expert on the individual per se. I have read some of the coverage, but I think we are a pretty broad church when it comes to "Strictly".

Q181 **Jo Platt:** So there is not a specific set of criteria that you are adhering to? I mean, with Thomas Skinner, is he controversial?

**Tim Davie:** What criteria are you thinking of?

Q182 **Jo Platt:** The basis of who gets on to "Strictly Come Dancing".



**Tim Davie:** I understand that. What criteria would you—

Q183 **Jo Platt:** Well, if one is deemed too controversial, what is that? There must be criteria if someone is deemed too controversial.

**Tim Davie:** I think it is related to there may be views you do not agree with, but that is not to me criteria. If someone had broadcast things that were totally unacceptable, had racist views, we do not want them anywhere near our shows. That is obvious. That is what our team has to judge. I do not know how many series we are into, but we have had a pretty good run of contestants. There have been things to deal with, but in terms of the casting and the overall show around the world, I think they do a good job.

Q184 **Jo Platt:** I think it goes back to the previous question from my colleagues. How are you deciding how much airtime there is outside of news and current affairs for personalities who could be described as political? Is there not a danger for the BBC of falling into the culture war trap?

**Tim Davie:** I would love the BBC not to be in the culture wars. But with everything, if you are going to cast people now, with social media we are in a completely new landscape. We are into a dancing programme here. We will not be talking about current affairs. We will be looking at how well they dance. I think it is fine to cast an individual, as long as they are within boundaries and it is one person within a long lineup of different individuals. Different people have different views on the casting this year the other way, by the way. It is just the nature of the beast in a social media world that everyone has a bit of a view. I do not think it is right to say that we will not have anyone who has ever said anything that you either disagree with or who is slightly controversial on social media. I do not think it works. Frankly I think it would just cut the list down too far nowadays. With some heavy heart, because I would love that to be the case.

Q185 **Mr Alaba:** What was your response to the Government's creative sector plan and the measures included to support public service broadcasters?

**Tim Davie:** Broadly speaking, I am positive. I am positive about the landscape at the moment. That is not only in terms of the Government's intentions around public service media but, if I may just say because I know we are a bit short time, of Ofcom's review of public service media as well and some of those recommendations. First, I really appreciate the overall support for public service broadcasting. We are going to have to fight for public service broadcasting. We should be incredibly proud of the BBC and what it is delivering, and I am glad the Government recognise that. I am also really pleased, having worked for many decades on this, that when you look at the industrial growth strategy, creative industries are absolutely part of that. This Committee is now looking after what I think is one of the key growth engines of the UK. I am very supportive of it.

Having said that, I think what we are seeing is a challenge to act more quickly, and with some urgency in a radically new landscape, around



collaboration, prominence, around a whole load of decisions around DTT transition, which we might not talk about. All those things. There is a sense that now is the time to get moving on public service media and support it, because if we do not, I think the jeopardy becomes too high. I worry. I think we are in a strong position. As I always say in this Committee, if you want cheering up, fly anywhere in the world and talk about the BBC. We are the envy of the world. The question is that we have to try to protect that.

**Dr Shah:** In both the Government and the Ofcom review, I am very pleased to note that there is a commitment to public service broadcasting. I cannot tell you how important I and the Board think this is. Of course the BBC is the major player here, but it is important for this country that we recognise the value of public service broadcasting in the face of this changing landscape. One of the issues, as all know, is prominence. I do not know if you have been to the latest smart TVs displays—it takes a long time to get to public sector broadcasting. It is really important that prominence matters, not just for the BBC but for PSB as a whole. Our impact on the creative industries of this country is profound. Again, I really welcome both Ofcom's and the Government's recognition of the importance of public service broadcasting.

Q186 **Mr Alaba:** On that point, the plan proposed the updating of the policy and the regulatory framework. What should the Government prioritise in updating its regulatory framework?

**Tim Davie:** First, we have to get the media Act done and get the prominence sorted. To echo the chair's comments, it is not an accident that we have such a thriving and admired creative sector. We have decided, in terms of prominence, in terms of intervention and in terms of our licence fee, to create something, and we have created a lot of growth. The roles for the BBC are clear: being a trusted source of information is one. There is also homegrown content. Last night I was at the amazing dinner to celebrate 70 years of ITV, and we have created an incredible system. Also, we all care about social cohesion. A public service broadcaster is not about weaponising and going into a particular silo.

To answer your question, and to echo the chair's points, we need to understand, in areas such as smart televisions, the right level of prominence for public service broadcasting. If the tiles along the bottom of a screen of an evening are just for sale to the highest bidder, that is a different regime from where we are today.

Secondly, we need stable and adequate funding. That includes the BBC in terms of what comes after the licence fee, how that works, and how we reform and ensure that we have universal funding. That is critical and I welcome the support from numerous quarters for that. We need clarity—sorry, but you did ask!

**Mr Alaba:** No, no, carry on.



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**Tim Davie:** We need clarity about the distribution in the future. By the way, I am largely echoing Ofcom's good work on this. It works with Government on that, which is where we are going. We need to ensure that we can execute partnerships in different areas to share our resources with other public service broadcasters.

We also need, in the words of Ofcom, who are on this, to streamline regulation and strip away unnecessary restrictions. We clearly need accountability—we are here to provide that—but we need to act at speed. My biggest worry is not about our all having the intent to do this; I feel supported and motivated about that. The BBC feels in a good place on delivering its numbers. The issue is speed. We are in a position whereby players are moving incredibly fast. Many are not regulated, and they are moving extremely fast. If we have a debate about prominence, or World Service funding, that lasts too long, with AI and all the other things we could talk about, the world is moving very fast. The worry is more about speed than intent.

Q187 **Mr Alaba:** Dr Shah, you wanted to come in. Could you please be brief?

**Dr Shah:** Yes. Ofcom is very positive about this, but the speed of regulation and control—earlier I mentioned how long it took to get our radio extensions done, with the public interest test—is slow. As Tim said, there must be a recognition of how fast things are moving. We must also think about our relationship with other social platforms—TikTok, YouTube and so on—and ensure that our regulatory framework allows us to go to where people are going. We need a framework that gives us the freedom to move, within accountability, to the changing landscape. I cannot tell you how fast it is changing and how much money streamers are pouring into, for example, AI. That will transform our world, and we need the regulatory mechanism to deal with it.

Q188 **Tom Rutland:** I declare an interest as chair of the all-party parliamentary group for the BBC and a recipient of hospitality.

Dr Shah, Peter Bazalgette, one of the creative sector plan's authors, told us that the Government's first priority should be sorting out the funding of a healthy BBC. Are you persuaded that that is high up the Government's priority list?

**Dr Shah:** I talk to the Secretary of State all the time, and I think that she is fully aware of the importance of our funding model, and the need for scale and universality. If there were an easy solution, we would have had it. How we get the funding model is quite complicated. I agree with Peter Bazalgette that we need to do that. Once the Green Paper is out in early October, we will get into earnest discussions about how we reform the common funding model in such a way as to deliver our mission to be universal and to have scale, and that allows us to compete in this new world that we are working in.

Q189 **Tom Rutland:** On a similar topic, and perhaps more urgently, we anticipate that a decision on funding for the World Service will be made by the Foreign Office in the coming weeks. Do you anticipate that the Foreign



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Office will meet your ask for a funding increase from around £137 million to around £200 million a year?

**Tim Davie:** I hope so. It is critical that we fund the World Service properly. Most people know this, but, as I have said, we fund most of the World Service at £262 million. We were very grateful to get an extra bit of money in the last round to get us to £137 million from Government in the round. We need that increase. It is essential if we are going to keep providing services with inflation and the competitive situation. We are short of time, so I will not put the butter on too thick, but you and others are aware that the investments by China, Russia and other places in capturing broadcast frequencies and pushing out their messages are extreme. That should be a Government priority. In the short term in the spending round, we need to make this decision.

There is a longer-term decision within charter, which is, "Who funds the World Service?" I have been clear that I do not think it is right to put it on the licence fee payer—through the licence fee, I should say. The second thing is, "Do we want to do the World Service at an increased level?" We can do it. The team are fantastic. It is what I would call "pay and play": if you invest more money, you get more reach. We can sign off against very robust targets and be held accountable for how we do it. We can see a plan. In the round, the BBC gets to about 400 million-plus people a week. We see a plan where we could double that. I think the UK should go for it. That is what we have to get to.

**Dr Shah:** I understand the pressures on funding everywhere, including the World Service, but people should recognise just how dangerous the world is and how important the World Service is in providing impartial news and journalists. Especially if you look at what is going on in Africa, as we retreat, China and Russia move in. That is not good.

Q190 **Chair:** What conversations have you had with the FCDO regarding that?

**Dr Shah:** I have talked to the Secretary of State, as was—not the new Secretary of State. Let me be honest: the response I get is warm and encouraging and recognises the importance of the World Service and its soft power. It is more than soft power; it is as much for democracy around the world and for the role of the BBC. People admire the World Service. I understand the budgetary constraints, but, if I may put it this way, there is a disconnect between the warm words and how much the World Service needs.

Q191 **Tom Rutland:** On that, it was reported that the Foreign Office asked the BBC to model a World Service budget that would be flat cash over the next three years as part of the spending review. What impact would that have on the World Service's work to counter hostile propaganda?

**Tim Davie:** We would just have to cut some services. As I say, it is pay and play. It is pretty direct. There is not a lot of fat there—there is no fat. A number of Committee members have been to see World Service operations. They are lean and mean and they do their business. It is very



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simple: globally, we face inflation just buying distribution slots. That is not faux—it is hard and you can analyse it.

It is no great surprise that in any spending round, you look at what flat looks like and what we would get if we got more money. We are looking at those scenarios. To echo what Dr Shah was saying, I have met the Secretary of State and the permanent secretary, and there is clearly support for the World Service.

Q192 **Chair:** Just to be clear, has neither of you yet met the new Foreign Secretary?

**Tim Davie:** Apologies; I meant the old Foreign Secretary, not the new one—that would have been rapid. Within the BBC, we have a very good dialogue with the officials. There is huge recognition for what the World Service brings. But, to your point, we are seeing budgetary pressure at extreme levels everywhere. Of course, we would make the case in terms of the next spending round. In my view, that is still a plaster, but it is essential. Otherwise, we will have to cut services.

What I can't do, with the pressure—this Committee has been through local—as we go into the next licence fee settlement, one thing I would be defensive on is that the BBC's efficiency is pretty brutal now. The steam is literally coming off in various places. We have taken 2,000 roles out of public service BBC. We are pretty efficient. So what I can't do is say to householders in the UK, "We are taking money out to fund the World Service." With a heavy heart, I just cannot find the money.

Q193 **Tom Rutland:** Tim, on the topic of income, what are you doing to address the continuing decline in the number of people paying for a TV licence?

**Tim Davie:** Dr Shah might want to say something on this. Certainly we are not immune from the pressures of a completely transformed market. If you talk to anyone in advertising subscription or look across local media, it's all pretty difficult. I think the licence fee has held up better than many models around the world. Overall, as you know, we took in a little bit more money last year, but we lost 300,000 households. That was the price rise. So it has been a balance. The licence fee is in no way collapsing. It is enforceable, in my view—

Q194 **Chair:** Evasion has gone up as well.

**Tim Davie:** It has gone up a little bit, but that is, I think, understandable with the vast changes in the market and some households going, "Okay, what services do we want?" Having said that, I think our numbers—as people who know me know, I am obsessed with usage of the BBC, not just making a case for it based on purpose. We have an incredible purpose; we have an incredible role. But the amazing thing is that we still have, as per the annual report, over 80% of people using us a week and 94% every month. These are incredible numbers and they are unique worldwide.

We do need to reform the licence fee. We need to think about the areas that I have talked about: level of progressiveness, exact scope—all those things. I do think that if we just stay where we are, that is not good



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enough. For what it's worth, I don't think that is right. We have ruled out advertising—Dr Shah, you might want to say something on that—but I do think we need some reform. I don't think it is easy, but I do think we need to be innovative and I echo the Secretary of State when she says she wants to find a solution for the next generation. I think that's good.

**Dr Shah:** The figures are not great. It is particularly worrying for us, and I think what it says is that the licence fee as an instrument—it does, as Tim says, produce a lot of money, but it is one that belongs, in a way, to an analogue world where people watched television. People do that differently now, so we need to reform it, because what will not work is simply to roll over the licence fee. Those trends that you are talking about will just continue, which is why the roll-over does not work. It is not that we just accept the decline, because last year—it is still going down, but we managed to stem it. How did we stem it? Because we had terrific content.

**Tim Davie:** Exactly.

**Dr Shah:** There was sport and there was drama. Making really good content that people want to watch and use is central to helping—it's never going to stop the trend, until we reform the licence fee, but we cannot just sit back and say, "Well, that's the end of it." No, we need to do it.

One of the things I will say is that we are really working hard at how we improve our content so that we speak to a variety of people. We have just done—it will be coming out shortly—our review of portrayal. How do we portray groups across the country, in terms of representation? The better we get at that, the better people think the BBC is for them, and the more likely they are to want to pay for it. So we do take lots of actions to try to keep this decline steady, but we need to reform the licence fee and find a way that does deliver what we need.

Q195 **Tom Rutland:** Finally on this, I think evasion rates have risen from just under 7% to 12.5% over the last five or six years. That is about an 80% increase. What is being done, Tim, to make sure that Capita is providing good value for money when collecting the licence fee?

**Tim Davie:** We are doing a lot of work with Capita. By the way, we are trying to get the balance right, because there are fair concerns around how you appropriately collect and enforce. I believe in enforcement. Actually, the vast majority of people say, "Well, I pay, so it's fair that everyone pays." But we are talking, often, about low-income households. We are often talking about women in the household. So we have been offering simple payment plans—all those things. It's not just about sticks; it's also about carrots. If you actually look at the number of prosecutions, it has been going down, so we are trying to get the balance right.

Our evasion rates are not wildly dissimilar to some in Europe and other places, but we are working with Capita on things like a retention unit, so we are working a bit more clearly in terms of talking to people and saying, "Are you definitely not using it?" There is one thing about someone saying, "No licence fee needed," but most of our evidence suggests that there is

also that evasion question, and we have to manage it, to your point. I can give you more details than I am giving you now because I am conscious of time, but there is a whole load of mechanics.

Technology can help us a little bit as we go forward, in terms of how we manage the call centre in Darwen—all those things. If people are interested in the BBC, manning those calls for a while is very interesting, because most of it is, to Dr Shah's point, about usage and making sure we have the right content. But we are enforcing; we continue to enforce. We continue to be quite tough about that, but in a sensitive way. We are seeing some results on the added investment from Capita on technology and retention.

**Q196 Chris Kane:** Can I ask about setting targets for tackling evasion? I do not think you have set targets for doing this. This is a general question—my curiosity is about not just the scale of the problem, but the scale of the answer to the problem. That is one part of it, but I note that, for example, you are putting a huge amount into enforcement visits. The visits statistics are going up, but the resulting prosecutions or remedial actions from those that you visit is not going up as well. You are spending a lot of money on this, but it is not all working out the way you would want.

**Tim Davie:** It is a harder environment when you have on-demand services and Netflix. Going back to the top, there is not a business model in traditional media that is not challenged. In fact, the licence fee has been a lot better than most. It has been incredibly resilient, and that is due to usage. We are watching this like a hawk. If you come to the top team at the BBC, we will look at evasion rates. We are also spending a lot more time on linking, as Dr Shah said, behaviour and payment. I am obsessed with people using the BBC, because I do not want the BBC to be a market failure BBC.

**Q197 Chris Kane:** But I do not think you are setting targets for tackling evasion, so how are you measuring success without targets?

**Tim Davie:** I think we are better than that, if I may. Every budget, we absolutely have a forecast in terms of no licence fee needed, and within that, what evasion there is. We can give you some examples of this, but in our budgeting, we absolutely need to know what our income is, so we have an assumption around our evasion rates.

**Q198 Chair:** When is Capita's contract up for renewal?

**Tim Davie:** I think this year—I don't know. It is quite soon, and then the question is whether you extend for a bit. The other thing is, to be open with you, if we are making some adjustments—we don't know how big—in terms of evolving the system, you ideally want to know what that is, going through charter, before you work on how you are going to provide that. That is where we are.

**Q199 Chris Kane:** These internal targets you are talking about would be useful information to see, to help us evaluate, as you are doing, how well things are working.



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**Tim Davie:** Let me take that away and see what we can do, and we can respond.

Q200 **Dr Huq:** Given the big gap between the BBC's expectations and the FCDO's current financial position, and black holes all over Government, do you have a contingency plan if they do not agree to take on the World Service after 2027?

**Tim Davie:** Fair point. We had plans in the short term if we got a flat settlement. To the earlier point about whether that scenario is being done, we have shown, "Okay, we'd have to trim here and do that." The answer to your question is, we are not quite there yet, because it is all linked to the charter negotiation and what public service we provide to the UK. Bear with me—it is one big pot of money. If you as the Government say, "I'm not funding the World Service," we then say, "Okay. If we're collecting the money in, what's the right amount to be spent on the World Service?" We have not finally done that work. Frankly, I am so passionate about the World Service. We would have to think about, within the overall licence fee, what a minimal service would be or how that would work.

We are not quite there yet, because the other thing we need to do is say, "Within the licence fee, what will we provide in education and disinformation for the UK?" What is public service going to be? Hopefully, we can have this as our next conversation. What is public service going to be in the next 10 years? What are we going to offer? It is all in the mix.

I do not have to have a contingency plan at this point—I don't have to have one. I have to have an overall plan for the BBC and then, between the Green Paper and the White Paper, we need—what is really important, and it links to a conversation we have not had about DTT—some planning certainty before the start of the new charter to do exactly what you are talking about.

Q201 **Dr Huq:** Do you think, in terms of all this stuff—public trust, journalistic integrity and creative freedom—that cuts are leading to reputational damage within the BBC? Even on HR matters, Gregg Wallace and all those people in the independent companies are not covered by your HR systems, because you slashed loads of HR staff.

**Tim Davie:** Yes, but we have had our budget, as you know, cut by millions and millions over the last decade, and we have coped. Actually, we have done more than cope; we have pulled off incredible results with limited resources versus the UK—I would be led by the data: we have still got 80% of people using us every week, for all our challenges. Bear with me: our trust scores, if you look in the annual report, as I am sure you have done—

**Dr Huq:** When things go wrong—do you know what I mean?—like the Gregg Wallace—

**Tim Davie:** Do I know what you mean? Of course; I live them every day. Last year, we actually—and I have spent my tenure—really drove up our reputation for impartiality.



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**Dr Huq:** The report that came out—I think it was in November that Gregg Wallace was—

**Tim Davie:** I'm sorry. I'm lost on what issue I am chasing here.

**Dr Huq:** Cuts leading to reputational damage and cutting corners.

**Tim Davie:** You have got two points in there. Cuts make it much harder. If the BBC is not properly invested in, it simply makes it much harder for us to drive usage and justify a licence fee. We are lucky. We still have a universal licence fee that gives us enough—just; with listed events and all the things—to be at the centre of British life and provide full services across local. You know we have moved money around—that has been sensitive—and all those things, but broadly speaking it is working.

Your point is a separate one but linked, which is: do I worry? Of course I worry that when we make mistakes it has an impact on our reputation. Of course I worry—trust is utterly critical to the BBC. There are two points here. One is that we need to address and make sure that we are minimising mistakes. That has been difficult.

Q202 **Chair:** There is a financial impact as well. When you are doing costly investigations into something that has gone wrong, that is money that you are not spending on the BBC World Service.

**Tim Davie:** You are absolutely right. Within the proportion of the licence fee it is not enormous, but every pound counts, so I totally take your point. The bigger thing is reputational. I would say, though, that the BBC is unique—it makes for an interesting leadership challenge at times; it is the toughest thing—in that we have a journalist organisation that was exposing and leading on the Gregg Wallace story. That was the BBC. That is an incredible thing—

**Dr Huq:** He has been on every week. He is on more often than ever.

**Tim Davie:** No, hold on. We have dispensed with his services—

**Dr Huq:** The Gaza programme with the child narrator has clearly been binned now.

**Tim Davie:** That was not a budgetary issue in the slightest.

**Dr Huq:** You can edit a Gregg Wallace, but you can't edit that.

**Chair:** Are you happy to move on?

**Dr Huq:** Ecstatic.

Q203 **Mr Alaba:** How is BBC Commercial planning to deliver on the ambition to double its size by 2027-28? How confident are you on its delivery? I say that because in the report it says you failed to meet your targets on intellectual property. I think one in 10 of your most profitable titles was based on new intellectual property, so how are you addressing that?



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**Tim Davie:** I think we have got an incredible story with BBC Studios in terms of what we have done over the last few years, and I am very proud of the business. I think the key routes to growth, if you talk to the CEO, the board and the commercial board, are clear in their plan. They want to grow the IP and production business. There are things like BritBox in the States, which we fully own, and there are other opportunities—we have just put a subscription on BBC.com in the States. So there are clearly business opportunities. Although it is an incredible story—£2 billion turnover at a decent margin—I still think we can double the business. Having said that, I think the market is a lot tougher than it was a couple of years ago.

Q204 **Mr Alaba:** How do you think you can double the business?

**Tim Davie:** I think the market is a lot tougher—let me just say that—because the amount of spending by some of the US providers is not what it was. There is often less money to be made in areas like news. So it is not without significant challenges. The growth we see is in building our own IP, where we have our own shows. Part of that is also tying up with people who have got valuable IP. Guess what has worked for us this year? It is an Australian blue dog—“Bluey”. We have the rights to “Bluey” internationally; I believe it is the biggest title on Disney+, and it is coming to the UK creative economy through BBC Studios. That is an example of the kind of things we can do if we can get more IP.

The second example is BritBox. BritBox is a service in the US. It is not the biggest in the world in terms of the US market, but actually for the BBC it is very profitable, it is growing fast and it builds the BBC. We can grow that out. I think there are other areas, such as BBC.com where we now have a subscription layer on news. We have got audio and factual documentaries. There are a lot of things you could do. One of the big issues for BBC Studios is to choose which one of those opportunities gets most return and balance short-term reward versus long-term growth. That is what we are trying to do, because what you do not want to do is take the dividend out to support the UK too fast—you want to grow value.

**Dr Shah:** I would like to make one further observation: to grow a business, you need to invest in it. The borrowing limits for BBC Studios sit on the Government books. It would be very helpful if BBC Studios could invest more by borrowing more. There are limits, and we are reaching those limits, so it would be worth debating and discussing the borrowing limits of BBC Studios.

**Tim Davie:** That is an important point, and it goes directly to your question about how we get growth—unless we have that funding, by the way. We have taken the debt up to £750 million, but I think being able to borrow effectively as a studio is something every company needs. I know that good conversations are going on about that.

Q205 **Mr Alaba:** In previous years, the amount returned from your commercial arm has been disclosed in your annual report, but it is not in your last report. Could you explain why? How much was actually returned in 2024-



25?

**Tim Davie:** I can't see where it is right now, but we have been public about our returns. Can we just write to you to confirm that? You can publish it. It is no problem at all.

Q206 **Chair:** Yes, that would be really helpful, because as far as we can see, it was absent in 2024-25. We cannot understand why it was left out this year.

**Tim Davie:** All right. I will look at it and send you a note, because there is no issue in telling you what it was.

Q207 **Mr Alaba:** Okay. You are going to write to us and let us know, which is great, but the question is about whether you could be a bit more transparent. Would you look at disclosing it in the reports?

**Tim Davie:** I do not see an issue with it, but I will check with the team. I will do it in the same note. I will give you the numbers and then confirm the protocol going forward. We have no desire not to share that.

Q208 **Chair:** And how that number came to exist, because how that value is worked out just seems to be quite opaque.

**Tim Davie:** Do you mean the so-called returns to the BBC number?

**Chair:** Correct.

**Tim Davie:** Right. That is important. We should just work together on that, because I have no desire not to share. The returns to the BBC number is a bit of a unique number. It is not that we are not being transparent—

**Chair:** Unique is one word for it.

**Tim Davie:** No, but it is valid to a degree. It is your profit, but also your investment into BBC productions, so we just need to show that—there is no smoke and mirrors here. It is absolutely clear: you have got profit, and if you are going to make a programme with Attenborough on parenthood, how much money did the commercial arm contribute?

Q209 **Mr Alaba:** Thank you for making that point. However, in previous years, it has been disclosed, but not this year.

**Tim Davie:** I am just going to confirm it to you, because I have no problem here. I think it was simply because the returns to the BBC number is, to the Chair's point, a bit of a strange number. It is not strange in that we are trying to dissemble; it is just strange as a construct in the normal world. In the normal world, you look at EBITDA and cash. We will give you all the numbers—it is fine.

Q210 **Chris Kane:** I do not know whether this is helpful or unhelpful, but on the Public Accounts Committee next week we will be looking at that. You have reported two dividends—last year and this year—in this year's accounts. I was a little bit confused about that question as well. A shared



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understanding and clarity are required, because I had that similar confusion at the beginning of the Committee as well.

**Tim Davie:** Okay. I have got a note saying that it is in the commercial section—let's just look at it outside, and I will come back to you. It may well be hiding in the commercial section. I have not been in a discussion that says we are going to not give you the number, so I am more than happy to do that.

Q211 **Mr Alaba:** My last question is for Dr Shah, given the board's responsibility for establishing a framework for assessing performance-related pay for the CEO of BBC Studios. How do you get to that, what is it based on and how do you substantiate that?

**Dr Shah:** The remuneration committee of the BBC determines the salary of the director general. We take into account the normal set of criteria. We benchmark it. We look at previous salaries. We look at the pay rates we have and the money we have. It is a proper quantitative analysis. We do it rigorously. We are not profligate with the money. The outcome that we have for the director general is, I think, appropriate to the job he does.

On the Studios front, it is the BBC's commercial board that determines the pay of the chief executive. I am across it, and it is based on targets—very clearly based on targets of returns. It is much more of a commercial operation.

Q212 **Mr Alaba:** Is that standard or has it altered from previous years?

**Dr Shah:** It has not altered to my knowledge.

**Tim Davie:** I can answer that, because I have done both roles, and before, I was overseeing it. From what I remember, it has always been pretty much the case that the Studios remuneration, because it is not funded from the licence fee directly, has been higher and bonused and all those things—but it is benchmarked versus others in the industry. Let's just say that we are not trying to benchmark totally here—we are trying to find a place in between that is realistic to attract that commercial talent.

Q213 **Mr Alaba:** And those criteria have been in place—

**Tim Davie:** They have been in place for a few years. It is really rigorous with the remuneration committee of the board. They work through the benchmarks. They get external advice.

It is a slightly strange situation that we are in, as a public service. We have taken down some of the public service salaries, including the director general's—quite rightly—over time; I am talking about over the last decade. But Studios—I want to be able to attract—

**Dr Shah:** I want to emphasise Tim's point. In the last assessment, the director general's pay has come down pretty significantly from what it was several years ago. It is important to know that we are doing our business.

Secondly, it continues to be far less than in the private sector for somebody running an organisation of £4.5 billion and 20,000 staff. Even in



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the media, there are people running smaller organisations who get paid a great deal more. I think we are pretty rigorous in the way we remunerate our senior staff.

**Tim Davie:** Very quickly, because I was a bit all over the place on that commercial point, I just want to say that we have published in a press release—we will send you that—the overall commercial returns number, which was £391 million versus £325 million the year before. Within that was the largest investment in content, at £200 million, and a dividend of £161 million. There are a few other bits and pieces in there. That does hit our cumulative return in the first three years. We got to over £1 billion, which we committed to do in five years. We got there in three years.

In the annual report in the chair of the commercial board section and in our press release, that showed the return figures for the first three years of the five-year period. I can send you that. I will just confirm that, but just to nail that one, there is no issue with sending you this and showing the dividend and the content payment. There is no problem.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Q214 **Chris Kane:** Can I come back to intellectual property for a minute? Watching movies in the last 10 years, I think we have all realised that exploiting current IP is preferable within the industry at the moment to creating new IP. I wonder how much of a leadership role the BBC is playing in creating new IP. While you have not met your targets, how much of an effort are you putting into creating new IP as opposed to exploiting it?

I will add a third part to the question that you might want to reflect on: regulatory barriers to exploiting or creating IP. Is there anything you think we would benefit from knowing?

**Tim Davie:** I don't think it is regulatory. There are other areas in the BBC where I would be saying that there are either legislative or regulatory issues. This is not that.

Your question is absolutely a grade A question for the UK, and top priority for the UK creative industries. A lot of the analysis we do, I think, does not look at how thick our share of the economics is. Do you see what I mean? I revel in and love our production sector in the UK, but production margin is generally quite small. To your question on where the real value is, it is somewhere like where we own "Strictly" and that is in many territories and you own IP, or where we do a deal with "Bluey" and we own IP.

I think there is a challenge for us to maintain enough UK IP. Why? It is a bit like footballers or anything. Those people are the top talent—you will have read the deals—and they are being picked up globally by companies because that is where the value is: in IP. They are being paid a fortune to bring their IP, and that then gets owned outside the UK. I don't think we are spending enough time on that.



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What is the BBC doing? First, it has created BBC Studios, the biggest production IP company that is not for sale; we have that for the UK public, as our shareholder, to grow IP. Do I think we should be generating more hits—new hits—out of Studios? Yes, I would like that. That is a really good, top-level challenge that relates directly to the question about Studios' growth.

We have hired some really good people in recent months. You will see a new chief content officer in Studios and all those people coming into Studios—we have a better IP exploitation unit in there, with an incredible team. We have work to do. That is an absolutely top-level challenge to create value for the BBC over time. We have an incredible archive. We have some new IP, but we could do with some more.

**Q215 Chair:** Do you think you are sufficiently exploiting your historical, archive IP? Just think about the nostalgia for some of the iconic childhood characters, with the success of Paddington being reimaged for the movies over the past decade or so. You have said yourself that Bluey the dog is one of your most successful earners; that shows the fondness for children's TV. There is quite a gap in the market for decent quality children's TV; in fact, we are going to be doing an inquiry into children's TV as a Select Committee.

**Tim Davie:** Critical—yes.

**Chair:** Do you think you are doing enough to exploit that back catalogue? In addition, the annual report suggests that the BBC's expenditure on children's programming reduced by 77% in 2024-25. How does that help with finding the great hits for the future?

**Tim Davie:** Let me deal with that last point, if I may: the children's figure is simply an accounting change. What we are doing is spreading the money over a longer lifetime. Our investment in children's programming actually went up, marginally, from £92 million to £94 million, doing 300 hours and the 50 titles—to your point, I am very pleased that you are looking at children's programming; I am worried about it.

I heard the other day—I can't back this up—that we may now be the biggest producer of non-animated children's content in the world, because no one is getting close. We really are in a completely unique position in the UK. Others are struggling to make that work—not because of lack of intent, but because of the economics. I absolutely think we need to consider the tax regime and all those things. We have this incredible thing—all of us were brought up on it—called children's television in the UK and children's output. Our investment to children's is rock solid.

I think your challenge is fair. We have done a bit of that; we have gone back and looked at old titles and are looking in the catalogue. Two things are in my head when you mention it. One is whether there are some gems in there, like a Paddington, that can be—this word is powerful—reimagined. Is something out there? Studios are looking every day, digging around. We need to keep digging and thinking creatively about



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that. It is a great challenge, and I am sure those in Studios listening will say, "Right." They know I am interested in that as well.

On the back catalogue and the archive, of course everyone thinks that we may be sitting on a gold mine, but how do you actually monetise that? We have launched services with deep archive—people are sentimental about it. I was very sentimental watching all the old ITV output and advertising last night at their celebrations. But people's ability to pay for it and monetise it needs a bit more work in terms of how that could happen. But I do think that new technology could open up possibilities with the deep archive, with searchability. There are creative solutions. I take your challenge. It is part of the answer to the question about commercial growth. We need to hire the right people as well.

**Q216 Chris Kane:** Can I put on the record my membership of the National Union of Journalists? I should have done that earlier.

This is a plea, I suppose, following on from the earlier question about freelancers and IP. Freelancers already have slightly fewer rights than employed staff in the way they interact with the BBC; employed staff know where they stand when it comes to IP.

If you are creating new IP, may I make a plea for a robust assurance that freelancers are being treated fairly? Again, there are different levels of freelance interaction with the BBC, but the creative spark for good IP is as likely to come from the person just out of university, on their first shift at the BBC, on the smallest contract with the smallest money, as it is from the next Michael Bond with Paddington Bear. If we are to treat freelancers fairly, we must recognise that freelancing comes at different parts of your career, with different understandings.

**Tim Davie:** Understood. I do not have a lot to add. Having said that, I think people working at the BBC are creating IP for the UK public, and not necessarily for personal transformational wealth. That is a tension. Hopefully, we will get a very good audience for "Celebrity Traitors"—it is a great title, and I could not be happier to have it on the BBC. The company delivering it is fantastic, but it is not the BBC. We have to get the balance right and make sure that UK IP grows.

I would broaden your question slightly as well; I am also interested in a bigger question as we go into charter. If you are a UK so-called creator and you are creating content, how is the BBC accessible and how can you make sure you are fairly rewarded?

Actually, you have a better route staying in the UK system than just going solely on to YouTube. That is really interesting in terms of the creator economy—essentially, there are a lot of freelancers as well within that. We have a bit of work to do on policy and thinking around that as we go into charter, to make sure that the UK, and UK creators, keep the value. We are a lot more benign than some of the others in terms of capturing IP.

**Chris Kane:** I agree.

**Chair:** That brings us to the end of our questions today. As you say, in the



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coming weeks the Government should finally be starting the process for the BBC charter review, so I expect that we will be speaking to you again. In the meantime, thanks very much for your time today.