



From the Director-General

20 May 2021

Julian Knight MP
Chair, DCMS Select Committee
DCMS Committee,
House of Commons,
London, SW1A 0AA

By email to: cmscom@parliament.uk

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julian," with a long, sweeping horizontal line above the name.

The BBC has today published the findings of the independent investigation, conducted by Lord Dyson, into *Panorama's* November 1995 interview with Diana, Princess of Wales. The investigation, commissioned by the BBC Board last year, was set up with a view to establishing the truth of the events surrounding the programme.

I know you stated in November that the review was the right way to proceed and that your Committee would monitor developments as the inquiry moved forward. As such, I wanted to write to you today to alert you to the publication, set out the BBC's position in response and to offer to discuss the issue further with you, should you want to.

As you will have seen Lord Dyson has concluded that, whilst Princess Diana would likely have undertaken an interview with a BBC journalist of similar experience and reputation even without Martin Bashir's intervention, nevertheless the means by which the interview was secured fell far below the

standards that should be expected of the BBC. Similarly, subsequent attempts to investigate these issues were also defective and the BBC did not cover the facts of those investigations on its news outlets, as could have been expected.

Having received the report from Lord Dyson, we have accepted his findings in full and published the report today. It is clear from Lord Dyson's thorough and comprehensive report that the process for securing the interview fell far short of what audiences have a right to expect. The BBC should also have made more efforts to get to the bottom of what happened at the time and been more transparent about what it knew.

In publishing the report, we have also set out detail on extensive changes to policies, processes, guidelines and governance that have taken place in the intervening 25 years. I am confident that the BBC today is a very different organisation to the one that existed in 1995.

Despite that, we have today made a full and unconditional apology to those affected by the interview. We hope that this thorough report can draw a line under the events of 1995 and 1996 and I am clear that we will continue to do all we can as an organisation to ensure that an incident like this could not happen again.

Do let me know if you would like to discuss this issue further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Davie', with a long horizontal stroke above it.

Tim Davie
Director-General



Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Tim Davie CBE
Director-General, BBC
Broadcasting House
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21 May 2021

Dear Tim,

Thank you for your letter of 20 May 2021 regarding the Report of The Dyson Investigation by the Rt Hon Lord Dyson into Martin Bashir's 1995 *Panorama* interview with Diana, Princess of Wales ('the Report').

The Committee welcomes the BBC's acceptance of Lord Dyson's findings in full. However, there are still some serious questions that the Committee feels have not yet been adequately addressed by the BBC.

First, given what the BBC knew about Mr Bashir's practices around the time of the interview with Princess Diana, why was he rehired by the BBC in 2016 as religious affairs correspondent? Whilst Lord Dyson notes that the BBC's investigations into the interview in 1996 was "woefully ineffective", the Report states that those conducting the investigation were very aware that Bashir had lied on three occasions in a "serious and unexplained" manner. The fact that the BBC saw fit to rehire such a person raises serious concerns.

Secondly, in your letter of 20 May 2021, you note that you are confident that the BBC is a "very different organisation to the one that existed in 1995", and reassure the Committee that the BBC will do all it can to ensure that such incidents do not happen again. Whilst the Committee appreciates this sentiment, and acknowledges that the BBC has undergone significant governance reform in recent years, how can you reassure the Committee that there could be no repeat of the serious failings highlighted in Lord Dyson's report?

Finally, the BBC says that a "full and unconditional apology" to those affected by the interview has been made. However, graphic designer Matt Wiessler, who was commissioned by Mr Bashir to create the mocked-up documents at the centre of the investigation and who ultimately blew the whistle on Mr Bashir, said today that he received a "well-crafted letter" from the BBC which did the "absolute minimum" to apologise for the way he had been treated. The Committee would welcome your thoughts on whether, in the spirit of being "full and unconditional", the apologies offered to those affected actually go far enough.

The Committee will be discussing this issue in its private meeting on 26 May 2021. Therefore, I would be grateful if you could ensure that a response is urgently provided to the Committee by 5pm on 25 May 2021.

Yours sincerely,

Julian Knight MP
Chair, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee