

CMS 217952/DC

Lord Patten
Chair
BBC Trust
180 Great Portland Street
LONDON W1W 5QZ

23 October 2012



Dear Lord Patten

Following today's Select Committee hearing and the revelations that have emerged about the factual inaccuracies in the BBC's explanation about why the Savile item in Newsnight was pulled, very real concerns are being raised about public trust and confidence in the BBC.

In all our conversations we have talked about the paramount importance of full public trust in the BBC's inquiries and agreed that it is essential that licence fee payers can be assured that they are being conducted thoroughly and with the full cooperation of the BBC, in line with the Trust's duty to 'ensure that the BBC observes high standards of openness and transparency'.

I welcome the news that Dame Janet Smith and Nick Pollard have already started work. I understand that Dame Janet has met with the police and that the secretariats that will support both are in place and will be provided by independent legal firm Reed Smith to help ensure that they are able to conduct their reviews free from any conflicts of interest and with both a keen independent eye and expert legal support. I also welcome the fact that following the new developments in last night's Panorama programme, you have been able quickly to adapt the Terms of Reference to allow the Pollard Review to look at inaccuracies in the Newsnight editor's blog about the decision to pull the Savile item.



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I know you agree that it is vital that these inquiries are able to follow the evidence wherever it takes them and that it is equally important that every part of the BBC cooperates fully and openly with the inquiries. I welcomed your commitment when we spoke this morning to ensure that this would happen.

You also said in your foreword to the Trust's Review of the BBC Governance last year that you would 'be clearer about the roles and responsibilities of the BBC Trust and Executive Board, including the interaction between both boards'. This seems to me to be a critical opportunity to put that determination into practice. We discussed how it would be helpful to the public to understand more about how Dame Fiona Reynolds will be taking a leading role in the inquiries including her chairing of the Executive Board. This will also help to clarify how you and the Trust are working with her and the Executive Board to ensure that these inquiries are able to get to the bottom of these very serious allegations. Both the Trust and the Executive must stand ready to act on the results of the inquiries swiftly and decisively.

It is the Trust's role as the sovereign body of the BBC to be accountable to licence fee payers and ensure public confidence in the BBC. I know you are aware of the importance of that role and I look forward to being kept in touch with developments.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria Miller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rt Hon Maria Miller MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport
and Minister for Women and Equalities