BBC Response to Public Account Committee’s
Eighty-Seventh Report of Session 2017-19

This document notes the Public Accounts Committee’s (PAC) findings in the Renewing the EastEnders Set report (Eighty-Seventh Report of Session 2017-19)\(^1\) and welcomes the committee’s recognition of the importance of the E20 Programme to secure the long-term future of EastEnders. As the report states, the Programme will deliver many benefits including an extended set to better reflect modern East End London and suitability for filming in HD. The BBC’s investment in BBC Elstree Centre will provide robust structures for long-term production, addressing the issues around rescheduling and maintenance with an existing set which is no longer fit for purpose. The E20 Programme has already delivered many vital improvements at BBC Elstree Centre which benefit other productions on site.

These responses, as previously indicated, are given in the context that, under its Charter, ‘the BBC must be independent in all matters concerning the fulfilment of its Mission and the promotion of the Public Purposes, particularly as regards editorial and creative decisions, the times and manner in which its output and services are supplied, and in the management of its affairs’; and should ‘duly consider the expectations of Parliament (including those of the Public Accounts Committee) which have been formally communicated to the BBC’.

**Recommendation 1:** Commencing in October 2019 — one year into the construction of the Front Lot — the BBC should annually update the Committee on the progress, expected costs and completion date of E20. These updates should demonstrate how the BBC has learned lessons from previous project failings, and whether its revised risk and contingency budget has been adequate.

As the NAO’s E20: Renewing the EastEnders Set\(^2\) identifies, as one of the BBC’s Critical Projects, the E20 Programme receives additional oversight and scrutiny from the BBC Board and Programme Management Office. The BBC Board receives a monthly report on the Critical Projects with detailed reporting on how the projects are progressing. The NAO has access to these reports and NAO representatives also attend the BBC Audit and Risk Committee where the Critical Projects are discussed further.

In addition to the provision of information to the NAO as outlined above the BBC will provide the Committee with a copy of the October 2019 report as far as it relates to E20, once it has been considered by the Board.

**Recommendation 2:** By July 2019, the BBC should develop, and update us on, processes to make sure the right skills are in place from the outset for all of its critical projects.

As the NAO report states, the E20 Programme Director conducted a skills assessment of the team in 2018 and identified where there was need within the programme as it progressed. The BBC’s Critical Projects

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\(^1\) Published 20 March 2019

Project teams regularly conduct assessments of the skills mix required for each project and will continue to do so.

The BBC will update the committee as suggested in July 2019.

**Recommendation 3:** By October 2019, the BBC should provide us with evidence of how it ensures best practice in procurement and contract management across its diverse range of contracts — for £20 and other contracts.

The BBC Procurement team is recognised in the industry as one of the leaders in public sector procurement. The BBC was the first ever organisation to be accredited to the GSA’s Global Sourcing Standard in 2017. The BBC’s Procurement team was the first media and first public sector team to be awarded the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply Corporate Partnership Programme Gold Accreditation. The team has won several industry awards such as the 2016 Supply Chain Excellence award for Sourcing and Procurement and the 2016 GSA Offshoring Project of the Year.

The BBC will write to the committee by October 2019 with evidence of how it ensures best practice in procurement and contract management.