

## **Opening Statement** **Siún Ní Raghallaigh, Chair, RTÉ Board**

**Wednesday 13th September 2023**

Cathaoirleach, TeachtaíDála agus Seanadóirí, go raibh maith agaibh as an deis labhairt libh inniu.

I trust you will have had the time to examine the extensive documentation furnished to you in recent days by RTÉ. The Board and interim Leadership Team will endeavour to answer your questions to the best of our ability.

The last number of months have been unseemly, and highly damaging for RTÉ.

The two Grant Thornton reports, commissioned by RTÉ, and the government commissioned interim Mazars report paint their own pictures.

Public trust has been eroded.

Níl amhras ar bith ach gur theip ar RTÉ bundualgaisí reachtúla a chomhlíonadh le tamall gearr de bhlianta. Tuigeann bord RTÉ agus tacaíonn siad le grinnscrúdú ar gach gné den phróiseas rialála agus tá muid tiomanta do athruithe ón bhun aníos a chur i gcríoch.

The Board has put in place a wide-reaching series of changes in light of the serious failures highlighted earlier this Summer.

This is on-going work and as further reports and examinations are complete, the Board is committed to reviewing and implementing the necessary changes required to build confidence and to ensure good governance and best practice are at the heart of how RTÉ carries out its business both at Board level and operationally.

RTÉ is engaging thoroughly with both government-appointed expert committees on governance, culture and human resources. The organisation is also working with Mazars so that it can bring its final report to the Department.

The third Grant Thornton report into Toy Show the Musical is under way, while law firm McCann Fitzgerald is examining the matter of voluntary redundancies. Both reports have been commissioned by RTÉ and will be published as soon as possible.

These are key elements in rigorously addressing the issues of the past and rebuilding our bond of trust with you, with the staff in RTÉ and the public.

However, as we deal with the past we must also look to the future.

In doing so it is imperative that we engage with this Committee about the sort of public service broadcaster this country wants, and we need to talk about how, as a public service organisation, it will be funded.

A secure future for RTÉ is by no means guaranteed.

This is currently an organisation under immense pressure across a number of fronts. Critically, the erosion of that trust has helped create immediate financial pressures. This needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency and is a matter of immediate focus for the Board and the Interim Leadership Team.

A secure future for RTÉ means having purpose and direction and making choices and taking decisions.

The Director-General and his team will soon complete a Strategic Review of the organisation.

I expect that the Review would then shape what will be a costed Restructuring Plan.

As part of that, hard decisions must be made in order to achieve a fit for purpose public service broadcaster. These decisions may not be popular with stakeholders and policy makers, including perhaps this Committee.

If we are to safeguard the future of RTÉ however, we need to work together. We need to make those difficult choices together.

As part of an overall reform plan, choices must be made in relation to interim funding and long-awaited licence fee reform. The current system is a legacy of a different era; obsolete, redundant, antiquated.

As RTÉ is a public service body, both the Strategic Review and significant elements of the Restructuring Plan would have to be approved by Government.

Only in this way can RTÉ be empowered to make the decisions necessary to secure the future of this organisation and allow us to move forward with shared purpose.

If so empowered we will undertake the necessary steps to achieve our shared vision for RTÉ.

We are but custodians of this organisation. Our central role, as I see it, is to secure this vital national institution for the future – so that it will prevail and prosper for many years to come.

I hope that, working together, we can achieve this.