

The S4C Authority Bulletin – January 2000

At its December 1999 meeting, the S4C Authority considered:

S4C's Corporate Plan for 2000

The Authority agreed the plan for publication on S4C's Internet web-site in January. This will be the first time the Authority's plan has been published. This is being done as part of the Authority's continuing commitment to openness, accessibility and accountability to the public it serves.

The plan sets out S4C's aims, objectives and targets for the year. Hard copies will be available to the public on request.

S4C's Commitments to Viewers

The Authority also agreed that, early in the new year, it should publish a concise statement of its commitments to viewers, including how to make their views (including complaints) known to S4C. This comes on top of the existing and well-used arrangements for viewers to get in touch with S4C via the Viewers' Hotline, which is open every day of the year.

S4C's Corporate Plan for 2000 and Beyond

S4C has already begun a strategic review which will lead to the publication of the corporate plan covering the 5 years from 2001-2005. The Authority agreed plans to take this forward in the first quarter of 2000.

Strong Language on 'Y Glas'

The Authority considered the latest regular report from its independently chaired Compliance Group. The Group bases its reports on the work of the independent Thomson Foundation Unit at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, which monitors S4C's output against the S4C and Independent Television Commission programme guidelines. The Group had drawn to the Authority's attention in particular to examples of relatively strong language which occurred in a number of editions of 'Y Glas'. The programmes had been broadcast between 8.00 pm and 8.30 pm.

The Authority noted that the programmes had gone out before the 9.00 pm watershed, at a time when a number of children might have been expected to be viewing. It also noted that the language used had mostly been at what is regarded as at the milder end of the scale, according to audience research carried out by the Broadcasting Standards Commission and that the strong language had not been used frequently. It did not seem to the Authority inappropriate in the context of a programme trying to present realistically the work of the police force. The Authority was also aware that this was the last series of this programme.

Against this background, the Authority decided not to take any action in respect of this particular programme. It will, however, ask the Compliance Group to monitor the use of strong language before the watershed and in particular between 8.00 pm and 9.00 pm. The Group will be asked to provide the Authority with further reports so that the position can be kept under careful review.

Commercial Activities

The Authority received the latest of the regular reports from S4C's Director of Commercial Activities, Wyn Innes. It noted in particular the intensive work which was going into S4C's involvement with SDN Ltd, in partnership with United News and Media and NTL, so as to launch Pay Per View services across the UK. This investment, which is coming entirely from S4C's commercial income, is intended to produce significant additional revenue in future years which can be used to sustain and improve S4C's public services.

Authority Members' Declaration of Interest

Authority Members reviewed their declarations of interest against the guidelines they have adopted in their Code of Practice. These follow the recommendations of the independent Committee of Standards in Public Life. The Code, together with a description of the role of the S4C Authority, will be available on S4C's website in January. Members' declarations of interest will be available for public inspection at S4C's offices in Cardiff and Caernarfon.

Other Matters

The Authority received a presentation on technological developments affecting broadcasting and related industries from its Director of Engineering and Information Technology, Arshad Rasul.

It also considered regular reports on:

- the performance of S4C's programmes
- complaints about individual programmes
- S4C's financial provision

Next Meeting

The Authority's next business meeting will be in Cardiff on 28 January. Its next open public meeting will be at Theatr Clwyd, Mold at 7pm on Thursday 24 February. The Authority will hold its regular business meeting in Mold the following day.
