

S4C Authority Bulletin August/September 2000

At its meeting in July, the S4C Authority discussed the following:

Congratulations

Mr Nic Parry was congratulated on being promoted as a Crown Court Recorder; and Ms Janet Lewis-Jones was congratulated on being appointed as a member of the Post Office Regulation Board.

Annual Spending Review/White Paper on Communications

Reference was made to the statement by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in relation to the annual spending review. The Secretary of State indicated that his two priorities were: to raise awareness of sport and fitness among young people; and to engender an interest in the arts among children from disadvantaged areas. Against this background, S4C learnt with disappointment that its application for additional funding in 2001 had not been successful. It was agreed that the most important thing now was to try to ensure that S4C secured a long-term increase in its funding through the new Communications Act and ideas on how to go about this were discussed.

The National Assembly for Wales – Post-16 Education Committee

It was stated that the Post-16 Education Committee intended holding a review of the arts in Wales and to recommend that a forum for creativity be established. The Chair understood that should such a forum be formed, S4C would receive an invitation to participate.

S4C Charity

The Chair referred to a very kind letter received from the NSPCC. A sum of £200,000 had been raised for the NSPCC, which was double the amount raised for last year's charity. Whilst the organiser had been extremely grateful that S4C had chosen it as its charity for this year, she had suggested that it was possible that even more money could have been raised had the charity learnt earlier in the year that it had been selected. As a result S4C intends to start the process, and then selecting, next year's charity at an earlier point in the year.

BECTU

The Chair referred to a letter by BECTU, which had appeared in the press, demanding that she and the Chief Executive resign from their posts. The Chief Executive would respond to the letter, also through the press, setting out the correct factual position and S4C's viewpoint.

Reviewing S4C's Performance against the Corporate Plan 2000

The Authority received a report which reviewed S4C's performance against the targets in its Corporate Plan for 2000. It was noted that the great majority of targets were being met. It was also noted, however, that the performance against the target for viewing share in North Wales was below target and discussion, therefore, concentrated on what was believed to be responsible for this and what could be done to reverse the trend. The Authority Members agreed with the strategy intended by the officers noting that discussions would have to be held with some suppliers in order to realise it.

Compliance Guidelines

The Chief Executive referred to the fact that the Authority would be asked to decide upon revisions to S4C's compliance guidelines during the Autumn and drew specific attention to the issue of language and the Monitoring Unit's report on the use of English in S4C's Welsh language programmes (see the note on the Compliance Group's report below). In particular, Authority Members were asked to consider whether any further research was necessary in relation to language. Following discussion, the conclusion was reached that there was no need to commission any further research at the present time.

The various revisions to the compliance guidelines would be discussed with S4C's suppliers at a seminar to be held in Aberystwyth on 10 October 2000, before being placed before the Authority for final consideration.

Interactivity and the Web

A report and presentation was given to the Authority on the latest developments in relation to interactivity and the website. Members of the Authority were particularly asked to consider the draft policy guidelines for S4C's web site. It was noted that a copy of the draft policy had been sent to all S4C's programme suppliers as well as facilities companies seeking comments and, as no negative comments had been received, S4C's officers recommended to the Authority that they be formally adopted. The Authority agreed that the policy guidelines for S4C's web-site should be adopted as presented.

Digital College

The latest position in relation to the development of the Digital College was discussed. The two levels of partnership were considered, i.e. main partners and associate partners; the situation in relation to applying for Objection 1 funding; and the position relating to funding programmes. A long and detailed discussion was held on the funding of the Digital College and the contributions of other partners. The Authority Members confirmed their support for the Digital College and their wish to see it succeed and an agreement was reached in relation to a request by the Digital College with regard to a method of financing the current year's commissions.

Annual Pay Review

The Chief Executive reported on the position in relation to the annual pay review and referred to the fact that inflation (RPI) for the year was 3.3%. Following discussion of all relevant circumstances, the Authority agreed to authorise the Chief Executive to offer staff a general pay rise of up to 3.3%.

Compliance Group Report

The report of the Compliance Group following its meeting held on 14 July 2000 was discussed. The Authority particularly appreciated the report on the use of English in S4C's Welsh language programmes, which was considered to be very valuable. Considered to be particularly interesting were the schedules listing all the occurrences of the use of English and a brief discussion was held on that which the Members considered to be acceptable and those occurrences which could have, for example, have been dubbed. The Authority thanked the Monitoring Unit and the Compliance Group for their work on this subject.

Report of the Director of Programmes

The Authority received a report by the Director of Programmes. Specific attention was given to the broadcasts from the Llangollen International Eisteddfod and the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show. It was noted that almost 45 hours of programming was broadcast from the Llangollen Eisteddfod, 8 and three-quarters on analogue and 36 on S4C Digital. It was considered that the programmes had been colourful and lively, and successfully managed to reflect both the formal competition and the host of unofficial activities at the Eisteddfod.

Also discussed were the broadcasts from the Royal Welsh Show during the week just passed. It was felt that the programmes had been excellent, reflecting not only the activities of the main circle but also the Show in its entirety.

In addition, attention was given to some of the programmes to be broadcast in the forthcoming month, including: two concerts by Bryn Terfel from the Faenol; broadcasts from the National Eisteddfod of Wales, throughout the day on digital, as well as the activities from the Literature Tent being broadcast in the evenings. Also, before the next meeting of the Authority two programmes on Owain Glyndwr would be broadcast: one being a heavyweight documentary; the other being of lighter note.

Other Matters

The following matters were also noted:

- Chief Executive's Report – Matters for information
- Complaints Report
- Minutes of Compliance Group meeting – 14 July 2000
- Research Report
- Financial Report
- commercial activities
- Minutes of the Personnel and Remuneration Committee held on 30 June 2000.

Next Meetings

An Open Meeting will be held in the Leisure Centre at Blaenau Ffestiniog on Thursday evening, 28 September, and the next business meeting will be held on 29 September 2000, also in Blaenau Ffestiniog.

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