

S4C Authority Bulletin November 2000

S4C Charity

It was reported that a meeting had been held with NSPCC and the *Heno* programme in order to review the arrangements made this year for S4C's Charity Appeal. It had been agreed that the process of advertising for, and selecting, a charity should start earlier. This would allow more time for the selected charity to put together a programme of events for the year. As a result, advertisements for applications from charities for the Appeal for 2001 would appear within a fortnight with the intention of choosing a charity early in the New Year.

Congratulations

Ms Enid Rowlands, a Member of the Authority, was warmly congratulated on being appointed as Chair of the National Council for Education and Training in Wales. Ms Rowlands thanked Authority Members for their kind comments and said that she was looking forward to the challenge ahead of her. In addition, she stated that she would not henceforth be expressing any views during the Authority's discussions on issues relating to the Digital College.

Thanks

The Chair referred to the fact that the five-year term of Mr Peter Davies and Mrs Janice Rowlands on the S4C Authority Board would come to an end in March 2001. Reference was made to the fact that the Department of Culture, Media and Sport now placed great emphasis on the process of advertising such appointments and, therefore, advertisements for both positions would appear in the press in the next few weeks. Although there would be a chance to wish Mr Davies and Mrs Rowlands well at the end of their term on the Authority, the Chair wished to take advantage of the opportunity to thank both of them for their total commitment to S4C over the past four and a half years.

Political Meetings

The Chair reported that she and the Chief Executive, as part of the programme of meetings in party political conferences, had met the regional chairs of the Welsh Conservative Party as well as a number of prospective parliamentary candidates during their conference in Bournemouth. It was stated that a meeting would be held for members of the Welsh Liberal Democrats.

Chair of the Broadcasting Standards Commission

Reference was made to the fact that Lord Holme, the Chairman of the Broadcasting Standards Council, had resigned in light of press attention regarding his private life.

NTL

The Chief Executive reported on a meeting held with NTL when, among other issues, reasons were given as to why they should carry S4C2 on their cable services in Wales and why they should give S4C a more prominent place on the EPG. Discussions with NTL had been constructive but as yet had reached no definite conclusions.

Code of Conduct for S4C's Programme Finance Unit

The Authority considered a Code of Conduct recommended for adoption in relation to members of staff in the Programme Finance Unit. The Code was intended to establish a system for dealing with situations when staff in sensitive posts within the Unit might apply for, or be offered, jobs in the independent sector. It was noted that the Code placed before the Authority was the result of negotiations with staff. The Authority approved the Code.

Report of S4C Programmes

Particular attention was given to *Pen Tenny*. It was felt that it was a shame that S4C had had to move this series from its original slot of 8.00 pm and schedule it at 9.00 pm, that is after the watershed. This was in response to a number of complaints received following the broadcast of the first programme in the series. This situation would be the subject of further discussion. Whilst people wanted S4C to push at the boundaries, it appeared that they did not actually like it when S4C acted upon that wish. It was felt that S4C needed to continue to broadcast its strongest programmes between 8.00 pm to 9.00 pm, that is during the most competitive period. However, there the question had now arisen of what was meant by peak hours now that the BBC had widened the definition to 10.00 pm.

Review of the Corporate Plan 2000

Consideration was given to S4C's performance against targets in its corporate plan for 2000. It was noted that the majority of targets were being met or exceeded. However, viewing figures in North Wales continued to cause concern. This was discussed further during the presentation on the programme service.

It was also noted that, although S4C was meeting current requirements in respect of an audio description service, there were technical problems – not least that S4C was experimenting for a services that no-one in Wales was able to receive! The Department of Culture, Media and Sport was holding a review on this matter and S4C had conveyed to it its comments.

Presentation on the Programme Service in the Future

The Director of Programmes gave a presentation which explained his current thinking on the programme services for the next commissioning round and beyond taking into account the new digital age which S4C was now a part of. In general terms, it was felt that S4C needed to be adventurous and redefine itself, and build for the future, whilst bearing in mind its responsibilities to its loyal audiences. It was becoming more and more obvious that it was only exceptional programmes that would attract a high number of viewers in a multi-channel environment. It was also clear that within a few years the majority of Welsh speakers would be digital viewers, thus begging the question of strengthening of digital programming. The Authority thanked the Director for sharing with them his current ideas and recognised that he needed to discuss these further with S4C's commissioners and others. He and his staff were invited to be as lateral in their considerations as possible and be as wide as possible in any options to be brought before the Authority. It was agreed that the director of Programmes would report back to the authority at the next meeting on how work was progressing.

Budget 2001

The budget for 2001 and beyond recommended by S4C's Management Team was presented to the Authority for consideration. A summary was given on past event which had led to the present budgetary position. In explaining how the budget for 2001 had been arrived at, specific attention was drawn to the fact that the priority yet again was to try to safeguard the programme budget, whilst finding savings elsewhere. It was obvious that the situation needed to be alleviated since the existing settlement based on RPI did not cover inflation within the broadcasting industry. There was also a commitment to maintain commercial activities taking into account the significant contribution expected from this source in the mid and long term.

Authority members thanked the officers for reminding them of the big picture and the background which had led to the current situation. It would be important to keep a keen eye on the financial situation in the years to come. There was also a need, on the political side, to keep pressing for increased funding from the Government. The Authority agreed to accept the recommendation of the Management Team and approved the budget for 2001 and beyond.

Other Matters

The following reports were also discussed or note:

Financial Report
S4C Masnachol's Business Plan for the Next 10 Years
Report of the Chief Executive- Matters for Information
Complaints Report
Report and Minutes of the Compliance Group – 10 October 2000
Research Report.

Next Meetings of the Authority

The Authority's next public meeting will be held in the Arts Centre, Llanover Hall, Romilly Road, Canton, Cardiff at 7.00 pm, Thursday, 23 November 2000. The Authority will hold its usual business meeting the following day, also in Cardiff.