

S4C Authority Bulletin **- November 2001**

Charter Mark

The Chair drew attention to the fact that S4C had succeeded in retaining the Chartermark and also noted that the report received from the assessors was highly complimentary. Members of the Authority congratulated the whole workforce on this excellent achievement.

S4C Chairmanship

The Chair referred to the fact that she had accepted an invitation by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to serve for a further term as Chair of S4C until 31 March 2006. All Members of the Authority extended their warm congratulations and said that this was very good news for S4C.

Authority Membership

The Chair reported that the Department of Culture, Media and Sport would be announcing in a week's time the appointment of two new Members.

Postscript The DCMS announced on 2 November 2001 that Dr Christopher Llewelyn, Head of Research and Policy at the Wales Consumer Council; and Mrs Eira Davies, formerly a Director of Champion FM and Marcher Sound, had been appointed Members of the Authority.

Permanent Secretary of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport

The Chair reported that the person appointed to the post of Permanent Secretary at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport was Sue Street, currently working at the Home Office. Sue Street would take up her new post at the beginning of December.

John Owen

Reference was made to the fact that the situation in respect of this matter had changed since it was discussed at the last meeting and Members of the Authority were already aware that the author and director John Owen had been found dead under circumstances that suggested he had committed suicide. Members discussed the decision taken to proceed with broadcasting the final episode of the repeat showing of *Pam fi Duw* and the statement broadcast prior to the programme. It was noted that S4C had received 22 complaints about the matter, a number of which objected to what they perceived to be a tribute to John Owen. Given recent developments, some Members said that they could see why some people regarded the transmission and the statement as a tribute. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that in the eyes of the law John Owen remained not guilty and that if S4C had decided not to show the programme it could have been accused of prejudging accusations made against him. It was also noted that the issue of whether or not to broadcast the new series currently being edited had to be considered, and that a decision would also have to be made as to whether to continue to work on the development of a further series thereafter.

Budget 2002

The Chief Executive reported that a report on the budget for 2002 would be placed before the Authority in November. However, he drew Members' attention to certain key issues that were still being considered by the Management Team. Members acknowledged that difficult decisions would have to be made and asked that adequate time be allocated at the next meeting of the Authority so that due consideration could be given to the matter.

Ffeil

It was reported that the Channel had now reached agreement with the BBC in respect of *Ffeil* and that a programme of some 5 minutes duration would now be transmitted at the end of the block of children's programmes. Members of the Authority welcomed this news. It was noted, however, that the position in relation to *Gôl* remained unresolved.

Digital Television Action Plan

Members discussed a paper setting out the Government's draft action plan for analogue switch-off and digital only transmission. This was a consultation paper and the closing date for responding was 2 November 2001. A long and wide-ranging discussion ensued on the paper and Members agreed on the main points that should be included in the response.

Sponsorship

Members discussed a paper that set out the details of the three requests for sponsorship:

- Welsh International Film Festival – It was agreed that sponsorship of £17,000 should be awarded to the Film Festival in 2001 on condition that it be made clear to the Festival that the increase of £2,000 (from £15,000 to £17,000) should not necessarily be considered a permanent one.
- The Voice of the Listener and Viewer Conference - 'Involving the citizen in the age of digital broadcasting' – London, April 2002 – It was agreed to contribute £500 towards the Conference. (It was noted that this would come out of the 2002 budget.)
- Commission for Racial Equality in Wales – 'Race in the Media' Awards' – It was agreed that sponsorship of £1,500 should be provided for the awards.

Review of performance against 2001-2003 Corporate Plan targets

The performance of S4C to date as measured against the targets in the corporate plan was considered. The disappointing figures in respect of the reach figures were again noted, although the share figure showed a slight improvement in Quarter 3. It was also encouraging to see the number of programmes continuing to attract over 100,000 viewers. It was, however, striking that the findings on programme appreciation in the various *genres* contradicted the messages that the Authority were receiving in their open meetings etc – e.g. in the report, situation comedies showed higher appreciation ratings than other channels, when it was common knowledge that this was not one of S4C's strongest *genres*. It was agreed that this needed to be monitored. It was noted that the remaining targets in the Corporate Plan were being met very satisfactorily.

S4C Strategic Priorities – Towards a 2002 Corporate Plan

The Authority noted a paper sent to the DCMS as part of the S4C bid for additional funding. It was intended that the document should form the basis of the 2002-2004 Corporate Plan.

S4C Masnachol Business Plan

The Authority received a presentation by the Managing Director of S4C Masnachol on the S4C Masnachol business plan. Attention was drawn to: the economic climate for advertising, S4C2 and special projects in hand; the co-production strategy; and the situation in relation to SDN. Reference was made to budget objectives, namely: securing the transfer to S4C; keeping within bank guidelines; and continuing to increase General Fund activity. Details of the position of S4C Rhyngwladol, administrative costs, S4C2, SDN, S4C Masnachol were also discussed.

Report of the Compliance Group

The report of the Compliance Group was considered following its meeting on 12 October 2001. Specifically, the Authority's view was sought on a clip from the programme *Dyddiadur y Clwyf* broadcast on 23 July 2001. The programme was a video diary prepared by a young farmer from Anglesey. During the programme, in a scene of him shot in a pub, he said that the disease had brought certain benefits as it had kept English people away and that Seimon Glyn may have been responsible for spreading it. It was obvious that the comment was a black joke. Nevertheless, S4C has a guideline that says: 'S4C seeks to avoid creating or reinforcing negative clichés and presuppositions about groups or particular types of people (e.g. sexual, racial, religious or linguistic) through the body of its programme material.'

It was agreed:

- (a) that the Compliance Group be thanked for bringing the matter to the Authority's attention and that the Monitoring Unit be thanked for their care and attentiveness in noticing the matter;
- (b) that this particular matter was not in itself a cause for great concern, but there would be cause for concern if similar and regular cases were to occur in the future.

Presentation by the Director of Engineering and Information Technology

The Authority received a presentation by the Director of Engineering and Information Technology. The presentation looked to the future and covered: broadband developments; the way in which companies such as BT and NTL were responding to developments; the channel management position; what the viewer would expect; the switch from analogue to terrestrial digital. More specifically to Wales, the presentation explained some of the concerns in respect of the inadequate power of transmitters, the need (because of the geography of Wales and its scattered population) to obtain more frequencies and locations for terrestrial digital in order to provide a reasonable reach; and problems whereby it was possible that areas on the border between Wales and England would not receive any services from Wales. The presentation also outlined plans within S4C for moving ahead to the future, plans such as: re-configuring digital systems to make them more effective and efficient, providing in-house facilities for broadcasting adverts; adding improved presentation facilities; moving gradually from tape to disk systems etc.

Members thanked the Director for an excellent presentation that had added to their understanding of the technical developments and of the challenges and opportunities facing the Channel and the world of broadcasting in general.

Other Matters

The following matters were noted/discussed:

- Report on the Programme Service
- Financial Report
- Report of the Chief Executive – Matters for information
- Complaints Report
- Minutes of the meeting of the Compliance Group held on 12 October 2001
- Report on the Viewers' Hotline
- Research Report – Service performance against targets
- Report of the Managing Director of S4C Masnachol.