

S4C Authority Bulletin - February 2002

The following summarises the main points raised in discussion during the S4C Authority meeting held on 25 January 2002.

Sympathy

Reference was made to the very sad news of the death of Dylan Morus, Subtitling Manager at S4C. The Members expressed their profound sadness and extended their deepest sympathy to his wife and his two month old baby.

Membership of the Authority

The Chair referred to the fact that Janet Lewis-Jones' term with the Authority had come to an end. However, Ms Lewis-Jones had been invited to extend her term for the period during which the Communications Act would be published, so that the Authority could benefit from her expertise in this field.

Chairmanship of the Personnel and Remuneration Committee

Members were reminded of the need to appoint a successor to Peter Davies (whose term on the Authority had come to an end) as chairman of the Personnel and Remuneration Committee. The Chair was pleased to announce that Enid Rowlands had accepted the invitation to chair the Committee.

S4C Charity

It was formally noted that Cefin Campbell had accepted the invitation to chair S4C's Charity.

Special Meeting of the Authority

It was confirmed that the Authority in March would begin lunchtime on 26 March 2002.

Christmas Programmes

It was noted that a very heartening response had been received in relation to the Christmas programmes both orally and in terms of viewer numbers. Members agreed that there had been a very good provision of programmes during the Christmas period and that there had been a number of highlights, such as children's programmes and the film Eldra; however, disappointment was expressed concerning the programme broadcast on New Year's Eve.

The New Programme Schedule

It was noted that the new schedule had been launched on 7 January 2002. Unfortunately, owing to problems with the new BARB Measuring Panel which was established at the beginning of the year no reliable viewer figures were currently available. In spite of this, the response received by S4C was favourable. People were responding to individual programmes and generally it was felt that S4C was offering something new and fresh. Authority Members stated that they had been encouraged by the programmes included in the new timetable.

The National Assembly's Welsh language and Culture Committee

[Authority Member, Nic Parry, expressed an interest in this matter - i.e. as a member of Cymuned - but he was invited to contribute to the discussion.]

Reference was made to the fact that the Chief Executive and the Secretary had appeared before the Committee to present evidence during its inquiry into the Welsh language. One specific matter raised by the Committee was the request that S4C should consider the feasibility of relocating itself in an area where the Welsh Language is a part of daily life. At the time it was stated that S4C's main responsibility was to provide a television service and that doing so in the most cost-effective manner was also a part of its duty. While noting this, the Committee asked whether S4C would consider the practical implications of moving its headquarters. The Chief Executive had agreed to present this question to the S4C Authority which, ultimately, was responsible for making decisions on such issues. Members held a preliminary discussion on this matter. Before reaching any conclusions it was agreed that S4C's officials should be commissioned to prepare a paper setting out the considerations which the Authority would have to weigh up, before deciding whether this matter should be moved forward and considered in detail.

TAC

It was noted that a constructive meeting had been held with TAC on 11 January 2002. A number of detailed points were made concerning the previous commissioning process and time was taken to discuss each point raised. During the meeting TAC was invited to consider the timetable for the process in detail. However, it was emphasised that S4C expected to discuss the ideas as soon as possible and such discussions were not confined to the six month tendering process. Basically, the next process was beginning now. Furthermore, it was noted that TAC members were of the opinion that they did not receive enough feedback from S4C. However, they appreciated that pressure of work on the commissioning editors was partly responsible for this and consequently they welcomed the new posts which had been created in the Programmes Department. It was agreed that another meeting should be arranged for TAC members later in the year.

Training in the Industry

It was noted that the first meeting of the Skillset Cymru Steering Committee had been held. The Chief Executive had been invited to chair the Committee and as a result he would also be a member of the Skillset Board. A meeting had already been held between Skillset, Cyfle, ELWa and the Chief Executive to discuss the Skillset trailblazer status and to try to ensure that both bodies' plans were being implemented hand in hand. It was of prime importance that Skillset Cymru could state that it represented the whole industry in Wales and that the corporation had won the support of broadcasters, TAC and PACT. Furthermore, association with Skillset and the industry on a UK basis was advantageous.

Visit by Greg Dyke, BBC

It was reported that Greg Dyke's visit had led to a worthwhile and open meeting. Among the issues discussed was the contribution by the BBC to the Welsh Language and de-encryption.

Set Top Box

The question was asked whether the Set Top Box to be offered by Pace was going to alter the situation with regard to the number of people who were likely to want digital television. In response, it was stated that it was likely that digital television would become more attractive as the number of free services, available through the box, increased. However, the question remained concerning the situation of those who lived in areas unable to receive DTT.

Digital Action Plan

The Chief Executive referred to a meeting which he would be attending in London later that day. All organisations involved in digital television had been invited; bodies such as broadcasters, multiplex operators, and others. The aim was to appoint a 'digital champion' who would be responsible for co-ordinating the plans the government had published recently.

Authority Members Register of Interests

A draft register of interests that reflected what had been declared by the Authority Members in January 2002 was presented and Members were asked to confirm that the details shown were complete and correct. It was agreed, subject to a minor change, that the register, in line with previous practice, be published on S4C's website, with copies available for viewing by the public at the Channel's offices in Cardiff and Caernarfon.

Compliance

[Apart from the Secretary, no S4C officials were present during the discussion of this item.]

(a) *Llwyth o Docs*

Members considered the Secretary's report which responded to the Authority's request in its previous meeting for comments by S4C officials on the portrayal of the character of Tomos Antigua Tomos in the series *Llwyth o Docs* following the issue referred to by the Conformity Group. Consideration was also given to a tape of clips portraying the character throughout the series. The main question to be considered by the Authority was whether it believed that the way the character was portrayed was contrary to S4C guidelines.

A long and careful discussion of this issue ensued. Members of the Authority held several different perspectives on this issue, varying from one extreme where the viewpoint that there appeared to be nothing wrong with the character to the other extreme where it was believed that the guidelines had been broken. However, having given due consideration to all opinions expressed, a decision was reached.

It was agreed: Llwyth o Docs had not broken S4C guidelines but that there was room for the Authority to express a certain amount of concern about some aspects of the character of Tomos Antigua Tomos. Detailed attention should be paid in future to the sensitivity of such issues.

(b) **Report of Compliance Group**

The report of the Compliance Group which resulted from its meeting held on 10 January 2002 was received. The Authority was specifically asked to consider a number of clips taken from the series Y 'Stafell Ddirgel; a series which was broadcast at 8.30 pm. While the clips contained scenes of sexual and physical violence as well as strong language, it was noted that these were essential to the drama's plot and an integral part of the background to the witness of the Quakers. Neither was there any suggestion that these scenes had been over-dramatised nor that too much attention had been given to the violence. The Compliance Group's main concern was the time at which the series was broadcast.

Members considered the scenes to which their attention had been drawn as well as the question of whether a warning issued before the broadcast indicating that some scenes were unsuitable for younger children would have been acceptable.

It was agreed: This series should not have been broadcast at 8.30 since it went beyond that which the audience would expect to see in a family viewing slot. Neither would a warning prior to the programme have been acceptable. The Programmes and Presentation Departments should give careful consideration to the implications of this for the future.

Presentation by the Head of Marketing

The Head of Marketing gave a presentation on the Marketing Plan for 2002. The Department would pay attention to three main points: S4C brand, the new schedule, and individual programmes. From the strategy point of view, the Department would: develop a book of technical references, a series of campaigns; promote the programme portfolio; hold launches; raise awareness of S4C Digital; develop the charity policy; re-launch Sgrîn; and develop the Planed Plant brand. As well as looking forward to the year ahead, the Department's achievements in 2001 were also reviewed and a tape of promotions during the year was shown.

Members thanked the Head of Marketing for a very interesting presentation and several questions arising from the presentation were posed, chiefly concerning the Sgrîn magazine; the logos, titles and music for programmes; and on-screen promotions.

Matters for Information

The following matters were also discussed/noted:

- Programme Service Report
- Financial Report
- Chief Executive's Report - Points of Information
- Complaints Report
- Minutes of the Conformity Group held on 10 January 2002
- Viewers Hotline Report
- Research Report - Service performance against targets
- Report by the Managing Director of S4C Marketing