

S4C Authority Bulletin - October 2002

The following summarises the main points raised during discussions held by the S4C Authority during its meeting on 27 September.

Public Spending Round

It was noted that no news had been received with regard to S4C's application for further funding but it was hoped that news would be received from the DCMS by the end of October.

Animation

Reference was made to the fact that the Cartoon Forum, which was held at Y Faenol, Caernarfon, was a resounding success. All at S4C who had been involved with the event were congratulated, especially Chris Grace, Kathryn Morris and Wyn Innes. Jenny Randerson, Assembly Minister for Culture was present and it was good to be able to show her the kind of contribution that the media is able to make to the economy and good name of Wales.

The Wales Mirror

Reference was made to the article by Paul Starling in the *Wales Mirror* which made allegations with regard to what was known by S4C officers concerning John Owen's behaviour. As a result, S4C had sent two letters to the Editor of the *Wales Mirror* concerning this matter.

Authority Members

- (a) **Janet Lewis-Jones** – The Chair referred to the fact that the DCMS had agreed to her request, namely that Janet Lewis-Jones's term as an Authority member be extended until the end of the year. The Chair was pleased to report that Janet Lewis-Jones had agreed to serve the Authority until the end of December.
- (b) **Eira Davies** – Eira Davies was congratulated on her appointment to the Richard Commission which would be taking up the work of considering the Assembly's powers.

Strategy

Attention was given to a paper by the Chair which outlined the Authority's responsibilities and which set out a number of issues for consideration by the Management Team during the following weeks. The paper was considered most beneficial and useful and the points made in it were accepted. The Members had already held strategic discussions during the current year. Consequently, the Management Team and the Commissioners would now be further developing the strategy and the paper gave the Members a further opportunity to offer any other comments which they wished the Management Team to take into consideration.

Publication of Viewing Figures

The technical difficulties and continuing concerns with regard to the make-up of the BARB viewing panel were discussed. Whilst recognising that there were implications for the Authority in respect of what could be published in the next Annual Report, it was agreed to accept the Management Team's recommendation that the figures were not reliable enough to be published. The question should be reviewed when it was felt that the panel was nearer to being able to accurately reflect the percentage of wholly Welsh speaking homes in the population.

S4C2 on ntl

Members were reminded that S4C2 had been available on cable since May this year. It had been brought to S4C's attention that ntl could not technically offer a dual-sound track at present. It was hoped that they would be able to provide a multilingual service during the second or third quarter of 2003. Consequently, it was necessary to decide whether the track should be broadcast without a translation, or to broadcast the track which would include the English translation until such time as the dual-sound track was available.

Members agreed that they were faced with an important principle and that this was a difficult and sensitive decision to make. The matter was discussed thoroughly and carefully and the two main considerations used as criteria were S4C's position as a Welsh language broadcaster and its responsibility as a public broadcaster to ensure that the Assembly's activities were available to the broadest audience possible. It was agreed to broadcast the track which contained the English translation on condition that this was a short term measure. Furthermore, a letter should be sent to ntl outlining to them the importance of offering a multilingual service as a matter of urgency. If ntl had not succeeded in offering the service by autumn 2003, the situation should be reconsidered.

The Communications Bill

The Authority considered a paper which summarised the latest situation with regard to the clauses in the Communications Bill which would specifically affect S4C. Special note was made of the comment made by the Select Committee under the chairmanship of David Puttnam which gave Ministers the right to change the remit of any public Channel; the intentions concerning meeting OFCOM's expenses by levying a charge on broadcasters; and the consideration that complaints should be directed firstly towards broadcasters before approaching OFCOM. Explanation was given also concerning the latest news about S4C's application to see a change in its funding formula; S4C's request to expand its marketing powers; and the situation with regard to charging for the use of the spectrum.

Compliance

Consideration was given to the Compliance Group report which stemmed from its meeting held on 13 September 2002. The following, in particular, were discussed:

(a) *Heliwr* –

- (i) The Compliance Group had drawn the Authority's attention to this series asking that Members consider whether the series' broadcast time, namely 8.30 pm during family viewing time, was suitable or not. Attention was drawn to three specific clips which included violent scenes and strong language. Members had been given an opportunity to watch these clips within their context in the programme before this meeting of the Authority.
 - (ii) **Agreed:** Whilst the Authority would not have any concerns about the series *Heliwr* if it had been broadcast after 9.00 pm, it was of the opinion that it was not suitable to be broadcast at 8.30 pm, i.e. before the 'watershed'. S4C officers, therefore, should take note of this decision when setting times for the broadcast of programmes in the future. This adjudication should be published in the next Annual Report as well as in the Authority's monthly Bulletin.
- (b) Political Conferences 2001/02 – The Authority considered a detailed paper by the Monitoring Unit which reported on the party political conferences in October 2001, 'Spring-Welsh 2002' and 'Spring-British' 2002. Amongst the issues noted was the attention given to the various parties during broadcasts from the conferences and within the range of programmes broadcast, e.g. *Newyddion*, *Manifesto* etc. Mention was made also of contributions by individuals, including party leaders, a number of Assembly Members, M.Ps, MEPs and Lords who took part, as well as the age and sex of those who contributed. In considering the various conclusions, Members were especially pleased to note that the detailed evidence suggested that the attention given to the various parties had been fair and that it reflected a political balance. The Monitoring Unit was thanked for its thorough work.

Presentation given by the Factual Programmes Commissioner

The Factual Programmes Commissioner presented an outline of current commissions along with issues which production companies had been requested to concentrate upon in the commissioning round to come. Particular reference was made to the following. Responsibilities included:

Religion - Devotional programmes were broadcast during Christmas and Easter, but religious documentary programmes were also being offered, e.g. *Llwybrau Paul* last year and *Y Ffordd Ymlaen* this year and these were very successful. Mention was made that *Dechrau Canu Dechrau Canmol* was a source of comfort to a large group of people, especially those who did not attend a chapel or church; non-Welsh speakers also watched the programme.

Arts – *Sioe Gelf*, *Croma* and festivals such as the Eisteddfodau and *Gwyl y Faenol* were examples of programmes which had been commissioned in this field. *Sioe Gelf* especially had competed well against *Coronation Street* and had won RTS awards.

News and Current Issues – This was the most sensitive field with regard to provision, which called for an attempt to satisfy the needs of a broad range. *Manifesto* offered the opportunity of in-depth political interviews; whilst *Pawb a'i Farn* was of a different nature and provided the opportunity of discussing current events, giving 'ordinary people' in the audience a chance to express their views on issues. Furthermore, of course, a daily news service was also being offered. A good service was provided during the Parliamentary elections by very experienced teams in the BBC and HTV, and a balance was achieved. The broadcasts from the political conferences too were without problems with regard to the main parties.

Feature Programmes - Among these were programmes such as *Pacio*, *Garddio*, *Ffermio*, *Byd Pws*, and *Crwydro*. *Prawn Da* also was shown on digital. Considering the competition on other channels, these programmes also drew a respectable number of viewers. With regard to *Wedi 6*, this programme drew a better response than *Heno* and it appeared that it was received regular daily viewing. *Ffermio* had a golden period during 2001 as a result of the Foot and Mouth epidemic. This programme was truly appreciated by farmers because it offered a service which was not available on any of the other channels.

Documentaries - There was a regular audience available for this type of programme. Programmes which gave a portrait of individuals (e.g. Ivor Emanuel, Cledwyn, Gwenlyn) received a following. Strong personalities such as Dewi Pws also were responsible for the success of programmes such as *Byd Pws*. Mention was made, however, that it was unfortunate that all S4C's presenters for such programmes were male, and that a request had gone out to the producing companies that they should look for suitable women.

Docudrama – It was decided not to commission any more of these in the future. They were generally less popular across the channels, but added to this, producing programmes such as these for S4C was a much more difficult task because of the need to find people and characters who were all able to speak Welsh.

Co-productions – A number of these had been made during the last few years. In some fields, including science and technology, a co-production had been the only means possible of producing a polished programme which met viewers' expectations. It was noted that it is difficult to draw people to individual programmes, especially when these were being shown at unusual times. *Tocyn i'r Sêr*, which dealt with space travel, was given as an example of such a programme.

Members thanked the Commissioner for his presentation and admiration was expressed for his ability to deal with the vast portfolio of work under his responsibility. During the ensuing discussion, special attention was given to the two programmes *Ar y Stryd* which were broadcast a few months ago. These were considered to be very notable programmes which had appealed to young people because of the nature of the topic, but which also appealed to a large range of people. Mention was made of the intention to produce one extra programme of *Ar y Stryd* which would follow up on the lives of those who appeared in the programmes.

Sponsorship

The Authority gave consideration to a paper which outlined the details of three requests for funding and recommendations were agreed upon.

Agreed:

- (a) Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales – That a grant of £1,000 be awarded to sponsor the Award Ceremony for Cultural Diversity.
- (b) Washington Gallery – That a grant of £200 be awarded to sponsor an exhibition of the *Masquerade* company characters which included several characters from S4C programmes
- (c) International Congress of Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth 2003 – That a grant of £2,000 be awarded to sponsor bags for conference delegates.

Other Matters

The following issues were also discussed/noted:

- Chief Executive's report – Issues for information
- Programmes Report
- Financial Report
- Complaints Report
- Viewers' Hotline Report
- Research Report
- Report of the Managing Director of S4C Masnachol.