

S4C Authority Bulletin
- November 2002

The following is a summary of the main points raised during the deliberations of the S4C Authority at its meeting on Thursday evening, 31 October 2002, and Friday, 1 November 2002.

Sky

It was noted that S4C was about to come to an agreement with Sky and once signed it would be possible to announce that the Channel was available to any viewer in the UK who owned a satellite set-top box without them having to request the service.

Publishing Viewing Figures

Discussions had been held with RSMB (the agency responsible for collecting data for BARB) to try to establish where technically things had gone awry in respect of accurately measuring the actual size of the S4C viewing audience. A fuller report would be supplied to Members in due course that would provide the basis for making real progress on this issue.

Secretary of State for Wales

Reference was made to changes in the membership of the UK Cabinet and it was noted that the Right Honourable Peter Hain, MP, had been appointed Secretary of State for Wales. The Chair had written to Peter Hain asking him for a meeting and the Secretary of State had expressed a willingness to meet at the earliest practicable opportunity.

Dinner for former members of the Authority to celebrate the 20th Birthday of S4C

Reference was made to the dinner to be held following this meeting of the Authority. It was pleasing to be able to report that all former Members had accepted the invitation with the exception of one who was now working in the Far East (and unfortunately there were also a couple of last minute apologies received because of illness).

OFCOM Board

It was noted that Ministers had announced the membership of the first OFCOM Board and their intention to invite Professor Ian Hargreaves from the University of Wales School of Journalism to join them at a later date.

Strategic Review

The Chief Executive took the Authority through a paper on the strategic review and the main issues that Members were asked to consider. Following detailed and thorough consideration of the paper and of the issues raised during discussion, the Authority agreed to accept the Management Team's recommendations in respect of the Channel strategy in relation to the overall objective of the programme service, the nature of the targets to be set, the commissioning process, and the schedule.

Communications Bill: OFCOM's Right to Fine S4C

The Authority considered a letter from the Secretary of State that proposed to give OFCOM the right to fine S4C. Specifically, it was noted that the proposal would mean that, for the first time, an external organisation would be able to fine the BBC and S4C in respect of anything broadcast by them. The Authority was of the view that the position of S4C was very different to that of the other independent channels, and also to the BBC, and it was agreed to reply to the Secretary of State on the matter.

Corporate Plan 2002-04 – Review up to end of quarter 3

The Authority gave consideration to the progress made against the targets set out in the corporate plan. It was noted that the majority of targets were being met. It was noted that it was not possible to fully report the viewing figures because of the ongoing issues in relation to the BARB panel.

Compliance Report

The Authority considered a paper by the Secretary on the response received from the BBC in respect of the use of the English language in the programme *Iolo yn Awstralia* broadcast on S4C on 1 April 2002. The issue was first raised at a meeting of the Compliance Group. The Authority noted the way in which the BBC had dealt with the matter internally. In light of the way in which the BBC had responded to the instance of the excessive use of English, it was agreed that no further action was required.

Presentation by the Head of Talent Development

The Head of Talent Development gave a presentation to explain in greater detail to Members the nature of his post, created some six months ago. He outlined his vision for talent development and the steps that needed to be taken. In particular, he noted that the nature of the post meant that it was necessary to take a much more long-term view, developing talent in the knowledge that the end results of such an approach might not become apparent for 5, 10 or even 20 years. It was explained that the post holder was directly accountable to the Director of Programmes and that the Head of Talent Development worked with each Commissioner in their individual areas of responsibility. The post had two main elements: development and talent.

The Head of Talent Development went on to explain how he worked with the commissioners on an individual basis to seek to inject the maximum effectiveness and energy into each project. There was now one overall fund for project development, as opposed to the previous system of several budget heads for each commissioner. Far greater emphasis was now placed on developing creativity. The presentation elaborated upon the way in which it was proposed to work with the production companies in order to realise these aspirations.

In terms of talent, the emphasis was on developing individual artists. The Head of Talent Development met people individually to advise them on how best to develop their talents and careers. This applied to actors, authors and producers. Specific examples were given to Members of discussions that had already been held with individuals, and of the types of ideas and conclusions that had arisen as to their options for the future. There was also the opportunity of working as a broker in a scenario, where, for example, a production company was looking for a particular type of person and he was aware of someone suitable.

Reference was also made to the fact that the Head of Talent Development was now responsible for the S4C scholarship scheme. As a result, changes had been made to the previous system where there were now far fewer but more valuable scholarships on offer. The hope was that S4C would benefit from this scheme in the future with the successful contributing in one way or another to the Channel in coming years.

The Authority thanked the Head of Talent Development for a very interesting presentation. As a result, Members now had a better understanding of the vision that would hopefully enable the new post to contribute to talent development for the future.

Sponsorship

The Authority gave consideration to a paper outlining the details of three requests for sponsorship.

It was agreed:

- (a) Sgrîn – That the sum of £5,000 be given towards the costs of Focus on Networking and Focus on Film conferences to be held in Cardiff in November.
- (b) Y Ffatri Bop/Pop Factory – Whilst agreeing to the principle of sponsoring the Best Welsh Language Band category in the Pop Factory Rock Awards, it was agreed that further consideration should be given to the actual amount that should be given.
- (c) Shakespeare Festival – That the sum of £1,000 be given towards the costs of a dinner to be held at the end of the Festival.

Other Issues

The following issues were also discussed/noted:

- Report of the Chief Executive – Matters for information
- Programme Report
- Financial Report
- Complaints Report
- Report of the Viewers' Hotline
- Research Report
- Report of the Managing Director of S4C Masnachol