

S4C Authority Bulletin January 2003

OPEN MEETING – MENAI BRIDGE

The Authority held an Open Meeting on Tuesday evening, 3 December 2002 at Menai Bridge, attended by some 30 people. The meeting was chaired by Nic Parry, Member of S4C Authority, and the Chief Executive, Huw Jones, and the Director of Programmes, Huw Eirug, participated in the discussion. Amongst the issues discussed were:

Sport - One of the viewers said that sports coverage was generally good but that he did not believe the cricket service was as good today as it was 10 years ago. Huw Eirug explained that this was an area where S4C reflected the rights held by Channel 4. Very many of the big games were now only available on Sky.

Magazine Programmes – The need for more programmes on S4C on fashion and clothes (such as the Lorraine Kelly programme on GMTV) was highlighted, focussing on fashion/designer shops in Wales rather than the tendency to concentrate on designers in London and further afield. It was agreed that *Pnawn Da* was a good programme, but the broadcast time was not suitable for some people, who were either at work during the day or did not want to sit down to watch television in the afternoon, as they were busy doing other things. People also felt that there was a need for more evening or early morning programmes aimed at women. An example of this kind of programme was the English language programme *What not to Wear*. The general feeling of the audience was that *Heno* had been a slightly more successful magazine programme than *Wedi 6*.

Pobol y Cwm – Different views were expressed about *Pobol y Cwm*. One person said that he was perfectly happy with the programme and that he had been an avid viewer since the beginning (he even watched the omnibus version on Sunday!). A large percentage of the audience had lost all interest. The reasons for this included boring storylines, a depressed feel to the programme, storylines being too heavy and depressing and not enough humour, particularly compared to the early days of the series. Another comment made was that the programme had showed signs of improvement in recent months, and that this should now be sustained. There was a mixed reaction to the moving of *Pobol y Cwm* to a later slot, although it was felt that there was very little late-night Welsh language material currently available.

Comedy – The audience was agreed that more comedy was needed on S4C, along the lines of *C'mon Midffild* and *Glas y Dorlan*. Overall, the response to *Naw tan Naw* was fairly positive, although some felt that the humour tended to appeal more to viewers in the north than the south.

News – Some people said that they wished to see the main S4C news earlier in the evening. In general it was felt that there was more coverage of the south than the north. Members of the audience were also of the view that S4C news tended to repeat material covered in the English bulletins and that there was a need to provide a service with more of a Welsh slant.

Drama Programmes – Programmes such as *Amdani*, *Palmant Aur* and *Pengelli* were very popular with the audience. *Amdani* was particularly liked because of the strong characterisation and storylines that retained viewers' interest from week to week. The response to *Treflan* was not so positive. The opinion expressed by one viewer was that the

series was typified by a dark and depressing undertone. Another viewer said that there was a need to stick with drama programmes, because they tended to improve as the series went on and that it takes time to become accustomed to the plays and to recognise and understand the plot and the characters before one could really start enjoying them. The audience wished to see.... "Next week on..." at the end of the drama programmes to give a better indication of what was in store in the next episode. Overall, the audience enjoyed period drama and reference was made to programmes such as *Y Wisg Sidan* and *Lleifior* as examples of popular drama.

Byd Pws – One of the viewers said that an hour-long programme would be preferable to the current half hour slot. It was felt that a half hour slot was not enough for such a good programme. *Byd Pws* was very popular with the audience, and people particularly enjoyed the programme's humour and Dewi Pws's character.

Nic Parry thanked everyone for their attendance and for their comments. The audience were given the opportunity to walk around the *Rownd a Rownd* set and to ask any further questions over a cup of coffee on the set.

BUSINESS MEETING – 20 DECEMBER

Visit of Lord Currie, Chair of OFCOM

A report was given on the visit of Lord Currie and Professor Ian Hargreaves to S4C on 6 December. It was noted that it had been an extremely useful meeting and that the opportunity had been taken to explain and discuss the S4C response to the new regulatory framework.

Communications Bill

Reference was made to the briefing paper prepared for Members by the Director of Corporate Affairs reporting on the progress of the communications legislation. Specifically, reference was made to those elements of the legislation in which S4C had a particular interest and to when they were likely to be debated in Parliament. It was agreed that a specific item should be placed on the agenda of the next meeting to discuss the latest situation in respect of the proceedings of the House of Commons Standing Committee.

Authority Membership –

- (a) Janet Lewis-Jones – Reference was made to the dinner held the previous evening to pay tribute to Janet Lewis-Jones as her period as a Member of the Authority draws to a close. Members referred to her dedication, her intelligent and valuable contributions to Authority debates, and to her total commitment to S4C since joining in 1992. She was also thanked for chairing the Audit Committee with such skill, thoroughness and attention to detail over a period of almost ten years.
- (b) Mrs Carys Howell – Reference was made to the fact that the new Member of the Authority would be Mrs Carys Howell. Mrs Howell had now retired but had been employed by the National Trust and was also a former television and radio producer in

England. A native of North Wales, she now lives in Cardiff. Mrs Howell will join the Authority in January.

Audio Description

Members discussed the requirement for public broadcasters to include an increasing element of audio description to assist blind people to enjoy their programmes. It was agreed that S4C officials should discuss these requirements with the relevant authorities in the context of the problems of ensuring that the necessary technical equipment was in place in order to be able to provide the service for users.

Welsh sub-titles

Members were reminded that a research project had been jointly undertaken with the RNID earlier in the year. A report was presented on the findings of the project and additional research undertaken to identify the needs of learners who also used the service. It was decided that more information, and possibly research, was needed on this issue before Authority Members would be able to come to a decision as to the best way to develop the service for the future.

Corporate Plan 2003-05

The Authority considered the proposed Corporate Plan for the period 2003-05. It was noted that the structure of the Plan had changed slightly in order to better reflect S4C's main aim of providing a television service of the highest quality. The Plan was in most other respects an update of the objectives and targets used for the 2002-04 Plan. The discussions on programmes had not led to a major strategic change of direction for the channel. The main aim remained that of providing a range of high quality programmes and the change in the structure of the Plan merely served to underline the fact that all aspects of staff activity at the channel supported this. Although some of the changes to the programme service were more tactical than strategic, there were elements of the discussions on issues such as the commissioning methods and other matters that had been reflected in the targets. The intention was to report on progress against targets throughout the life of the Plan. The Authority gave its approval to the Corporate Plan for 2003-05, conditional on further consideration being given to certain aims and objectives in the light of comments made by Members.

Other Matters

The following issues were also discussed/noted:

- Report of the Chief Executive – Matters for information
- Strategy and Timetable
- Programme Report
- Financial Report
- Report and Minutes of the meeting of the Compliance Group held on 6 December 2002
- Complaints Report
- Research Report
- Report of the Managing Director of S4C Masnachol
- S4C Masnachol Business Plan