

S4C Authority Bulletin **- February 2003**

At the beginning of the meeting held in January in Cardiff, Mrs Carys Howell was very warmly welcomed to her first meeting as a Member of the S4C Authority.

Sir Goronwy Daniel

The Authority expressed its great sadness at the death of Sir Goronwy Daniel, S4C's first Chairman, and a member of the deputation which persuaded the Government not to break its commitment to establish the Channel. His contribution to S4C was immense and it was he who was responsible for establishing it at the outset. Sir Goronwy Daniel was also the first Permanent Secretary at the Welsh Office and was at one time Principal of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. The funeral was due to take place later that day and the Chair, the Chief Executive and the Secretary would be attending on behalf of S4C.

Audio Description

It was reported that the officers had discussed this matter further and that they wished to hold discussions with other broadcasters in order to ascertain their views concerning the technical problems which were currently hindering the development of this service.

Welsh Subtitles

It was reported that the Management Team had been reviewing the possibility of offering a Welsh subtitling service suitable for deaf people or those who are hard of hearing and for learners. It was intended that the final recommendations be presented to the Authority in February, with a view to putting the work out to tender in March, the new service being introduced on 1 July 2003.

BBC National Governor for Wales

Reference was made to the announcement that Professor Merfyn Jones had been appointed as the new National Governor. The Chair had already sent a letter of congratulations to Professor Jones and also had a very worthwhile informal discussion with him.

IPPR Conference

The Chair gave a report on a broadcasting conference arranged by the IPPR which she had attended. There were two main points to note:

- (a) The Secretary of State, Tessa Jowell, mentioned that she intended to give detailed attention to the matter of the BBC Charter renewal in 2006.
- (b) During his speech, Lord Currie outlined the timetable for the Communications Act along with the date when it was expected that OFCOM would be operational (i.e. 26 July). Members noted that advertisements had already appeared in the press for membership of the Content Board. It was further suggested that S4C should begin to consider the issue of a 'Wales Committee' and the type of committee it would like to see as an advisory committee. S4C needed to formulate an opinion on this matter and to forward it to OFCOM fairly soon.

Meeting with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

Following a letter which had been sent to the Secretary of State before Christmas, a meeting had since been arranged for 13 February.

Membership of the Authority's Committees

The Chair had given consideration to the membership of the Committees and the two vacant positions which needed to be filled. She had invited Eira Davies to sit on the Personnel and Remuneration Committee and Chris Llewelyn to sit on the Audit Committee. Both Members had accepted the invitation extended to them, and as a result of this the Authority was asked to confirm the situation. It was agreed that both appointments be given the Authority's approval.

Eldra

The Authority congratulated all who had been involved with the film *Eldra* for being the British nomination for an Oscar in the 'Best Foreign Language Film' category. It was noted that a special screening of the film would be held in Los Angeles that evening.

Communications Act

The Members received a report on the debate in Parliament on the Communications Bill during the preceding days and the specific discussion held on S4C. The Members were pleased to hear that the politicians had spoken so positively about S4C. They were also pleased to hear that there was cross-party support for the Channel.

New Strategy

It was noted that 'top twenty' targets had been set for the programmes scheduled for the first three months of the year. The aim was to use this as a mechanism to steer internal discussions on performance. Since they had been based on a small sample, it was important that any discussion on the viewing figures should be based over a period of time and not based on data which was received from one day to the next.

Sgrîn Film and Television Fund

The Chief Executive explained the latest situation with regard to discussions on the establishment of the Film and Television Fund. The plan being put forward was considered and its main points noted, especially those pertinent to S4C. Members had a careful discussion on the plan, especially its relationship to S4C. It was agreed that the Channel's commitment to the venture be confirmed but that any conditions which were associated with S4C's support be formally presented in Sgrîn.

Political and Election Broadcasts during 2003

The Authority considered a paper which made recommendations with regard to the distribution of political and election broadcasts to the parties in Wales during 2003. Members noted that what was being offered followed a pattern which had been adopted in the past. It was agreed that the recommendations be accepted as set out in the report under consideration.

Consultation on Revised Welsh Language Guidelines

The Authority considered a paper which put forward recommendations following the consultation held with regard to the revised Welsh language guidelines. In considering the contents of the guidelines and the responses received, the Authority felt that the policy adopted by it in July was correct. It was agreed to adopt the guidelines and to accept the recommendations with regard to some minor amendments as set out in the report under consideration.

Authority Members' Register of Interests

A draft register of interests which reflected declarations made by Authority Members in January 2003 was presented. Members confirmed that the register was accurate and, according to the usual practice, it was agreed that it should be published on S4C's website, with copies available for public viewing at the Channel's offices in Cardiff and Caernarfon.

Presentation by the Head of Press

Hannah Thomas gave a presentation in which she outlined the role of the Press Office and defined the main aims of public relations work. She described the staffing arrangements for the press office team and explained the responsibilities and activities with regard to three main areas, namely, programmes, corporate and S4C's commercial activities. She also outlined the necessary skills required to carry out these duties. She underlined the importance of building a relationship with the local and national press in order to maximise good publicity for S4C and she also emphasised good internal and external communications. She brought her presentation to a close by outlining the press office's main plans for the year ahead. Members thanked the Head of Press for an interesting presentation and a discussion ensued on some of the issues referred to in the presentation. Relationships with the press in Wales was the main topic under discussion.

Other Issues

The following issues were also discussed /noted:

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