

S4C Authority Bulletin

- July 2003

The following is a summary of the main points raised during discussions at the meeting of the S4C Authority held on Friday, 27 June 2003.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 23 May 2003 were accepted. The chair of the Committee drew attention to two specific issues, namely:

- Annual Report on the 2002 Internal Audit: that the auditors were of the view that the operational measures used for risk management and the controls within the areas audited were adequate and effective and as a result that the S4C Authority could rely upon the internal control system;
- Risk Management: that the Authority at its last meeting had agreed to the request to change the name of the Audit Committee to the 'Audit and Risk Management Committee'.

Annual Report and Accounts 2002

Reference was made to the publication of the Annual Report the previous day. Members were agreed that the style of the Report published this year was very good and that the content was much sharper than last year. The Authority was of the view that the Report showed S4C to be an accountable body and that it was a useful document that had successfully summarised the main events of the year.

With reference to the press launch, it was felt that it had been very well received. It was felt that the Chief Executive, the Director of Programmes and the other members of the Management Team should be congratulated on their success in attracting viewing figures of 900,000. This was a significant achievement in an increasingly competitive market.

Meetings relating to the External Review

It was noted that meetings had been held with Peter Hain, the Secretary of State for Wales and with Alun Pugh, Assembly Minister for Culture. The reasons behind S4C's request to the DCMS for an external review had been explained to them. The response in both cases was good and constructive. The Chair had also had a meeting with the Chair of the Welsh Language Board. The intention was to arrange a meeting with the Board to discuss the implications of the review and to assess the respective strategies of both organisations.

S4C Charity Appeal

The Head of Marketing and her team were thanked and congratulated on the range of activities relating to the Appeal. The work they had put in to the activities was outstanding and it was reported that all had gone exceptionally well over the past fortnight.

It was noted that officers were anxious to conduct an assessment of the appeal campaign for this year once all the activities had been completed. Specifically, it was felt that with regard to the plans for next year it was necessary to look at the most effective ways of responding to the significant burdens the appeal placed on the shoulders of the staff of the marketing department.

Meeting with the BBC National Governor for Wales

A report was received on a meeting between the Chair, the Chief Executive and the Secretary with the BBC National Governor and Controller. The meeting was useful and positive.

Report of the Chief Executive

The report of the Chief Executive, which focussed on budget allocations for 2004, was received. In presenting his report the Chief Executive guided Members through several pie charts that outlined the main expenditure headings of S4C. In terms of programmes, the charts reflected the decisions already taken for 2004. The Director of Programmes elaborated upon the considerations that had led to the commissioning decisions.

Reference was made to the fact that the Director of Programmes would be leaving his post at the end of the summer. Members took advantage of the opportunity to convey to Huw Eirug their sincere gratitude and appreciation for all his efforts during his time with S4C, initially as a commissioner and then as Director of Programmes. S4C would miss him and best wishes for the future were extended to him.

S4C Internal Review: Areas of Activity

Members considered a report outlining the main areas of activity which S4C would need to address in preparation for the external review. Following discussion it was agreed that the report presented should be adopted as a basis for the review, conditional on Members' comments being incorporated.

Internal Review: Scenarios for Television in 2012

A report containing the paper 'Future Reflections: Four scenarios for television in 2012' was noted. Members were of the view that the paper was highly interesting and useful as background material for the forthcoming discussions on the internal review.

Compliance Report

The report of the Compliance Group emanating from its meeting held on 13 June 2003 was received. Specifically, the Authority was asked to consider several issues relating to the *Bang Bang Bangkok* series.

Members had already considered a tape of one complete programme from the series in order to gain an understanding of the context of that being presented and had also viewed a tape of selected clips from the entire series that raised questions of compliance. The question that the Authority was asked to focus upon was how appropriate it was that a public service broadcaster should broadcast programmes of this nature, together with the responsibilities arising from the original decision to commission the series in question. Amongst the issues considered were matters relating to:

- whether an impoverished Third World population had been exploited
- whether the group of young people that went out to Bangkok had been exploited or placed in situations of danger
- whether it was appropriate that public money should fund the kind of behaviour reflected on screen.

It was agreed: That it was not the wish of the Authority to declare as a matter of policy that S4C should not broadcast programmes of this nature. This type of programme raised important questions for a public broadcaster, but the Authority was convinced that it was part of the duty of S4C to target a young audience through programmes such as *Bang Bang Bangkok*. Nevertheless, certain issues had been raised in relation to particular aspects of some of the programmes, such as the fierceness of the fighting, one of the girls seen drunk in a swimming pool, drug taking etc. Members accepted officers' assurances that the production company had complied with health and safety legal requirements. The Authority was anxious to emphasise how important it was that officers of the Channel as well as the production team should give detailed and careful consideration to these aspects in the case of 'reality' series of this particular kind.

Other Matters

In addition, the following matters were discussed/noted:

- Report of the Chief Executive – matters for information
- Report of the Director of Programmes
- Financial Report
- Complaints Report
- Report and Minutes of the meeting of the Compliance Group held on 13 June 2003
- Report of the Viewers' Hotline
- Research Report
- Quarterly Report of the Managing Director of S4C Masnachol