

The Authority Bulletin - August 2003

Below is a summary of the main points which were raised during the S4C Authority's discussions in its meeting held on Friday, 25 July 2003.

The Relationship between the S4C Authority and OFCOM

It was noted that the Communications Bill had completed its passage through Parliament and therefore was now an act of law. Regarding OFCOM, it was noted that the Act establishes an advisory committee in Wales. The Authority would need to consider its relationship with this advisory committee.

The Royal Agricultural Show

The Chair reported that S4C had held a breakfast meeting on the Tuesday of the Show. This was the beginning of the consultation process for the internal review and a number of organisations representing different aspects of Welsh rural life were present. The meeting went extremely well with a number of comments and ideas being put forward.

At lunchtime on the same day a very successful reception was held attended by some 220 people, rather than the 150 that had been anticipated. The atmosphere over lunch was very warm and happy where appreciation was expressed of what was considered to be a quality service of a high standard being provided by S4C from the Show.

The National Eisteddfod

Members' attention was drawn to the fact that, as well as the usual activities, a public meeting on the theme 'Where Next for S4C?' would be held on the Field during Eisteddfod week.

Richard Hooper, Chairperson of the OFCOM Content Board

It was noted that it had been arranged for Richard Hooper to attend a meeting with the Chair on the 20 August. Sue Balsom, the member for Wales, would also be present.

Lord McIntosh, DCMS Minister for Broadcasting

It was noted that the Chair and the Chief Executive would be having a meeting with Lord McIntosh on the 9 September in London.

The Welsh Language Board

It was noted that the Chair the Chief Executive and the Secretary would be meeting with the Chairman and the Chief Executive of the Welsh Language Board in September as part of the series of consultative meetings concerning the review.

The Authority Membership

It was noted that an advertisement had appeared in the press and there had also been coverage on the S4C service, drawing attention to the DCMS's desire to appoint a new Member to the Authority. It was confirmed that Huw Wynne-Griffith's extended period with the Authority would be coming to an end in September but that it was unlikely that the new Member would be in place before November.

The Appointment of a Director of Programmes

It was noted that Iona Jones had been appointed to the post of Director of Programmes. She would be starting in her post on 1 September and everyone was looking forward to welcoming her back to S4C. The Chief Executive and the Chair had been involved in the interviewing and it was reported that very good presentations had been given during the process with applicants clearly having thought in depth about the service and had prepared very carefully. The interviewing process had been very encouraging.

S4C's Relationship with its Producers

Consideration was given to a document setting out the proposed policy for S4C's relationship with its producers. It was noted that this document was intended to be linked with a document outlining S4C's policy regarding the rights which the Channel wanted to buy from independent producers together with related issues. S4C must now produce the second of these documents in order to comply with the requirements of the ITC/OFCOM. It was agreed that the document should be approved subject to consideration being given to the form in which it was presented.

Solus Sky Card

The implications arising from the BBC's decision to discontinue paying for 'solus' Sky cards were noted, together with the fact that Sky is sending new cards out to every subscriber in Britain.

S4C Review

(a) Presentation by Dr Jeremy Evas, Head of Research, Welsh Language Board-

Dr Jeremy Evas was welcomed to the Authority's meeting and he was thanked for agreeing to present to the Members his conclusions from research undertaken for the Welsh Language Board into the 2001 Census returns regarding the state of the Welsh language. Following the presentation the Members discussed the issues drawn to their attention. This discussion was seen as the beginning of a journey and the Channel was keen for the relationship with the Language Board to continue, with both organisations benefiting from sharing information. Dr Evas was thanked again for taking the time to discuss this subject with the authority.

(b) The Remit for the External Review

A paper by the Secretary presenting an initial draft of a remit for an external review was discussed.

Monitoring the Corporate Plan 2003-05

The report monitoring progress against the targets in the Corporate Plan 2003-2005 was discussed. Most of the targets were being met at present.

ITC/OFCOM Guidelines on Commissioning from Independent Producers

The Secretary's paper was considered and it was acknowledged that, at present, this was a matter to be noted. Although S4C officials would be sending a draft version of the operating code directly to the ITC by the end of July, there would be an opportunity for the Members to offer comments in the Autumn. According to statutory requirements, S4C would need to publish the operating code by December.

Presentation by the Commissioner for Light Entertainment Programmes

The Members received a presentation by Huw Chiswell, the Commissioner for Light Entertainment Programmes. During his presentation, the Commissioner referred back to programmes that had been broadcast over the year and a number of clips were shown reflecting this provision. He proceeded to talk about the programmes which were in preparation and still being developed and gave a foretaste of the programmes that it would be possible to screen in 2004.

In the discussion that followed the members said that what they had seen boded well for the following year. They felt that there was energy in the new material. It was noted that it should not be taken for granted that all the pilots that the Members had just seen would be broadcast.

Other Matters

The following matters were also discussed/noted:

- The Chief Executive's Report -Matters for information
- Complaints Report
- Minutes from the Compliance Group meeting that was held 11 July 2003.
- The Viewers' Hotline Report
- The Research Report
- The Report of the Director of Programmes
- The Financial Report