

S4C Authority Bulletin - March 2004

The following summarises the main issues raised during S4C Authority's discussions held during its meeting on Thursday evening and Friday, 25 and 26 March 2004.

February Meetings Cancelled

Reference was made to the fact that it had been necessary to postpone the public meeting and to cancel the Authority's February meeting in Llanberis owing to the snow. It was confirmed that the meetings in Llanberis had since been rescheduled for April (along with the meeting that was to be held with the TAC Council).

Presentation by the Director of Programmes

The Authority received a presentation by the Director of Programmes who began by outlining her plans for the programmes service. She explained her vision of creating an exceptionally high quality programmes service and an ambitious agenda for a full Welsh language channel on S4C Digital. The aim was creative excellence. The Director explained how the Department would set about achieving this. She described the philosophy of aiming at perfection in every step of the process of creating a programme; ensuring feedback; and working in partnership with internal departments and producers. She proceeded to outline the way in which the Department would operate in order to achieve the aim of 'ensuring numerous high points which offer memorable and excellent cultural experiences'.

The presentation emphasised some of the main implications of the changes which the Director intended to implement. Members' comments led to a discussion on a number of practical aspects which the department would face in order to realise these changes. The Director would be in a position to introduce more detailed information with regard to her plans in a few weeks' time.

Code of Practice for Commissioning Programmes

It was reported that S4C was very close to coming to an agreement with TAC with regard to the Code. Very constructive discussions had been held over the last few weeks on the actual nature of the rights package that S4C expected to secure from commissioning. Some very important issues arose in relation to children's programmes because of their educational value, since there was a value to these for a time beyond that usual for other programmes and it was noted that TAC had been very constructive concerning this matter. It was very much hoped that the TAC Council would agree to the Code during the next week so that S4C could then present it to Ofcom. The Authority noted the situation and expressed contentment that things were coming together harmoniously.

Letter from Eluned Morgan, MEP

It was reported that the Chairm had forwarded a reply to Eluned Morgan with regard to the programme celebrating Dafydd Iwan's 60th Birthday. The letter sent supported the broadcasting of the programme in view of Dafydd Iwan's contribution to the world of entertainment in Wales over some 40 years. The letter also acknowledged that the election of Dafydd Iwan as President of Plaid Cymru meant that his appearances in the future would have to be considered on a programme by programme basis.

Complaints Committee *[The Member, Enid Rowlands left the room for this item since she was Chairman of ELWa at the time when the programme under review was broadcast.]*

Minutes of the Complaints Committee held on 5 March 2004, when the complaint from ELWa concerning the programme *Y Byd ar Bedwar* which had been broadcast on 2 July 2003, were received. This episode, produced for S4C by HTV and broadcast on 2 July 2003, dealt with various aspects of the provision of Welsh lessons for adults and the role of ELWa – The National Council in relation to these. Following this, ELWa complained about the programme on the grounds of unfairness.

Having considered each aspect of this matter, the Authority came to the conclusion that this was an appropriate subject for investigation by the programme. It also determined that ELWa had been given an appropriate level of information about the programme in advance and that the nature of the questioning had been fair. The Authority did, however, feel that the way in which the filmed material was used had been unfair in that it could have given viewers a misleading impression that ELWa's representative had been unable to answer the interviewer's questions. The programme makers had also breached another member of staff's privacy in using pictures of her when she had not consented to appearing in the programme. The Authority, therefore, upheld ELWa's complaint in part. It was decided that an apology should be broadcast before the next episode of the programme *Y Byd ar Bedwar*.

Broadcasting Reviews

The Chair noted that three reviews were being held at present, namely: one concerning the external review of S4C; one with regard to Ofcom's review of the public broadcasting service, and the other, the BBC Charter Review. It was noted that Lord McIntosh, (Minister for Broadcasting, Film and Tourism at the DCMS) had begun discussions on the BBC Charter and that he had visited Cardiff during the previous week. Lord McIntosh attended a meeting organised by the RTS along with a public meeting. Whilst he was in Cardiff, Lord McIntosh took advantage of the opportunity to attend a meeting at S4C.

S4C Review

- (a) It was noted that a meeting had taken place with Alun Pugh, the Assembly's Culture Minister. The purpose of the meeting was to advise him of the main findings of the internal review and to outline future steps.
- (b) Reference was also made to the Chair's article concerning the review which had been published in The Financial Times. It was hoped that such an article would draw the attention of a wider range of people to the review.

Lord Richard Attenborough

The Chair and the Chief Executive had met with Lord Attenborough in Cardiff during the previous week. The main issue discussed was the plans concerning the Dragon Studios enterprise in Bridgend made by the group with which Lord Attenborough was associated.

Conference on Communication at the University of Wales Aberystwyth

Reference was made to the conference arranged by the University of Wales Aberystwyth to be held on 29/30 March. It was noted that Roger Laughton and Meurig Royles would be attending and that they intended to give people the opportunity to present them with comments and evidence on issues concerning S4C's review.

Service Performance

The Management Team had been reviewing its methods of reviewing the performance of the broadcast service and of reporting on that performance to the Authority. The Authority agreed to a new order of reporting on performance which would ensure that a combination of quantitative and qualitative results would be jointly presented to the Authority in order to facilitate a meaningful discussion.

Viewing Figures Outside Wales

The Chief Executive explained that the BARB system now could produce evidence of viewing outside Wales. The figures were produced by BARB in the same manner as it produced the Channel's viewing figures for Wales alone (apart from the fact that there was no 'boost' panel). After careful discussion, the Authority agreed that S4C from now on should publish figures for individual programmes which included viewing outside Wales – for the purpose of the Weekly Top 20 and for the purpose of the Top 30 published in the Annual Report.

S4C Review

A report was given on the latest situation. Meurig Royles had arranged to meet various bodies and individuals around Wales in order to ensure that people were given the opportunity to voice their opinion and to input comments to be included in the review. Roger Laughton also would meet with a range of bodies. Explanation was given concerning the nature of the various presentations and meetings which reviewers had held with senior S4C staff during their visits to S4C to date. A meeting had also been held with the Chairman and the chairpersons of the Audit and Risk Management Committee along with Personnel and Remuneration Committee. The reviewers were also provided with a selection of Authority minutes for the last few years. Mention was made that Roger Laughton was still intending to report to the DCMS in May.

Review of BBC Charter

Members discussed the first draft of S4C's response to the consultation by the DCMS on the BBC Charter. Whilst Members agreed with a number of points made in the report, a number of additional comments were made. It was agreed to forward a response to the DCMS consultation provided the document presented to the Authority was adapted to reflect these comments.

Freedom of Information Act 2000: S4C Publishing Plan

A report was considered which set out a suggested publishing plan in accordance with the Channel's duty under the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act. It was noted, since S4C was a public body, that members of the public would be allowed under the Act to ask for information held by S4C from 2005 onwards. As a first step, public bodies were duty bound to prepare publishing plans which listed the information which they proposed should be made available to the public. The Authority approved the publishing plan as presented.

S4C Race Equality Plan

A report was considered which introduced a proposed race equality plan. This was another example of a plan which needed to be published as a part of S4C's duty as a public body. During a discussion of the plan, the point was made that it was important for S4C to take the monitoring seriously and that it should form part of the Authority's work programme (possibly to be delegated to the Personnel and Remuneration Committee). It was noted that S4C was already looking at advertising jobs in suitable newspapers/magazines in order to try to attract applications from more individuals from ethnic backgrounds, and also that there were plans to expand the opportunities for young people from ethnic minorities to experience the industry in Wales. The Authority approved the Race Equality Plan as presented.

Other Issues

The following issues were also discussed/noted:

- Minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee held on 23 January 2004.
- Chief Executive's Report – Matters for information
- Report by the Director of Programmes
- Financial Report
- Report by the Managing Director of S4C Masnachol
- Complaints Report
- Report and Minutes of the Compliance Group held on 13 January 2003
- Viewers' Hotline Report
- Research Report