

S4C Authority Bulletin - April 2004

OPEN MEETING – ELECTRIC CENTRE - LLANBERIS

The Authority held an Open Meeting on Thursday evening, 29 April 2004 at the Electricity Centre, Llanberis. There were 30 members of the public present. The meeting was chaired by Elan Closs Stephens, Chair of S4C; the Chief Executive, Huw Jones, and the Director of Programmes, Iona Jones, also took part in the discussion. Amongst matters discussed were:

Digital Television

The matter was raised that those who did not own digital equipment missed out on the programmes broadcast on S4C Digital. Huw Jones replied that the policy adopted by S4C tried to ensure that no-one would miss out on analogue what they had been used to receiving in the past. The digital provision offered more, for example, extended broadcasts from Urdd events and the National Eisteddfod. However, with regard to the analogue service, S4C also had a responsibility to broadcast Channel 4 programmes. He also made the point that analogue television would cease within a few years and consequently it was important to ensure that everyone knew how to obtain digital television and to make operating the equipment as easy as possible. Attention was drawn to S4C's Viewers' Hotline service, where staff were available to offer advice on this matter.

C'mon Midffild

It was stated that C'mon Midffild had been very successful in the past and questions were asked why further series of the programme had not been produced. Iona Jones replied that there were plans for a C'mon Midffild film and that it would be broadcast during the Christmas period. A new series would also be broadcast next year.

Children's Programmes

A member of the audience drew attention to the fact that the digital service did not begin until 12 o'clock while the children's service began much earlier on other digital channels. Huw Jones replied that S4C was aware of the situation, but in the end this was due to lack of financial resources. S4C had applied to the Government for more money and this was one area where S4C would wish to spend more money. However, Iona Jones went on to mention that S4C attempted to offer a morning service during school holidays and that the Channel had been experimenting with programmes on Saturday afternoons. Whilst noting this, mention was made that, as a parent, a service between 7.00am and 9.00am would be welcome in order to attempt to prevent the children from turning to the English language channels (including some from USA). Reference was also made to the fact that S4C had also been asking that their *Planed Plant* service be included on the children's menu on the EPG, but it had not been successful in this matter to date.

Sport

The question was asked why S4C did not show Welsh League football matches. Iona Jones replied that S4C would like to broadcast such programmes but that Sky had won the rights for these along with international matches. However, S4C hoped to come to an arrangement with Sky so that it would be allowed to show some of these football matches.

Another member of the audience mentioned that there was a fair amount of football and rugby on the television, but why was cricket not shown, especially the Glamorgan team. Iona Jones mentioned that one of the problems with the cricket was the timetabling difficulties involved with the cricket since it was not possible to know when a match would end.

The question was also asked why the *Tour de France* no longer appeared on S4C. Huw Jones replied that the reason for this was that Channel 4 had lost the rights to this programme, and consequently S4C also was unable to broadcast it.

Drama

Mention was made of the fact that young people enjoyed programmes such as *Rownd a Rownd*, *Naw tan Naw* and *Emyn Roc a Rôl* and a question was asked with regard to the future of these programmes. Iona Jones said that *Rownd a Rownd* was here to stay and that the intention was to add to the number of episodes next year. Another series of *Naw tan Naw* was being scripted at present and, unusually, the decision had been made to commission a second series of *Emyn Roc a Rôl* before the first series reached the screen. As a result of its popularity amongst young people, broadcasting it during an earlier slot than the current 9.00pm needed to be considered.

World Travel Programmes

The question was asked whether there would be another series of *Byd Pws*, a very popular programme. Iona Jones confirmed that a new series would appear next year and that work on this would begin within the next week. *Pacio* also was very popular and the response was made that this programme would also continue along with another series of *Lawr y Lein* with Bethan Gwanas, following the series *Ar y Lein* which had been broadcast during the last year.

Information on S4C Programmes

A discussion was held on the various ways in which audience members learned about various S4C programmes. It was noted that local papers and the EPGs were the main sources of information. Some also felt that *Sgrin*, S4C's magazine was very useful but doubted that many people were aware of its existence. The question was asked why British newspapers did not give more attention to S4C programmes and in a reply it was stated that the Channel had done its best to change the situation but the truth was that these papers did not view S4C as a channel which was important to them.

The North East

The question was asked why accents from the north east were not to be heard on S4C. Huw Jones mentioned that a series entitled *Mostyn o Fflint* was being filmed at present, but he acknowledged the point made. He went on to say that the honest answer was that a large number of people from Gwynedd and Anglesey went into the media – a similar situation existed in the south where people from Carmarthenshire appeared frequently on the screen, yet the accents of people from the Glamorgan valleys were rarely heard. It was said that S4C was aware of the situation and as far as possible, the Channel attempted to ensure a geographical balance across the service.

Radio Programmes

It was mentioned that some good programmes were to be heard on Radio Cymru and the question was asked whether there was anything which was suitable for transfer to television. The point made was acknowledged and it was stated that S4C was attempting to strengthen its relationship with the BBC. However, although there were a few such successes, radio programmes often were not suitable for television.

Working in the Media

A question was asked with regard to working in the media and television in particular. Huw Jones replied that S4C had a section in its website which offered advice on the various types of work available in the television industry, in front and behind the screen. This advice extended to giving information on which qualifications were needed and where relevant courses were available. S4C hoped that this would be useful to people and the Channel was keen that talent should be nurtured for the future.

Deiniolen Pentre Ni

A member of the audience referred to the above series to be broadcast by S4C and mentioned that he was glad that the band and football team had been given attention. He thanked S4C in particular for giving this village – which had attracted an unfavourable response in the press – an opportunity to express its own viewpoint. These comments were applauded by the rest of the audience. The meeting came to an end on this note and the audience were shown one of the episodes from the series due to be broadcast.

BUSINESS MEETING - 30 APRIL 2004 - LLANBERIS

Code of Practice for the Commissioning of Programmes

Officers were still waiting for a formal confirmation that Ofcom had approved S4C's Code of Practice which had been agreed by TAC.

BBC Charter Review

Members had received a copy of S4C's response to the BBC Charter consultation which had been sent to the DCMS. Appreciation was expressed that the paper, which had been amended since the Authority's last meeting, reflected the points made on that occasion.

Condolences

- (a) Members expressed much sadness on the death of Eirug Wyn, who had been an author and contributor to S4C programmes. After this meeting, a representation of the Authority would attend the funeral which was to be held during the afternoon.
- (b) Members were also saddened by the death of Lord Geraint Howells, a man who had been a good friend of the Channel and Welsh affairs in general.

Farewell

Mention was made of the fact that this was the last Authority meeting which Cefin Campbell and Nic Parry would attend, since their term as Members was coming to an end. They were thanked for their notable service during the last six years and for their advice, their wit and devotion. Two such dedicated members would have been hard to find.

Corporate

The Chairman reported that S4C had held a successful event at Plaid Cymru's conference. The event, which had been held at the House of Lords on 20 April, when it had been possible to discuss the S4C review with a number of Lords, had also been a successful event.

Ofcom's Report on Public Broadcast

Reference was made to the report published by Ofcom on 21 April (a copy of which had already been sent to the Members). It was disappointing that S4C's contribution had been limited to a separate box and that it had been withdrawn from the tables which outlined broadcasting in the UK. The task now was to ensure that consideration was given to S4C's situation in the second clause of the review. Reference was made to the fact that Ofcom had requested a response to the document by the middle of June and this was an opportunity which could be taken. Also, it was likely that S4C's review had come to an end by now and this, possibly, would also provide evidence which could be presented to Ofcom.

Digital Switchover

A discussion was held on the need for S4C to formulate an opinion with regard to how to respond to any specific plans which would be suggested by the Government during the next few months concerning digital switchover. Many aspects listed in the Chief Executive's report needed to be considered and these were considered on an individual basis. It was not necessary to make final decisions on these issues during this meeting, and discussions would be on-going.

Rights to Welsh Football

A discussion was held with regard to the fact that Sky had won the rights to broadcast the matches played by the Welsh national team, along with the Welsh League. A report was given on the discussions held by S4C officers with the BBC and Sky.

Sub-titles

Suggestions regarding a sub-titles policy were considered. Examples of suggestions made regarding sub-titles information on the screen were watched since Transl888 and 889 conveyed messages which were not clear enough. It was agreed that what had been suggested be approved, on condition that it would be reviewed after a few months, with consideration given to viewers' response to the new system.

Roger Laughton Review

The Secretary's paper, which reported on the progress made by the external review since the Authority's last meeting, was considered. Roger Laughton was due to begin writing his report and intended to present it to the DCMS during mid May.

Corporate Plan 2003-2005: End of Year Monitoring Report

The Authority considered the end of year result with regard to the targets set within the corporate policy for 2003-05. It was agreed to publish the monitoring report on the website along with the Annual Report.

Corporate Plan 2004-2006: Monitoring Report End of 1st Quarter

The Authority considered the corporate plan's position at the end of the first three months of the year. There was nothing specific which needed attention and it was acknowledged that it was still early in the year to establish progress against targets set for 2004.

Expanding Commercial Activities

The Authority considered a paper which suggested that it should be sent as a basis for a bid to the Secretary of State to expand the commercial powers of S4C. The Authority approved the paper.

Declaration of Interests by Members of the Management Team

Members noted the interests declared by members of the Management Team to the Authority, as the body answerable to the public for S4C. Matters declared to the Authority were confidential and were not for publication.

Compliance

The Authority was asked to consider the following issues:

(a) ***Popcorn:***

The Authority considered issues contained in three separate programmes in this series where the suitability of comments of a sexual nature, especially by the presenter, were questioned during a family slot (the series was being broadcast at 7.00pm). It was also considered whether the style of presentation was offensive to the audience. Members also noted the correspondence on the matter received from Tinopolis, the production company. The comments received from Tinopolis acknowledged that it accepted there were a few childish insinuations and that it had reminded the production team of its responsibility with regard to family viewing, but Tinopolis did not accept that the programmes would have offended the audience. Neither did the company accept that these programmes showed contempt for the audience. To support its claim, Tinopolis compared the issues under scrutiny against issues which had been considered by the ITC in the past.

It was agreed:

- (i) that these examples were very close to crossing the definitive line of what was acceptable in such a programme which was broadcast at 7.00pm. However, it was not evident that the content would be beyond the expectations of the young audience targeted by *Popcorn*.
- (ii) whilst noting comments made by Tinopolis with regard to decisions made by the ITC in the past (a regulating body which was still active when the programmes under consideration were broadcast), Tinopolis company should be reminded that it was a matter for the S4C Authority to make decisions on compliance with regard to programmes broadcast on S4C.

(b) ***Bandit:***

The Authority considered an occasion when a strong crude word was used in the programme *Bandit* which was broadcast on a 14 November at 10.55pm. Members noted that Boomerang, the production company, had already acknowledged that the programme had infringed the guidelines, had apologised fully and had taken measures to ensure that such an incident would not happen again in the future.

It was agreed: Although it was good to see the way in which the production company had responded to this matter, and although the programme *Bandit* appealed to a minority of viewers, the use of the crude word under consideration during this programme had broken the guidelines.

(c) ***Uned 5:***

The Authority considered an incident when the group Pep le Pew performed the song 'Smocio dy sh.. a Smocia dy ha..' on the *Uned 5* programme broadcast on 3 October 2003 at 4.00pm. The matter considered was the way in which the use of drugs was mentioned during a children's programme. Members noted that Antena, the production company, had already acknowledged that the programme had violated the guidelines and had taken steps to ensure that such an event would not happen again in the future.

It was agreed: Although it was good to see the way in which the production company had responded to this matter, it should be made plain that the Authority was clear that the programme had broken the guidelines and unhappy that a song with such words had been included in a children's programme.

Meeting with TAC Council

A meeting was held with the TAC Council following a meeting of the Authority. At the beginning, the Chief Executive of TAC gave a presentation to the Authority outlining the role and work of TAC. Reference was made to:

- membership (80 companies at present)
- the fact that it works closely with PACT (especially in order to ensure that TAC members were aware of what was happening in the markets in the rest of Britain and world-wide).
- that TAC negotiated with the unions on behalf of the industry, offering an advice service (which included legal advice) to its members,
- TAC's dealings with Ofcom.

Following this a discussion was held between the Council and the Authority where the following main issues were raised:

- the situation with regard to co-productions
- the fact that only 1% of spending on the independent sector in Britain came to Wales
- the need to get productions by the sector in Wales on the main British networks
- the new system with regard to rights as a result of the Communications Act 2003 (and S4C's Code of Practice)
- discussions with the WDA on the creative industries and how the independent sector could take advantage of public money in order to develop projects
- the fact the S4C spent 95% of its programmes budget on commissions from the independent sector
- S4C review and the attempt to persuade the Government to increase its investment in the Channel (which in turn would benefit TAC members)
- Ofcom and BBC Charter reviews.

Other Issues

The following issues were noted:

- Chief Executive's Report – Matters for information
- Complaints Report
- Minutes of the Compliance Group held on 16 April 2004
- Viewers' Hotline Report
- Research Report
- Report by the Managing Director of S4C Masnchol
- Minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee – 26 March 2004
- Financial Report
