

S4C Authority Bulletin

- July 2004

OPEN MEETING – TREGARON

The Authority held an Open Meeting on Thursday, 22 July 2004, at the Rhiannon Celtic Centre, Tregaron. 45 members of the public were present. The meeting was chaired by Elan Closs Stephens, Chair of S4C, and the Chief Executive, Huw Jones, and the Producer of Children's Programmes, Angharad Garlick, also took part in the discussion. Amongst the matters discussed were:

Sport

A member of the audience expressed a wish to see greater Welsh language coverage being given to minor sports – bowls, cycling, cross-country running, athletics, tennis, and it was said that there was also a need for a programme on soccer in Wales such as *Gôl*. It was said that although rugby was fine, there was too much of it. Huw Jones explained that S4C was anxious to obtain rights to broadcast other sports where they were available. However, rugby was an example of where S4C was able to increase its audience. Soccer had similar potential and S4C was aiming to broadcast more soccer over the coming year. It was, however, more difficult to make similar pledges in relation to the minor sports. It was hoped to be able to give greater coverage to rallying, and discussions were ongoing in respect of some other areas of sport. However, the Channel was aware that viewers expected sports coverage to be exciting and of a high standard. S4C would seek to pursue the rights to broadcast such sports when they became available.

Linguistic Standards

It was said that S4C needed to take great care in relation to linguistic standards, particularly when children were likely to be watching. It was felt that certain words were being used that should not be heard at all on television and that this had worsened in recent years. It was hoped that no further decline would be seen and that Welsh language programmes would not follow the same course as that seen on English language channels.

Education

Reference was made to the fact that S4C had claimed that the purpose of television was to entertain. The question was asked as to whether S4C acknowledged that broadcasting should also include an element of education. Huw Jones responded by saying that broadcasting and television had traditionally comprised three elements, information, education and entertainment. He went on to say that programmes such as documentaries contained a high degree of educational objectives, not only for children but for all viewers. Nevertheless, it was important to recognise that what most people expected was to be entertained. Education was, however, also part of the mix of objectives.

Elan Closs Stephens went on to say that Ofcom, the new organisation responsible for regulating the world of broadcasting emphasised the concept of 'citizenship', and the responsibility to make us all better educated in terms of our role in society. This was one of their major aims for public service broadcasting. S4C was of the view that this was a major part of its service, namely the ability to provide information about Welsh politics and current affairs on *Y Byd ar Bedwar* and *Taro Naw*, and others. But to reiterate what had already been said, it was also important that this is done in a way that attracted people to watch in the first place.

Huw Jones said that there was an interesting example in the area of programmes for learners, where S4C had been discussing how it should be making its contribution to the area of learning Welsh. S4C was of the view that its main function was not the provision of programmes to learn Welsh, but that it should rather be seeking to ensure that the programmes it broadcasts were accessible to learners by providing glossaries and ways of enabling learners to enjoy them and by so doing to continue their learning. However, it remained the case that the primary function of the programme was to entertain.

Reference was also made to discussions held with ACCAC in terms of deciding which programmes should be put on tape or DVD; which films, for example, were most valuable, and what additional resources could be included with such DVDs. If teachers were able to make sure that their voices were heard within the education system, S4C would seek to ensure that things would happen that would not otherwise be the case.

Literature

Disappointment was expressed that there was so little coverage of aspects of literature. It was expected that S4C and radio should be playing their part in encouraging people to read Welsh. Were there, therefore, any plans to make new or to improve existing provision? Huw Jones responded by saying that S4C was clear that the arts would receive more than adequate coverage on S4C, a trend that was possibly contrary to that reflected on other channels. *Sioe Gelf* ran for part of the year, and it was foreseen that the level of arts coverage would increase, and that such coverage would be of a more substantial nature. However, it was foreseen that literature would be part of wider arts coverage, rather than a subject to be given separate attention. For example, there had recently been coverage of the Book of the Year; and there was also occasional coverage of poetry and books. Literature was part of the challenge to give the arts the coverage it merited. Elan Closs Stephens added that S4C naturally made a contribution to creative writing in general. One of the major recent successes was that S4C had co-funded the Children's Poet. Myrddin ap Dafydd, the first Children's Poet had produced a volume of some very good quality work produced as a result of the scheme and had also been on a tour of schools. S4C has also helped with some of the courses held at Ty Newydd.

Sub-titling

A member of the audience claimed that sub-titling attracted non-Welsh speakers and learners in Wales, and that it helped to present matters from a Welsh cultural viewpoint. Travel programmes, for example, were very different on S4C to English language output and it was seen that this element of bridging was a very important function for S4C. A questioner asked whether S4C had any plans to produce programmes looking specifically at elements of Welsh culture.

Huw Jones said that S4C hoped that its service was different and unique, where the bulk of programming reflected a very distinct cultural perspective, with content that was not available on other channels. In terms of sub-titling, Huw Jones said that this had been a very important tool for S4C over the years to expand the channel's appeal, so that non-Welsh speaking viewers were able to watch and enjoy S4C. One of the major issues for S4C was whether it was appropriate to show open sub-titles on screen, such as *Pobol y Cwm* on Sunday afternoons. S4C was of the view that if it was to do so for all of its programmes, many Welsh speaking viewers would be unhappy, because it adversely affected their viewing enjoyment.

The answer was, therefore, to ask people who wished to use the sub-titling service to press 888. Unfortunately, although this facility had been available for some years, many people continued to be unaware of its existence. Digital made the situation more complicated, because Sky used a slightly different system.

A member of the audience acknowledged the fact that open sub-titles could have an adverse effect on the quality of Welsh speaking viewers' experience, but emphasised the importance of making the channel accessible to non-Welsh speaking viewers. She said that she knew of non-Welsh speaking work colleagues who enjoyed watching programmes on S4C through sub-titles.

Another person added that her sister was deaf, and although she did not understand Welsh she watched some programmes on S4C because the sub-titles allowed her to understand what was being said without having to turn to a member of the family for explanation. Lipreading on television was very difficult and she was, therefore, very grateful for this service.

Children's Programmes

Attention then turned to looking specifically at *Planed Plant* and *Planed Plant Bach* programmes. Angharad Garlick gave an outline of the daily work of the children's programmes department, together with an indication of what S4C was striving towards, namely the provision of the highest possible quality entertainment service for nursery and older children.

Specific reference was then made to the *Sali Mali* programme. In March of last year, an innovative project was launched to create an actual village in rural Ceredigion to film a television series for children inspired by characters in the *Sali Mali* books and series, based on the creations of Mary Vaughan Jones. It was intended to broadcast the nursery series *Pentre Bach*, produced by Sianco, on S4C at the beginning of September this year. The intention was that the television village at Blaenpennal should be used as a visitor centre when not in use for filming purposes.

Siân Teifi, the producer of the series, then shared some details of the filming process that took place in the Tregaron area as well as in the 'Pentre Bach' itself. She explained that *Pentre Bach* was an investment of 52 programmes over a two year period and she thanked the people of Tregaron for their support to the company during the filming in the area. She then gave an exclusive preview for those present of the first programme in the series in its entirety.

After the showing, Adrian Savill who was, with Ifana Savill responsible for designing and building the village, explained the work that had been undertaken on the site of the farm that had been in the ownership of Ifana's family. It was felt that one of the major attractions would be Sali Mali's house, built to the dimensions in the book, and it was already apparent that when children came to the village, they all ran to the front door and wanted to have their photograph taken. Although he showed photographs of the building work as it developed, he did not show photographs of the village in its finished form, as he was eager that everyone should come to Pentre Bach to see it for themselves.

At this point, the evening was brought to a close, and Elan Closs Stephens extended her thanks to Siân Teifi and Adrian Savill for their particular contribution and for their willingness to contribute to the evening.

BUSINESS MEETING - 23 JULY 2004 - ABERAERON

Secretary to the Authority

It was noted that this would be the last meeting for John Howells, Secretary to the Authority, prior to his departure from S4C to join the Assembly as Head of Higher Education. The Chair, in particular, expressed her thanks to him for the support and wise counsel he had offered her over the last four years. She extended to him Members' best wishes in his new post.

Publication of the Roger Laughton Review

Members' attention was drawn to the fact that the Roger Laughton report had been published the previous day. The Authority discussed how to make progress on the issues raised in the report.

Clywch Report

Members noted the chapter in the Clywch report on *Pam fi Duw*, which was the aspect of the investigation with which S4C had been associated. Attention was also given to notes of a meeting held by S4C officers to consider the implications of the report. Whilst noting the sentence that said that the Children's Commissioner had not found any evidence of abuse during the making of *Pam fi Duw*, it was agreed that S4C officers should report further to the Authority after the summer break on the details of the revised child protection policy being produced as a result of the recommendations of the Children's Commissioner.

Corporate Plan 2004-06: Monitoring Report

Members considered a report that set out the progress made against targets for 2004 listed in the corporate plan. Whilst noting that the vast majority of targets had been met, it was agreed that it was necessary to consider the nature of the aims and targets to be set for the next year as a result of the Authority's strategic deliberations over the last year.

Sponsorship

Consideration was given to the applications that had been received, and it was agreed that sponsorship should be awarded to the following organisations:

- Cardiff Film Festival
- Celtic Film and Television Festival
- Bafta
- Cardiff University

In relation to the application by the Bevan Foundation, it was agreed that the Foundation be informed that S4C would be interested in co-funding work on a specific project that would be of benefit and interest to S4C

Compliance

Members considered the report of the Compliance Group following its meeting of 9 July. It was noted that there were no instances of concern to be brought to the attention of the Authority. The Authority went on to consider the report on the broadcasting of the various political party conferences held during the spring and autumn of 2003.

Other Matters

The following matters were noted:

- Report of the Chief Executive – matters for information
- Programmes Report
- Financial Report
- Complaints Report
- Report and Minutes of the meeting of the Compliance Group held on 9 July 2004
- Report on the Viewers Hotline
- Research Report
- Report of the Managing Director of S4C Masnachol