

S4C Authority Bulletin - November 2004

OPEN MEETING - CRYMYCH RUGBY CLUB - CRYMYCH

The Authority held an Open Meeting on Thursday evening, 25 November 2004 at Crymych Rugby Club. There were 15 members of the public present. The meeting was chaired by Elan Closs Stephens, Chairman of S4C, and the Chief Executive, Huw Jones and Iona Jones, Director of Programmes, also took part in the discussion. Matters discussed included:

'Idents' on S4C

A member of the audience stated that he was not very happy with the fire and flames on all the 'idents' which preceded S4C programmes. He mentioned that fire was a very sensitive issue in some areas of Wales. Huw Jones acknowledged the point made and stated that the intention was to reflect the dragon's flame, which was of course, a very Welsh symbol. Iona Jones added that the Marketing Department had recently completed a review of the Channel's 'idents' and that it intended to replace the current ones with something new in 2005.

Repeats

Disappointment was expressed that programmes were often broadcast some three times on S4C and turning to a programme only to discover that it was a repeat was frustrating. The question was asked whether S4C was able to do anything about this. Iona Jones acknowledged that the arrangement of giving people additional viewing opportunities could be a problem for viewers who watched S4C regularly and were loyal to the Channel. She mentioned that in an ideal world, and if S4C had more money, that she, of course, would wish to commission more programmes and cut down on the number of repeats. However, for the time being, the present arrangement would have to be adhered to.

Imitating English programmes

It was felt that too many programmes on S4C imitated English programmes. Drama was an exception. It was asked how much research was carried out by S4C with regard to what was on offer from foreign programmes. It was felt that there were too many superficial programmes on S4C. Huw Jones replied that there were many programmes which were perhaps based on themes currently seen on English channels, but that they were indeed programmes of a very Welsh nature, and he cited the following examples: *Dudley* (cooking) and *04 Wal* (houses). He suggested that the format of the quiz programme *Risg* was unique to S4C. With regard to *Y Briodas Fawr*, this format was one which Wales could offer to the world and many overseas countries had shown an interest in buying it.

Iona Jones added that S4C did not undertake research similar to that which had been mentioned but it was stated that the Channel was a member of the European Broadcasting Union and that S4C's commissioners, as members, attended meetings where European commissioners could learn from one another. She added that people tended to think of *Big Brother* as an English programme, but, of course, the idea and the programme itself came originally from the Netherlands. Again, reference was made to Cariad@laith which had a background idea not too dissimilar to *Big Brother*, but this is was programme which was uniquely Welsh.

Risg

The new quiz programme was discussed. A mixed reaction was given by the people present; some were fond of the format but others were dissatisfied with other elements of the series.

S4C Viewers' Ages

A question was asked concerning the ages of S4C viewers. It was felt that young people did not watch the Channel. Huw Jones replied that this varied from programme to programme. The regular S4C viewers tended to be older, but, having said so, older people did tend to watch more television. The debate about winning over viewers of all ages was a discussion which occurred in every channel, although Channel 4 had made the decision to try and attract a young audience. Furthermore, one of the things which digital television had done was to create a culture where young people use the 'zapper' to channel hop. Loyalty to one channel, as was the case in the past, was now less evident. Now, viewers had to be attracted by individual programmes, and *Bandit* was working well for S4C in this respect. However, S4C, as the only Welsh television service, was trying to offer something for everybody, for at least some of the time.

Children's Channel

Reference was made to the CBBC channel which was available on digital. A question was asked whether S4C could do something similar. Iona Jones replied that S4C had already decided that more emphasis should be placed on children's programmes in 2005, when an extended service would be introduced. She added that it was her aim to establish a children's channel within five years, which would broadcast from 7.00a.m. - 7.00p.m. Developments in 2005 would set a firm foundation for this. It was felt that S4C succeeded in attracting children as viewers until they reached 10 years old or so, but unfortunately the Channel then lost them for a while, until they returned to it somewhat later. It was mentioned that S4C was also trying to produce goods to correspond with its programmes in order to reinforce children's interest, by marketing books, videos, DVDs, and, in the case of Sali Mali, a doll

Extended Coverage from the Festivals

A member of the audience wished to thank S4C for the extended coverage provided by S4C Digital from festivals such as the Eisteddfod, the Royal Welsh, etc. As a person who was no longer able to travel around much, being able to see what was happening throughout the day during these shows was much appreciated. Iona Jones was grateful for these comments. She mentioned that S4C hoped to do more of this kind of thing and to add events which at present were not receiving much attention. This was one way in which S4C could offer something different and valuable.

Religion

It was felt that little attention was being given to religious issues – not only Christianity but also attention to other religions. It was felt that it was important for young people to be able to grow up knowing about the various religions in a contemporary context. Iona Jones replied that S4C was keen to reflect things as they are today. *Nefoedd ar y Ddaear*, a series of six programmes which had been broadcast recently, had looked at several types of religion. It was agreed that there was a need to reflect things as they are today in Wales and not only to give a historical perspective. Perhaps it was true that there was a tendency to concentrate more on the past rather than on the present.

Pawb a'i Farn

The programme *Pawb a'i Farn* was discussed. Iona Jones expressed the viewpoint that this was an important programme, since there was no other forum of this kind for the people of Wales. She mentioned that she wished to expand the programme by means of the services that the digital world was able to offer, so that people could join in the debate from home and consequently a national discussion could be held every Thursday evening.

Pobol y Cwm

A number of the audience were very fond of *Pobol y Cwm*. However, one person wished to make the comment that too much violence had appeared in the soap opera lately, especially with regard to Steffan's story, when he murdered Teg.

BUSINESS MEETING – 26 NOVEMBER – LLECHRYD

Authority's day away/Ofcom -

- (a) The Chairman thanked Members for their work during the day away on 8/9 November. It was felt that significant steps had been taken in formulating S4C's strategy for the future.
- (b) Reference was made to the developments which had taken place since then and which stemmed from the speech made by Ed Richards, Senior Partner, Ofcom, regarding the future of broadcasting in Wales, during the IWA seminar held in Cardiff on 18 November, when three possible options were outlined: change in the relationship with the BBC; joint management with the BBC; or thirdly, an option based on the public sector publisher model. It was heartening to see that the Authority's discussion during its away-day had not been that far removed from what had been mentioned by Ed Richards. It was good that S4C's Chief Executive had been able to respond to the suggestions made by Ed Richards during the IWA seminar in a way which showed that S4C was adopting a modern viewpoint.
- (c) Mention was made of the way in which the media (the BBC and the *Western Mail* in particular) had chosen to interpret what was being said by Ed Richards in a negative way with regard to S4C's future. The fact that Ed Richards had taken the trouble to respond and to rectify this in the *Western Mail* was welcomed.
- (ch) Discussions ensued on the work which had taken place in S4C with regard to creating its own model for the future. It was expected that the publication of Dai Davies' report (on behalf of the WAG/WDA) on the creative industries would also be an important element for consideration in the formulating of this model.

Partnerships

The Director of Corporate Affairs guided Members through his report. He explained the way in which he had differentiated between what was a project, a relationship, or a partnership with another body. He proceeded to list those establishments with whom S4C was already working and also gave examples of the type of things which could be developed as partnerships. Members welcomed the report under discussion as a significant step ahead in the process of formulating a partnership policy. It was now necessary to build upon what had been introduced.

Terms of Trade

The Secretary reported that additional meetings had been held with TAC since the Authority's last meeting. It was hoped that the Terms of Trade had since been agreed and the Secretary was waiting to hear if the TAC Council had approved the latest revised version. The aim was to reach an agreement before the meeting being held by Ofcom on 2 December.

Corporate Plan

The Secretary introduced what was being suggested with regard to the Corporate Plan for 2005-2007. Members suggested a few changes/additions and it was agreed that the Secretary would revise the Plan and present it once more for approval at the next Authority meeting.

Ten Year Budget

The Director of Finance guided Members through the suggested budget for 2005 and beyond. The Authority approved the budget under discussion.

Discussion on Broadcasting with Simon Thomas, MP

Simon Thomas was welcomed to the meeting. The Member of Parliament was present to discuss the latest developments with regard to broadcasting in Wales, e.g. speech made by Ed Richards, Ofcom in the IWA seminar; report on the creative industries by Dai Davies, which was due to be published; S4C's situation with regard to its contribution to the economy of Wales; and the work which S4C was doing at present to meet the challenges of the future in the digital world which is on the doorstep.

Other Issues

- Minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee
- Chief Executive's Report – Matters for information
- Complaints Report
- Report and Minutes of the Compliance Group held on 12 November 2004
- Viewers' Hotline Report
- Research Report
- Financial Report
- Programmes Report
- Report by the Managing Director of S4C Masnachol