

**BBC Audience Council for Wales
Cyngor Cynulleidfa Cymru y BBC**

CONFIDENTIAL

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT
BBC BROADCASTING HOUSE, LLANDAFF, CARDIFF
FRIDAY 3 APRIL 2009**

Present:

Audience Council Members

Janet Lewis Jones (Chair and National Trustee for Wales)
Sangeet Bhullar
Nicola Branson
Andrew Carter,
Nicola Cockburn
Carl Cooper,
Roy Grant
Rob Humphreys
Andrew Jones.
Alex McMillan
Arun Midha

BBC Cymru Wales staff:

Menna Richards, Director BBC Cymru Wales
Mark O'Callaghan, BBC Cymru Wales, Head of News and Current Affairs
Clare Hudson, BBC Cymru Wales, Head of Programmes, English
Keith Jones, BBC Cymru Wales, Head of Programmes, Welsh, and New Media
Cathryn Allen, BBC Cymru Wales, Head of Broadcast Development
Gareth Powell, BBC Cymru Wales, Chief Operating Officer (for item 32)

Also present:

Chitra Barucha, Deputy Chair of the BBC Trust
Jana Bennett, Director BBC Vision (for item 33)
Geoff Prout, Correspondence Manager, BBC Trust Unit (for item 29)

Governance and Accountability Wales, BBC Trust, staff:

Karl Davies, Head of Governance and Accountability Cymru Wales
Siôn Brynach, Accountability Adviser, Cymru Wales
Clair Baguley, Departmental Assistant, Governance & Accountability Cymru Wales

27. APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dafydd Whittal,
Teresa Rees
Rhodri Talfan Davies, BBC Cymru Wales, Head of Marketing, Communications and Audiences

28. TRUST BUSINESS (IN PRIVATE)

The Council asked for their good wishes for a speedy recovery to be conveyed to Dafydd Whittal.

The National Trustee referred to the suggestion by the Leader of the Opposition at Westminster that the BBC should forego its scheduled licence fee increase for this year in the present economic climate noting that the Secretary of State for Culture had rejected the proposal.

She informed the Council that the broadcasting rights to the Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race had been won by the BBC for five years from 2010.

The recent events in Northern Ireland and the perilous state of the world economy had been the key news stories during the previous month.

Discussion had been undertaken with other public service broadcasters regarding possible partnerships and a memorandum of understanding had been signed recently with ITV.

Peter Horrocks had recently been appointed to head the BBC World Service, moving there from BBC Network News. Lucy Adams had been appointed to be Director of BBC People.

The National Trustee updated the Council on her appearance before the National Assembly Culture Committee at which she had presented evidence alongside the BBC Director General and Director BBC Cymru Wales. At that session it had become apparent that S4C's position regarding the commissioning of news (whether in English or Welsh) remained unclear. She informed Council that there had now been an exchange of letters between the Chairmen of BBC and S4C and a meeting had been requested to discuss news provision within the context of the Strategic Partnership Agreement between the BBC and S4C.

The Council asked whether the matter of 'top-slicing' the licence fee was still on the agenda. The National Trustee responded by saying that this appeared to have slipped down the agenda, but had not disappeared altogether.

Quarterly report on Trust Audience Insight

This was welcomed by the Council.

Final BBC Trust Workplan for 1009/10

The Council was informed that the final Trust Workplan would be circulated to Council members as soon as it was published, but was unlikely to be fundamentally different to the draft version. The Council's submission to this consultation had been appreciated by the Trust.

Report on Trust Audience Engagement Framework

This would be considered at the Council's next meeting.

Report on BBC management's implementation of the recommendations in the Nations Impartiality Review.

The Council's contribution to this had been greatly appreciated by the BBC Trust and this process would continue. The Council's members were asked to keep a continuing record of examples where BBC Network News failed to reach the required standards for accuracy and impartiality when reporting on devolved matters. It was noted that there was a clear need for this matter to continue to be reviewed to ensure that it remained on the BBC Executive's agenda.

The Council responded by saying that there remained examples of inaccuracy, but that there were also examples of good practice where accuracy was to be commended. The Council asked for the matter to be placed on its agenda for October so that a wider discussion could take place. It was agreed that it would be helpful for the Council to actively monitor progress during the period until then. HoG&AW informed Council that the Trust's Audience Councils Committee had commissioned BMRB to undertake further research on this matter in the near future and that in six months' time this research could further inform the Council's discussion.

Defining a BBC Trust/Audience Councils project to investigate issues around portrayal.

The Council was informed that there would be an Audience Councils conference in Newcastle upon Tyne on 14th October to consider this matter with the Trust. The Council's outreach events would contribute to this project in a significant way. The Council asked for linguistic communities to be included within the key communities to be included and in the key questions section of the report, since bilingualism was of pivotal importance in Wales.

Approval of Annual Performance Review Document

The Council approved its Annual Performance Review Document.

29. SELDOM HEARD COMMUNITIES AND THE BBC COMPLAINTS SYSTEM

Presentation by the Correspondence Manager, BBC Trust Editorial Standards

The Correspondence Manager said that it was vital that seldom heard communities were aware of the process for lodging complaints with the BBC when they felt this to be necessary. This was not a case of the BBC Trust soliciting complaints, but that people from all backgrounds should be able to complain if they felt it necessary. He said that the Audience Councils could play a key role in this regard through their outreach activities and that a leaflet was being prepared for their use. He also said that a *mystery shopping* exercise would be undertaken in the near future to test the new complaints process's implementation.

The Council asked about the size of the *mystery shopping* sample and whether a complaint from a seldom heard group would also be used? The Correspondence Manager said that assessing the success of seldom heard groups in making complaints would be one focus of the *mystery shopping* exercise.

The Council asked whether any comparable information was available regarding other organisations and whether it was clear what the point was of complaining. The Correspondence Manager said that the publication of complaints outcomes on the Trust website was useful in this regard as was the publication of the sanctions imposed when complaints were upheld by the Trust.

The Council asked whether there was a danger that the complaints process might become mechanical rather than a real resolution of issues. The Council also asked whether there was a process to identify vexatious complainants. The Correspondence Manager said that the Trust was aware of the danger of the complaints process becoming mechanical. Procedures were in place to identify vexatious complainants and there was no guarantee that matters referred to the Trust would lead to an appeal hearing.

The Council also reminded that Correspondence Manager that there was a seventh equality strand in Wales – relating to the Welsh language – and that provision should be made to address this matter. Equality and diversity considerations had to include the Welsh language.

The Council said that this development was to be welcomed and encouraged. The draft leaflet however was thought to be unsatisfactory at present and should be redrafted to communicate more effectively with the target audience. The Council also said that there was an issue relating to training for programme staff who received complaints via programme e-mail addresses. Staff should be aware of the path along which complaints should be directed and how to differentiate between comments and complaints.

The Council agreed that it would be happy to be involved with this aspect of the Trust's work in its outreach activity.

management joined the meeting

30. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The Council agreed that the minutes were a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

Under matters arising HoG&AW agreed that a draft response on Canvas would be circulated to Council shortly and submitted by the consultation closing date on 17th April.

31. REPORTS

National Trustee

The National Trustee informed the Council that the Trust had recently set the BBC's budget for 2009/10 and that the savings targets remained very challenging. The weakness of the pound was making a difference in some areas.

The Council asked whether in due course they could have sight of the management controls to which Sir Michael made reference in his letter to the Director General relating to the *bbc.co.uk* budget, and made it clear that it would continue to appraise the suitability of provision to audiences in Wales. It repeated its desire (previously agreed at the meeting of the Council held in October 2007) to see a Wales appendix added to the *bbc.co.uk* Service Licence.

ACTION: HOG&AW

The Trust had published its report on TV licence fee collection and had concluded that the tone of letters dispatched at present by TV Licensing was inappropriate. The Trust was now considering ways in which procedures could be improved.

The National Trustee informed Council that Ofcom had fined the BBC £150,000 for the conduct of Ross and Brand during the Jonathan Ross Radio 2 programme in October 2008.

She informed the Council that plans were progressing apace for the BBC's activities during 2012 including coverage of the Olympic Games in London and the Queen's 60th Jubilee celebrations. The BBC's move to Salford was scheduled to take place shortly before the Olympic Games as well as News' move to the refurbished part of Broadcasting House in London.

Controller Wales

Controller Wales said that she had recently participated in a session of the Westminster Media Forum.

She also informed the Council that she had recently been at the Audience Performance Committee of the Trust and the BBC programme plan for S4C for the coming year had been approved at that meeting.

Board Report

It was announced that BBC Cymru Wales community activity would be undertaken in the near future linked to the *Doctor Who* Easter special. The BBC would also have a presence at the RHS show in Cardiff over the Easter weekend, and broadcasting would be taking place from there. It would provide a key opportunity to meet members of the audience.

The Council congratulated the BBC on the launch event of the Cardiff Singer of the World competition and said that it again promised to be a very worthwhile event in June. The Council also commended the outreach events of the National Orchestra for Wales and said that the concerts that the Orchestra had provided for those with special needs had been particularly welcomed. Management responded by saying that discussions were currently underway with the Orchestra on its future outreach activity but that it was primarily a broadcast orchestra.

The importance of the BBC community strategy was emphasised by the Council and it expressed its hope that it would continue to be developed despite the present budget pressures.

The Council recorded its congratulations to Dylan Jones on winning the Radio Personality award at the Celtic Broadcasting Festival.

Head of Programmes Welsh expressed his thanks to Owain Arfon Williams and John Roberts for their work in covering the maternity leave of the Editor of Radio Cymru, who had recently returned to her post.

The Council was informed that work was progressing on the expansion of the BBC's news service for S4C and this was scheduled to be launched in early May. Some significant research work had been undertaken ahead of the service's launch. The service demonstrated the BBC's commitment to S4C and to its PSB responsibilities to provide a news service in Welsh.

The high viewing figures for BBC Cymru Wales' on-line material and recent activity which had been undertaken on the future direction of on-line work within BBC Cymru Wales were noted by the Council.

The Council asked whether any conclusions had been reached regarding the viewing figures of *Taro Naw?* Head of Programmes Welsh responded by saying that viewing figures had improved as the series had progressed but that the overall viewing figures for Current Affairs programmes were on a downward trend so new formats were being considered to improve viewing.

The Council was reminded of the *One family in Wales* programme which had been broadcast recently which had elicited a passionate response, and encouraged a wider debate in Wales

and it said that it considered that this kind of thematic approach over a concentrated period of time was very successful.

32. PRESENTATION ON BBC CYMRU WALES BUDGET & PROPERTY STRATEGY

BBC Cymru Wales Chief Operating Officer informed the Council that the current economic climate meant that the environment within which BBC Cymru Wales was operating was increasingly challenging. He informed Council that the business development challenges in the year ahead included the production of the fifth series of *Doctor Who*, fulfilling an ambition to win more TV radio and on-line commissions, contributing to the next set of proposals for a BBC local service, renegotiating the rights to broadcast rugby, strategic partnership discussions with S4C, progressing of the BBC Cymru Wales property strategy and seeing the BBC National Orchestra of Wales in its new home in Hoddinott Hall for its first full year.

With ambition came challenges and these included maintaining the quality of the output while also meeting challenging quotas and obligations and delivering more savings. There continued to be concern regarding the relative levels of spend on English and Welsh language TV in Wales.

He said that the financial headlines included a budgeted cash spend of £120m during 2009-10 with a headcount of 1293 staff for BBC Cymru Wales. Incremental efficiency reductions of £3.7m would take place and additional saving requirements were also expected. The Council was reminded that there would be a reduction in the expected levels of new investment because of the Trust's rejection of the BBC Local proposals. The savings challenge included both the £8m annual savings delivered since 2007-08 (known as the *Value for Money* process) and a further £15m per annum efficiencies which were the target by 2012-13 (the *Continuous Improvement Programme*).

Under the heading of new investment Council was informed that the budgetary restrictions imposed by the BBC Trust on *bbc.co.uk* meant that there would be limits on future multi platform investment.

There were significant business risks apparent in the coming years arising from the budget as presently set, including

- industrial action
- staff unrest
- audiences – deficits in reach, share and quality
- reputational decline arising from levels of investment in English language TV
- Fulfilling SoPPs, meeting Ofcom quotas and the NAO efficiency audit.

He informed the Council that a tremendous amount of feasibility work had been undertaken on the BBC Cymru Wales property strategy since his last presentation in June 2008. *Casualty's* move to Wales required additional capacity from 2011 and this would deliver long term creative sustainability in Wales if deliberated as part of a Drama Village. Cardiff Broadcasting House was no longer fit for purpose and was showing signs of age. It needed expensive maintenance work which would do nothing to reconfigure the building and improve its suitability. He also said that co-siting of all BBC Cymru Wales' productions and broadcasting activity would assist a wider Creative Future strategy which would allow BBC

Cymru Wales to deliver its multi-layered business on all platforms, across all genres and in both languages.

He said that a solution was being sought for drama by 2011 ready for *Casualty* to begin production in Wales in January 2012. Plans for a broadcast centre by 2015/16 would be considered at a later stage. The Welsh Assembly Government and Cardiff City Council were supportive of the idea of establishing a *Media Capital*. He said that the present economic climate was having an impact on plans but was also providing some benefits in terms of a potential good long term deal. The Memorandum of Understanding with ITV assumed a co-location by 2015.

The BBC's Finance Committee had approved further work on the Drama Village proposition and had noted that the preferred long term solution might be for a broadcast centre to be co-located with the drama village (Media Capital) but needed the economic case to support it. Further plans would be going to the Finance Committee shortly, and further input would be sought from possible partners, and an assessment of possible risks undertaken.

The Council noted that it considered that the plans for the establishment of a *Media Capital* would significantly benefit audiences in Wales and commended the work undertaken thus far on the plans.

33. PRESENTATION ON OUT OF LONDON TV COMMISSIONING AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN BBC VISION

Director BBC Vision outlined the scope of her responsibilities which included oversight of the TV Channel Controllers. She indicated that one of the key measures for her was *Reach* rather than just viewing figures for programmes and that the health of BBC services was also considered through such measures as Appreciation Indices.

The goal for BBC One was to achieve the widest possible *Reach* and to provide something for everyone, reflecting our heritage but also taking audiences on new adventures.

BBC Two, while providing depth and substance, was also seen as a place for entertainment, to attract a broad adult audience and showcase the widest range of knowledge programmes, focusing on those between 22 and 44 years old.

BBC Three aimed to be Britain's bravest youth media brand (primarily for those aged 16-34) and to provide space to develop new talent and ideas.

BBC Four was seen as providing a richer offering for the more discerning viewer – united by attitude and curiosity and aiming to stimulate and challenge with wit and verve.

The goal of CBBC was to deliver high quality content for those between 0 and 12 years old.

BBC HD was the channel to provide programmes in the best possible broadcast quality.

Addressing the question of what was heard from BBC audiences in Wales she said that the weekly *Reach* of *Vision* in Wales was healthy (84%) and that while weekly *Share* was relatively low (31.8%) *Approval* of BBC TV in Wales was very high (6.5 out of 1). However, she informed Council that it was also the case the people of Wales told the BBC it needed to better reflect a world with which could they identify while also giving greater consideration to location and casting. Representation and portrayal were not enough on their own – audiences didn't want quality to be sacrificed.

The *Network Supply Review* had identified possible answers to some of the issues associated with portrayal and creative solutions were being sought that didn't sacrifice quality and learnt from what had gone before. Listening to audiences was crucial and creative partnerships were being established between Commissioners and creative executives based outside London while authentic writers were also being nurtured. However, serendipity was also part of the mix, and she cited the example of *Gavin and Stacey*, where portrayal of Barry and Essex had been a happy coincidence rather than a planned outcome.

She said that Drama in Wales had been a success story thus far and that the move of *Casualty* to Wales – a year-round title - would increase sustainability and widen opportunities to develop talent further.

Wales was also known for its strong factual tradition with programmes such as *Tribe*, *Coal House* and *Rivers* all contributing to the momentum.

Looking to the future she said that *The One Show* was building on a strong consumer journalism tradition. *Crimewatch*, which would shortly be moving to Wales, sought to further strengthen a centre of excellence in the production of Factual programming. She said that there was also a move to develop ambitious landmarks programmes through collaborations between local and Network commissioners.

Director Vision finished her presentation by showing the Council a clip of the forthcoming series, *Human Planet*, produced in collaboration with other companies, which would encompass a world-wide perspective; and a clip of a *Torchwood* special which would be transmitted in the near future.

The Council thanked Director Vision for her presentation and emphasised the importance to audiences in Wales of portrayal – which was a point made at each and every one of the Council's outreach events. She was also asked for assurances that the out of London quota was a *floor* rather than a *ceiling*. She was happy to give Council that assurance and said that good ideas would always be welcomed. She said however that it was important for writing talent to be nurtured which would be a real reflection of the geographic origins of writers.

She was asked about her plans to nurture and develop further projects in Wales where there was a clear pool of talent. Head of Programmes Wales said that an increase in confidence through success was contributing to an increased confidence to pitch ideas which would boost the portrayal of Wales. Director Wales also said that individual writers such as Russell T Davies had gone out of their way to nurture and develop younger writers.

The Council asked about the extent to which Director Vision was targeting an age range in her programming. She responded by saying that BBC One had no particular targeted age range since the channel needed to embrace a wide age range but that some of the other channels were more targeted.

The Council said that while the presentation given had emphasised the positives whether Director of Vision could also identify some possible future difficulties? She responded by saying that the BBC was finding it increasingly difficult to target younger audiences who were in any event watching less TV overall. Neither was there evidence that people began watching more TV as they got older and there was a danger therefore that young people would simply get out of the habit of watching TV. She also cited the sustainability of creative excellence as another possible challenge – though she emphasised that this was not an issue

for BBC Cymru Wales. The Council was informed that the present economic recession could lead to serious problems for regional independent television production which would be to the detriment of the whole industry.

34. PRIORITY ISSUE FOR BBC TRUST

The Council agreed that the priority issue should be its annual performance review of the BBC's activities in Wales.

35. CONFIRMATION OF DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The National Trustee informed the Council of the arrangements for the next meeting of Council and the previous evening's outreach event in Rhosllannerchrugog. The Council was also informed of the Council's outreach event scheduled for 9th April which was being facilitated with the assistance of Age Concern.
