

AUDIENCE COUNCIL ENGLAND

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 13 May, 2008 at BBC Television Centre

IN ATTENDANCE:

Alison Hastings	Chair
Annette Priestley	Chair, South
Belinda Channer	Chair, West Midlands
David Claridge	Chair, South East
Denis Price	representing Yorkshire & Lincolnshire RAC
Elizabeth Peacock	Chair, Yorkshire
Hannah Eyres	Chair, North East and Cumbria
Helen Hunt	representing East RAC
Julie Panagarry	Chair, North West
Michael Davenport	representing London RAC
Phillippa Denton	Chair, East Midlands
Stuart Paterson	Acting Chair, West
Thelma Holland	Chair, South West
<i>Pat Loughrey (part)</i>	<i>Director Nations & Regions</i>
<i>Roly Keating (part)</i>	<i>Controller BBC Two</i>
<i>Andy Griffee (part)</i>	<i>Controller English Regions</i>
<i>Richard Waghorn (part)</i>	<i>Controller Distribution</i>
<i>Craig Henderson (part)</i>	<i>Head of Programming English Regions</i>
<i>Gareth Tuck (part)</i>	<i>Senior Adviser, Performance Team BBC Trust</i>
<i>Professor Bill Osgerby} (part)</i>	<i>London Metropolitan University</i>
<i>Dr Anna Gough-Yates}</i>	
<i>Louise Hall</i>	<i>Head of Governance & Accountability England</i>
<i>Frances Bryant</i>	<i>Public Accountability Manager, South & South East</i>

APOLOGIES

Clarke Willis	Chair, East
Ted Wright	Chair, Yorkshire & Lincolnshire

1. APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Alison Hastings welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Clarke Willis and Ted Wright.

She welcomed Helen Hunt, Denis Price and Michael Davenport
Michael was representing the London RAC, which was awaiting the appointment of a new Chair.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

- 2.1 The minutes required the word Chair to be added alongside Ted Wright's name, in attendance listing; with this amendment the minutes were approved as being a true record.

2.2 Matters arising

9.1 Meeting with Helen Boaden to be arranged in June to discuss 'parachuting in of network journalists'. Louise Hall to invite two to three members to join her. It was important to have specific examples to discuss.

9.5 Andrea Callender, Head of Diversity to be invited to October meeting (Bristol 7 October)

9.6 Liverpool Capital of Culture – Members were invited to contact Julie Panagarry with any feedback on BBC coverage from Liverpool. The Reith Lecture was being broadcast live from Liverpool on 16 May.

9.7 Joint meeting in Salford for the four northern Councils had now been confirmed for 22 September. It was suggested that a representative from the West and West Midlands Councils might attend.

3. REPORTS

3.1 Trust Meetings

Members had received the January and February minutes and March summary. The following was raised:

the Ofcom Public Service Broadcasting review was at the forefront of Trust discussion: the Chairman would be speaking on this subject at the Royal Society of Arts that evening (members to receive a copy).

the Trust looked likely to give the BBC some tough targets for out of London network production. It was important that Chairs, particularly for the West Midlands and the West, understood the implications and issues about moving programme departments to other regions. There would be sustainable hubs of excellence to ensure creative communities outside London. The hubs in England were Bristol, Birmingham, Salford and London.

January minutes item 11.3: members were reassured that no further breaches were being scrutinised by the Trust. It was agreed that the members should be given an outline of the relationship between the Trust and Ofcom, with particular reference to complaints.

members asked if their work could be recognised within the Trust minutes or at least some feedback that their input was useful or not, and if not how they might change their approach. Could the impact of the Councils' input be measured on the Trust and the BBC executive?

it was also suggested that the RAC agendas should include some feedback to the councils; the item could read 'Trust Business and Feedback'.

3.2 Report of the Head of Governance & Accountability England

Louise Hall highlighted the following from her report:

Induction Day: 15 council members had attended and the feedback was very positive.

England Accountability Review: it was hoped a consultant would be appointed shortly. Their schedule would include attending three or four June council meetings and meeting all of the Chairs; details will be made available as soon as possible.

Public Service Broadcasting Review: comments from the dinner discussion would be included in the ACE submission to Part One. Members were invited to contact Louise Hall if they wished to add to the draft paper. There would be the opportunity for RACs to contribute to the second part of the review.

The Chairman had recently visited the South West and East Midlands regions, and met members of the RAC; the discussions had been lively and worthwhile.

3.3 Report of the Controller English Regions

Andy Griffie updated his report with the following as follows.

RAJAR (Radio Joint Audience Research) figures had been very encouraging and were up year on year. Particular focus had been on the big stations. BBC London received its highest figures to date, Manchester and Merseyside looked to be recovering, there was some concern about Leeds and continuing concern about WM. Radio Gloucester had the highest figures in their history. Radio Jersey had won many new listeners following coverage of the Haut de la Garenne news story.

TV audiences had sustained their reach for the 6.30 programme, but growth had been in the 10.25, particularly in the cities. The 8pm bulletin continued to attract new audiences.

BBC Radio Suffolk won a Gold Sony Award in the Live Events Category.

Only two stations had reintroduced competitions. Many had created alternative ways of having a dialogue with their audience. It was suggested that the Local Radio link representatives might monitor audience reaction to the loss of competitions, if any.

3.4 Report of the Head of Programming

Craig Henderson recapped on recent programmes including *Nation on Film* and *Made in England*, and showed a compilation tape.

He reminded members of BBC English Regions' commitment to the arts through the partnership with the Arts Council for the *Made in England* series which had resulted in a mass of activity across Local Radio and regional television. Output had included landmark programmes and a new website. There was also a new funding pot to support artist commissions, inviting them to step outside their comfort zone and take a wider perspective. Such output would extend English Regions' usual genre base of news and current affairs.

There had been strong audiences for many of the programmes and staff had benefited from their own 'voyage of discovery' through contact with new talent. Members gave some preliminary feedback prior to discussion at the June regional council meetings and asked that the whole series be shown on the network; they worked well together and put contemporary life in England into context.

In answer to a query about the *Made in England* 10.40pm scheduling slot, Craig said that audiences generally held up until 11pm, and there had also been some watershed issues. He was in discussions with BBC Two and Four for repeat showings.

Alison Hastings referred to a letter from Michael Knowles, Head of Media for The Campaign for an English Parliament to which she would be responding on behalf of the Council, and asked members for their views.

The point was made that the BBC's handling of 'Englishness' as an issue was based on the UK Constitution and emphasised the local and regional, as exemplified by the *Made in England* programming which began with the local and ended as an England-wide project. The size of England meant that 'Englishness' was a continually fascinating subject but the *raison d'être* for BBC English Regions was to reflect the diversity and not become embroiled in constitutional matters. Andy Griffie noted that a huge proportion of the BBC's network output was made in the English production centres of London, Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester.

Looking ahead, Craig drew members' attention to a number of programmes for members to watch out for:

More activity around the *Made in England* theme involving audience e.g. a travelogue around the country during the year; a *Nation on Film* special on BBC Four and regional TV and Local Radio programming on the subject of the Beeching rail cuts, in the Autumn; and a mini-season on the BBC to mark the 90th anniversary of Remembrance Day in November.

It was agreed that a report on *Inside Out* would be made to a future meeting.

4. BRIEFING ON FREESAT

Richard Waghorn's presentation attached. He highlighted the following:

Freesat was launched on 6 May with over 80 services available; by December it should have just over 200. ITV HD would be launched soon and Channel 5 expected to launch on Freesat later in the year.

It is hoped that the BBC iPlayer will be made available on Freesat using the Ethernet in the box; other IP delivered services could also be made available.

Freesat is a free service, with just a one-off cost, and it will remain free.

There are currently nine million HD-ready TVs in people's homes but very few of them are watching an HD service.

Other information included the fact that:

HD will not be on Freeview until 2009-2010; the only BBC Local Radio on Freesat is BBC London 94.9; the BBC was running a marketing campaign for BBC HD at present with a phone help-line; it was anticipated that cost of the Freesat hardware will come down over time, but unlikely to the same extent as Freeview.

Regional television services available at launch were: BBC London, the Channel Islands and BBC East. The other regions are on different satellite transponders and they will be configured onto the Freesat EPG during June and July. Members felt it was important that this information should be communicated when equipment was purchased during that period.

5. PROGRAMME & SERVICE REVIEW

5.1 *The White Season*

Alison Hastings welcomed Roly Keating, Controller BBC Two to the meeting.

Roly outlined how the season had come about, with ideas and input from a number of different departments also audiences were saying that with all the attention on multi-culturalism, there was a pocket of people who were unheard. A number of themes were considered, but it had been Abbie Morgan's script for *White Girl* which finally brought the season together.

The marketing department provided the iconic trail which was treated with the same care and debate as the series. It had been important to alert viewers that some of the voices and subjects might make for uncomfortable viewing. The marketing campaign was deliberately short and sharp with only a eight to nine day promotional window.

With over two million watching most programmes, the usual upmarket audience to BBC Two had included higher than average number of C2DEs.

Throughout the season the audience had been encouraged to respond and debate the issues raised via *The White Season* website. This captured the emotional and regional temperature of the audience; there were over a million views on the website, with over half a million taking part in the news debate.

While the season invited people to question their own views it also took the BBC out of its comfort zone.

Roly Keating had received the councils' overall comments.

Members unanimously agreed that the BBC had been courageous in broadcasting this season; the South West, North West and Yorkshire & Lincolnshire Councils felt it had allowed them to discuss class and race issues across the wide spectrum of programmes.

Unlike the *Abolition Season*, the South East Council had liked the short duration of this season and had watched many of the programmes. However, the London RAC felt it could have gone further: the season had not 'punched its full weight' and some felt the trailer had raised expectations that were not met.

The West Council felt there should have been a concluding debate to round off the season and the East Council would have liked to have seen some positive aspects of working class life; the portrayal was mainly negative.

Last Orders

The Yorkshire Council felt the idea behind *Last Orders* had been good, but it had poorly executed. While some Councils didn't like the American film-maker, others felt he provided a different perspective.

The Poles Are Coming

There was praise for this programme particularly from the East and the North East Councils, who felt it was aimed at a younger audience and had painted a very strong picture. The East Midlands Council felt this had shown real life in these communities.

All White in Barking

This was considered the strongest programme by the London Council and met the expectations raised by the trail.

White Girl

There was praise for the quality of this production. The story line was less about different cultural backgrounds and more about the lack of family support. There was praise from the South Council for bringing on new talent: the young actress had been excellent.

The Primary

There was high praise from the West Midlands Council for this programme which portrayed a very positive image of school life for these young people.

Concern was expressed by the South Council that the trailer had been broadcast near children's programming and it was unsuitable for children.

Roly Keating felt these views reflected many captured in the online debates. If it had opened up the debate then the season had achieved much of what it set out to do. The perception that the programmes were negative was not the intention; they were trying to portray people in the round.

5.2 CBeebies and CBBC

CBeebies

Members were very positive about CBeebies; the programmes reflected different regions, cultures and accents. They had good educational content and opportunities for informal learning. It was a child's first introduction to the BBC, it was trusted, with no adverts and parents felt 'safe' letting their children watch. Members said the BBC shouldn't be worried about repeats – children loved to see things again and again.

The children nearer the top end of the targeted age group had already moved on but were still using the website but the programmes were perhaps too young.

Another attribute was that parents too enjoyed watching the programmes but a parent on the South Council was concerned that trails for the *White Season* had been shown around the time of some of the children's programmes.

CBBC

The programmes were considered to be good in parts; this was a more challenging age group and many had moved onto commercial channels. There was little channel loyalty at this age, and little output for the top end of the age group. There was praise for *Newsround* and its ability to handle delicate subjects with care.

5.3 *Made In England* – discussed under 3.4

6. BBC ENGLISH REGIONS: FORWARD LOOK

Pat Loughrey, Director Nations & Regions, outlined the history behind BBC Local as the evolution from clutter to clarity, moving from text and stills to audio and video.

The websites now focussed on four key services: News, Sport, Weather and Travel.

News is key; the new sports service is getting around 750,000 page impressions a day; there had been new investment to enrich the weather service and two stations have been offering Sunday forecasts; and Travel information provided up to the minute traffic reports.

It was vital that the BBC got these four services right, to provide a cross platform offering, to fully benefit the audience.

It was hoped the Trust would recognise the public value of BBC Local; the BBC had imposed its own constraints, defining the full extent of localness which would be limited to 60 areas with 65 sites across the UK. All commercial listings and horoscopes had been excluded. The proposition would address digital democracy.

Original journalism was vital and at such times as the floods, Madeline McCann story and the London Mayoral elections, it was essential that the BBC maintained its reputation. The 6.30 news programmes continue to perform best in the southern heartlands, but London is a particular challenge. The 8pm bulletins have got off to a strong start in targeting hard to reach demographics.

Andy Griffie explained the 2010 strategy for Local Radio within the constraints of the licence fee settlement. The Service Licence set out the requirement for a 60/40 speech/music ratio with all speech at certain times of the day. It was important the tone was right, with adult talking to adult and that it was sufficiently local and diverse with the right amount of audience interaction.

Nations & Regions were pioneering audience engagement through internal and external partnerships; including BBC Learning and the Arts Council. Audiences were being given the confidence and access to technology to provide their own reports.

Andy Griffie briefly explained the changes to the Community Service Volunteers partnership (CSV). European funding had been withdrawn and CSV was therefore only able to fund 12 of the 39 CSV staff. These would focus on volunteering, recruiting and administration. BBC Learning had agreed to work with the regions.

Alison Hastings asked that members be provided with a more detailed map showing how each region would be divided. She reminded Chairs that new members were given a presentation of BBC Local so they had a full understanding of the proposition.

7. OUTREACH ACTIVITY

7.1 Report from Entertainment events

This feedback would be informative to the Trust and help avoid entertainment being ghettoised. Members had found the events interesting and working across three generations had been informative.

7.2 Literature Review: Part One of Report

Professor Bill Osgerby and Dr Anna Gough-Yates joined the meeting and outlined their report to date.

Part One set the context, summarising the literature and showing that there were 20 distinct areas of academic research.

Members were invited to look at the report and consider one of three options for the second part of the research

8. TRUST BUSINESS: CHILDREN'S SERVICE REVIEW – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Gareth Tuck summarised the Consultation Document and timetable, with the final report due in September. There were two broad aims: to assess the current performance of the CBeebies and CBBC Service Licences as well as the Formal Learning and other content provided for children under 12; and consider the future of the services. Performance data, quality indicators and the need for further research to fill any gaps would all be taken into account as part of the process.

A child friendly version of the consultation document was in preparation for launch in June.

In answer to questions, Gareth explained that the wording of the consultation questions was intended to elicit as much information as possible; there would be supporting quantitative and qualitative research; and parents, professionals and stakeholders were all included in the target audience for the consultation.

Members agreed that regional council outreach would focus on a mix of the areas identified in consultation question 7: 'where children live, the type of area where children live (e.g. inner city, rural), family background, age, gender, ethnic or cultural background, religion or belief and disability.'

9. BURNING ISSUES

East RAC: members had expressed concern that the Trust might be stifling innovation. It was important that the Trust took all the necessary steps to ensure value for money and the systems were in place to do this. BBC Local had yet to be submitted to the Trust.

East Midlands RAC: members requested that an East Midlands town be shown on the weather map.

West Midlands RAC: members asked about the BBC's diversity policy and if the BBC would consider a news reader wearing a head-scarf or turban. It was suggested that this might be raised with Helen Boaden, Head of News and Andrea Callender, Head of Diversity who was attending the October ACE meeting.

South RAC: CBeebies scheduling was often altered during the school holidays causing frustration for parents and children. This was perhaps the one time when it needed to be consistent.

West RAC: the over-promotion of programmes continued to be a concern for members. The BBC needed to get the balance right between letting people know about a new series and irritating people with over-promotion. Also there appeared to be no single rule for the 'squeezing of credits' and many found this irritating. It was suggested that all councils might consider both these issues at future meetings.

London RAC: members thought the councils should be promoted through the regional television news programme with a short feature – what they did, why and what impact they had.

DETAILS OF NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting would be a video conference (venues to be agreed) on Tuesday, 8 July 2008

The meeting closed at 3.40pm.