

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

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD
CASTELL DEUDRAETH HOTEL, MINFFORDD
FRIDAY 04 APRIL 2008**

Present:

Audience Council Members

Janet Lewis Jones (Chair and National Trustee for Wales)
Roy Grant,
Dennis Gethin,
Nicola Branson,
Dafydd Whittall,
Alexandra McMillan,
Andrew Carter.

BBC Cymru Wales staff:

Menna Richards, Controller BBC Cymru Wales
Clare Hudson, Head of Programmes (English)
Keith Jones, Head of Programmes (Welsh) and New Media
Cathryn Allen, Head of Broadcast Development
Rhodri Talfan Davies, BBC Cymru Wales Head of Marketing,
Communication and Audiences

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

In attendance

Marian Wyn Jones, Head of Centre, north Wales (for item 26)
Siân Gwynedd, Editor Radio Cymru (for item 26).

22. APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Carl Cooper,
Richard Lewis,
Jane James,
Teresa Rees,
Sangeet Bhullar,
Arun Midha.

23. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

With some minor typographical amendments the minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record.

The Council was informed that the National Assembly enquiry on broadcasting was progressing. It was reported that it was likely that both BBC Wales' management and the National Trustee would be called to give evidence to the committee in the period between now and July when the enquiry was scheduled to conclude.

Council members were informed that the November meeting of the Council would take place in Aberystwyth.

24. REPORTS

National Trustee

Discussion of the previous evening's audience outreach event in Blaenau Ffestiniog

Council members felt that this had been the best yet of the Council's accountability events, with good levels of attendance and lively discussion and comments, giving praise as well as expressing concerns at the BBC's output. The Council also concluded that Siân Parri Huws, the meeting's enabler, had fulfilled her role very effectively.

The Council expressed its encouragement that a broad range of people had been present at the meeting and concluded that the issuing of personal invitations, rather than advertising more generally, had been successful with participants saying that they had been glad to have received an invitation.

Council raised the question of whether the correct balance had been struck between presentations and discussions. The Council also recognised that one drawback of having wide-ranging discussions was that the conclusions were also rather vague and wondered whether it would be worth having more focussed discussions at future meetings? Council resolved to discuss this matter further as part of its considerations of the outcomes of the Maximising Audience Councils Effectiveness (MACE) project.

The Council was informed that a report of the meeting would appear on the Audience Council website shortly.

Controller Wales

The Controller informed the Council that the National Assembly's Broadcasting Committee's terms of reference were wide ranging encompassing digital switchover and the OFCOM PSB review.

Controller informed Council that work on Digital Democracy, the BBC politics multi-media portal project was progressing. A presentation would be given to the Council at its meeting in June by Pete Clifton.

A successful Faith and Broadcasting Conference had taken place recently with a wide range of people attending and a significant number of points raised during the discussions which had taken place under 'Chatham House' rules. She informed the Council that it had been useful both in terms of what had been said, but also in terms of sharing with participants, through the use of training exercises, some of the pressures which broadcasters face and difficult decisions they must make. Council resolved that it would be useful for it to undertake a similar exercise.

Controller Cymru Wales informed Council that progress was being made on the BBC Local service proposals and that these would be presented to the Trust in June.

Board Report

The Council commended the content of the report and praised the coverage of the *Dolgellau Here for You* residency, in particular on *Wales Today*.

The Council was informed that BBC Cymru Wales had received 34 nominations for BAFTA Cymru awards and 5 nominations for UK-wide BAFTA awards.

25. THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE BBC IN WALES

The Council expressed its satisfaction with the final draft report and suggested some minor stylistic and drafting adjustments be incorporated. The Council approved the document and the Audience Priorities for BBC management 2008-09.

26. PRESENTATION ON THE WORK OF THE BBC CENTRE IN NORTH WALES

Marian Wyn Jones, Head of BBC Centre North Wales informed the Council that there were 100 programme makers in north Wales and 8% of BBC Wales' staff, that up to 85 hours of programmes were produced from the north each week giving 4,000 hours during 2007/08 encompassing radio, television and online provision in both Welsh and English. She then outlined how some of the activities of the centre contributed to the BBC purposes.

Bringing Wales to the World and the World to Wales

The BBC Network TV programme broadcast that week, *One Life: Josie's journey* was a good example of this purpose being fulfilled. The programme focussed on Josie Russell who had been left for dead following an attack in 1996 which had killed her mother and sister. The programme achieved an audience share of 24% in Wales and an overall audience of 3.1 million across the UK.

Network Radio was also a key focus for this Purpose and Head of Centre cited the example of Jeremy Grange's documentary, *Calls across the Wall* telling the story of a friendship which had been established between Israeli and Palestinian women by phone as a good example of this, which had elicited a very positive audience response.

Stimulating Creativity and Cultural Excellence

Head of Centre considered that there were many good examples of this purpose being fulfilled in Wales as well as Network output from north Wales. She considered one good example to have been the Good Friday service broadcast by Radio Cymru. This year's service had used the format of a 24 hour news service to present the Bible's accounts of Good Friday as news reports, thus highlighting the contemporary nature of the crucifixion story. She informed Council that the script of this programme was available on the BBC website and has already been appreciated by many Christian congregations and individuals.

Representing regions and communities of Wales

Blas is new programme on Radio Cymru looking at food. This is more than a cookery programme but rather encompassed the wide range of issues associated with food. The special programme broadcast during the Dolgellau *Here for You* residency had been particularly successful with the residency itself attracting more than 2,000 visitors during the two day roadshow.

Head of Centre also informed the Council that BBC Information in Bangor continued to provide a first class service to the audience gaining a 95% satisfaction rate in a recent independent survey.

Delivering new technologies

She informed the Council that it was a continuing challenge to keep material relevant but that new technological innovations such as the launch of a range of podcasts by Radio Cymru and Radio Wales had proved popular, citing as one example the *Pigion* podcast for Welsh learners which contained highlights of Radio Cymru's output and attracted Welsh learners to Radio Cymru's other output.

Promoting education and learning

Science Café on Radio Wales presented by Adam Walton from Wrexham had been a successful recent addition to the station's schedule in relation to this Purpose and included a strong mix of reports and an enthusiastic presenter.

Diversity

This was an area which had received a lot of attention recently and while there was an element of fulfilling targets, she considered it to be more about making BBC Wales a welcoming place to work for everyone. She informed Council that new software was about to be launched which would help the BBC to monitor portrayal of people with disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. She informed Council that there had been successes in improving diversity but that on-going monitoring was crucial to ensure long-term success.

She informed Council that the *Out of London* related developments were likely to benefit north Wales – particularly because of the close proximity of Wrexham to Salford – and that benefits were most likely in the area of staff development.

In closing her presentation she emphasised to Council the huge commitment that existed within BBC Cymru Wales to reflecting all the communities of Wales in its programming and services.

Council thanked Head of BBC Centre North Wales for her presentation and commended the work being done in the area of diversity. Council asked how the development of co-presenting radio programmes from Bangor and Cardiff was impacting upon audience figures? She told Council that while it was difficult to identify any particular aspects of individual programmes which had an impact upon audience figures it was the case that anecdotal evidence suggested that listeners had reacted positively to this development.

Council members asked Head of Centre North Wales whether any material specifically for children was produced in the north Wales centres. She replied that while no specific children's material was being produced, there were close links with many schools in north Wales and there was a *Ffeil* young news reporter based in Bangor.

27. OFCOM's Second Review of Public Service Broadcasting

The National Trustee informed the Audience Council that the BBC Trust had concluded that there should now be one response from the BBC rather than separate responses from the Trust and Executive. She suggested that Council, in drawing together its contribution to this submission, might wish to focus its energies in particular on the crucial role of the BBC in Wales in sustaining citizenship and civil society and on the PSB provision in Welsh.

The Council expressed the view that a crucial point to be made that greater competition led to greater plurality was in Wales a flawed argument – and that top-slicing the licence fee would not necessarily lead to a greater degree of plurality in Wales. Council also made the point that top-slicing would also reduce accountability for the use of the Licence Fee income.

Council expressed the strong view that the matter of critical mass was one area that should be concentrated upon in its submission, since the evidence of the importance of this was very evident in BBC Wales. The scale of the BBC in its present form enabled it to deliver the range of output that it did and if it were reduced then this could also be lost as well as the related efficiency benefits.

While there would be several opportunities for the Council to comment and to reflect the views of audiences during the OFCOM review, Council resolved that this matter should be given a central place on the agenda for its next meeting, so as to enable it to give careful consideration to the initial proposals from OFCOM to be published shortly. The Council articulated the view that it would be important to identify an effective way for the particular issues in Wales to be communicated.

BBC management left the meeting

28. Trust Business (in private)

The Council strongly commended the work which had been taken by Governance and Accountability Wales staff on the ACW website and warmly welcomed the significant increase in visits to the website during recent months.

National Trustee's report

The National Trustee informed Council that the BBC budget was now in place to deliver the efficiency savings required as a result of the Licence Fee Settlement.

She informed Council that the introduction of Freesat was progressing according to schedule. She also said that the Trust had approved the MACE proposals.

The National Trustee informed Council that the Impartiality Review of Network Coverage of the Nations being undertaken by Prof Anthony King was scheduled to be presented to the BBC Trust in the early summer.

Maximising Audience Council Effectiveness (MACE)

The Council warmly commended the document arising from this far-reaching and important project and agreed that further work was required on audience engagement and consultation. The Council resolved that the small group which had looked at this matter a year ago should be reconvened to again consider this issue in the light of the MACE proposals with a view to building on the firm foundations already established by the Council during its first full year of operation.

ACTION: HoG&AW

29. Priority Issues for BBC Trust

The Council considered it crucial that the BBC, in responding to the OFCOM review of public service broadcasting, highlighted the fact that the media context for PSB in Wales was very different to that in the UK as a whole.

30. Date of next meeting

The Council was reminded that its next meeting would be on 2nd May at BBC Broadcasting House, Cardiff and a private dinner for the Council would be held on the evening of 1st May.
