

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

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD
BBC BROADCASTING HOUSE, LLANDAFF
FRIDAY 08 FEBRUARY 2008**

Present:

Audience Council Members

Janet Lewis Jones (Chair and National Trustee for Wales)
Roy Grant,
Arun Midha,
Nicola Branson,
Dennis Gethin,
Teresa Rees,
Carl Cooper.

BBC Cymru Wales staff:

Menna Richards, Controller BBC Cymru Wales.
Keith Jones, Head of Programmes (Welsh) and New Media
Cathryn Allen, Head of Broadcast Development
Mark O'Callaghan, Head of News and Current Affairs
Adrian Davies – Head of Factual Programmes and acting Head of
Programmes (English)

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

Wendy Bryant, BBC Trust Unit.
Jane Tranter, Controller Fiction for item 02
Erik Huggers, BBC Group Controller Future Media & Technology (for
item 09)
Tony Ageh, BBC Controller Internet (for item 09)

01. APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Richard Lewis,
Dafydd Whittal,
Sangeet Bhullar,
Jane James,
Clare Hudson, BBC Cymru Wales Head of Programmes (English)
Rhodri Talfan Davies, BBC Cymru Wales Head of Marketing,
Communication and Audiences

**02. PRESENTATION BY JANE TRANTER - BBC CONTROLLER
FICTION**

BBC Controller Fiction, Jane Tranter, gave a presentation to Council before their private dinner on Friday evening. Council members present at were National Trustee for Wales Janet Lewis-Jones, Nicola Branson, Roy Grant and Arun Midha.

Controller Fiction emphasised the central importance of Drama to the BBC's television schedules with 89% of the UK population watching drama at some time or another, two thirds of viewers watching drama every week. Nearly half the UK population watched drama on BBC One during a typical week and it continued to be seen as the best channel for drama by the audience. Drama had also proved more resilient than other genres to the rise of multi-channel provision with terrestrial television still seen as the natural home of drama.

Research had also shown that BBC One's dramas were considered more 'original and different' than those on ITV1 and that the BBC's drama audiences had remained level during the past 5 years while those of the BBC's competitors had experienced decline, partly since increasingly the audiences considered known brands as a guarantee of satisfaction in a world of increasing choice. This same tendency was seen also in an increasing fear of commitment to new unknown long running drama series.

Whilst the typical viewer of drama was older women, it was nonetheless a robust genre amongst all except those aged under 35 years old. Those younger viewers considered terrestrial drama 'too safe' and young men often criticised the BBC for a paucity of US sourced drama on BBC Channels. However, it was the case that *Doctor Who* bucked this trend, being particularly popular amongst younger viewers and in particular young men. It was also the case that a higher number of young people watched drama on BBC One than on Channel 4.

Controller Fiction said that the lower than expected licence fee settlement had resulted in a cut in the budget available for drama and that consequently the first things to be axed would be those dramas that were no longer original.

Returning dramas such as *Casualty*, *East Enders* and *Holby City* were a very important part of the TV schedule and 'warm' dramas that reflected contemporary life were also important (e.g. *Love Soup*) as were significant individual dramas such as *Sense and Sensibility* and *Cranford*, and *The Diary of Anne Frank* likely to be broadcast in either April or May 2008. Other recent modern drama pieces had included *True Dare Kiss*, *The Street*, *Last Enemy*, the *Doctor Who Xmas special*, *Oliver Twist*, and *No 1 Ladies Detective Agency*. She told Council that £210m was spent on Drama broadcast on BBC One with the goal of reaching the channel's entire audience at some time, though not necessarily at the same time. Many more single dramas were shown on BBC Two with most returning dramas now being broadcast on BBC One. BBC Four, similarly, had a single drama strategy largely based on biographical material, though some literary adaptations, such as *Diary of a Nobody* and *Fanny Hill* had also been broadcast. She informed Council that her primary goal was to get the best drama from all parts of the UK broadcast by the BBC's outlets at various times of the year.

Controller Fiction was asked for clarification on the matter of drama productions which were executively produced by BBC Cymru Wales but actually produced in locations outside Wales e.g. *Fanny Hill* which had been produced by an independent company in Bristol.

She responded by saying that Window of Creative Competition (WOCC) provided a guarantee that 50% of the production would be in-house, a further 25% by independent producers with the remaining 25% open to competition from both in-house and independent producers. She said that while Drama was a strong genre in-house at present there were nonetheless many key figures within the Drama genre operating outside the BBC and that it was important to use those talents. The key consideration for her was the originality of ideas - and at times the location of a drama could be crucial, whilst at other times those could and were moved, but TV was a creative endeavour and sometimes the art form had to be a more important consideration than the location where things were produced.

Controller Fiction also said that there was an element of talent development associated with executive producing and made reference to the way in which BBC Cymru Wales Head of Drama, Julie Gardner had learnt as a result of her involvement with independent companies through such dramas as *Life on Mars*.

Audience Council for Wales's members responded by emphasising how pivotally important *Torchwood* had been in depicting Wales on Network – not least in terms of building citizenship.

Council also asked her how Wales produced programmes could be better recognised?

Controller Fiction emphasised that there was widespread recognition across the UK and beyond that BBC Cymru Wales produced excellent Drama material such as *Doctor Who*, *Torchwood*, *Sarah Jane Adventures* - and that BBC Cymru Wales was the envy of many other parts of the UK.

Friday 8th February 2008

03. TRUST BUSINESS (In private)

The National Trustee for Wales reminded Council that the Audience Councils conference had taken place on 18th and 19th of January and thanked those members of Council who had been present. The three principal topics were the Ofcom Public Service Broadcasting Review, Prof Anthony King's Impartiality Review on Network coverage of the nations, and the Maximising Audience Council Effectiveness project. Council members who had attended described it as a lively event with invigorating discussions.

The BBC Trust Chairman had also visited Cardiff mid-January and had held some very interesting meetings, including a business breakfast with Members of the National Assembly for Wales.

She reminded Council that the Trust would be meeting in Cardiff in November and that discussions about this would be commencing shortly. A policy decision had been taken that the BBC Trust would now hold three meetings a year outside London (an increase on the present two) – two being held in the in regions of England and one in either Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

She reported that the BBC Trust was continuing to keep an eye on business relating to trust in editorial matters and that the Digital Switchover Assistance Scheme pilot project had now taken place and large contracts were in the process of being awarded for implementing the main elements of work associated with the scheme. The attitude of the Trust was that the scheme should be implemented as well as possible because of its importance in relation to the reputation of the BBC.

She also said that the Network commissioning review would be considered at the BBC Trust's meeting later this month and would clearly be a matter of huge interest to the Audience Council for Wales.

Professor Anthony King was continuing with the BBC Trust commissioned impartiality review and would be visiting the Council at its meeting in March. He was looking in particular for evidence to support people's perceptions of lack of impartiality in the representation of the UK's nations on Network output.

She informed Council that the biggest policy issue being considered by the Trust at present was OFCOM's Public Service Broadcasting Review – with the agenda developing at an increasing pace. The Trust was considering its position extremely carefully as was the BBC's Executive. The BBC would need to be ready to respond reasonably when OFCOM published its outline ideas in the spring. She told the Audience Council that their input would be required as soon as these were published.

Making reference to the recent public discussions on the matter of top slicing of the TV licence fee, she advised Council members to read the BBC Trust Chairman's recent speech in which he had outlined the key objection to this putative development – i.e. that lines of responsibility would be blurred.

Council were informed that Audience Council Northern Ireland had recently undertaken a significant amount of work on the provision of BBC services in Ulster Scots and Irish. The Trust had decided at its last meeting that there should be a gradual increase in the provision available in both languages over time. The Gaelic Digital Service had also been given the green light at the BBC Trust's most recent meeting.

The Council were also informed that Public Value Test on MyLocalNow (BBC Local) would be considered by the Trust at its next meeting.

The National Trustee also made reference to the significant changes that had recently taken place to the Audience Council for Wales website and these were

commended. However, members were invited to cast an eye over the website and to offer comments.

management joined the meeting.

04. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes were accepted as a full and accurate record of the meeting. Council were informed that its submission on the revised BBC Complaints Framework had been made.

05. REPORTS

The National Trustee for Wales

Ofcom's Public Service Broadcasting Review was taking a great deal of the Trust's attention at present.

She also informed the meeting that there was a distinct 'out of London' direction to the Trust's thinking at present, reflected in the property strategy and the Trust's decision to meet more frequently outside London.

She informed the meeting that the BBC Trust Chair had greatly enjoyed his visit to Cardiff and had been impressed by the people he had met and the accomplishments of BBC Cymru Wales. She thanked all those who had contributed to the visit.

Controller Wales

Making reference to the Chairman's visit Controller Wales said that the staff meeting hosted by the Chairman had led to some very honest and thoughtful questions and answers and that the feedback from staff to that event had been very positive.

Council members asked about the impact of the announcement on staff morale. Controller Wales responded saying that the way in which core output had been protected had kept morale relatively high.

Controller Wales also informed Council that she had participated in several meetings with politicians recently including the new Secretary of State for Wales, the National Assembly Presiding Officer and had also given evidence to the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Select Committee.

Board Report

The most recent RAJAR figures which showed that Radio Wales listening figures had decreased following schedule changes. Radio Cymru's listening figures had also dropped but had remained constant amongst the station's core audience.

The launch of the iPlayer on Christmas day which had proved a big success. The Six Nations Rugby Union Tournament had been the first sports content provided via the iPlayer and Council expressed some frustration at the excessive use of the aerial camera during the Wales-England match.

Reference was also made to several factual series presently in production including a series being presented by Stephen Fry on animals on the verge of extinction and *Somebody's Child*, which had been over a year in production, and was being broadcast at present.

Council commended the recent news coverage of the terminally ill Ghanaian woman who had been deported, praising the way the story had explored the moral issues surrounding the case. Members asked also about the "your stories" strand within *Wales Today*? Head of News said that it had struck a chord with the younger *Wales Today* viewers and had been received positively by local communities. He also informed Council that this strand was proving to be a useful testing ground for material which might in future appear on BBC Local.

06. BBC PROGRAMME PLAN FOR S4C 2008-09

Head of Programmes (Welsh) and New Media outlined the *BBC programme plan for S4C 2008-09* which emphasised the key place occupied by News and Current Affairs in the BBC's provision for S4C. He said that the BBC produced 31% of the S4C's total hours in its analogue schedule but delivered 45% of the total hours of viewing.

He continued saying that he had been encouraged by the increase in the viewing figures of *Pobol y Cwm* following its recent re-branding. The young people's magazine programme, *Mosgito*, broadcast twice a week had also done well and was solidly established. The *O Flaen dy Lygaid* strand had also proved successful and *Taro Naw's* situation – competing as it did with the ITV Wales produced *Y Byd ar Bedwar* – kept that team sharp and that a special *Taro Naw* programme had been commissioned from News and Current Affairs on the US Presidential election.

He said that Sport was an area where there was competition with S4C regarding rights acquisition and that the BBC would continue to provide coverage of international rugby union matches on S4C.

The Audience Council for Wales formally endorsed the *BBC programme plan for S4C 2008-09* and the plan will now be presented to the BBC Trust with the Audience Council's comments.

07. PERFORMANCE OF BBC CYMRU WALES PROGRAMMING ON S4C 2007-08

Head of Programmes (Welsh) and New Media gave a presentation on BBC Cymru Wales' management's assessment of the performance of BBC Cymru Wales programming on S4C 2007-08. A written report had also been circulated to Council members.

Council asked about the drop in the level of awareness that BBC produced programmes for S4C? Head of Programmes (Welsh) and New Media responded saying that the BBC was continuing to take steps to address this with S4C.

Council also asked how the discussions regarding the success of programmes worked in practice and Head of Programmes (Welsh) and New Media responded saying that this was addressed at the monthly editorial meetings between the BBC and S4C.

Making reference to the BBC Trust's performance measurement criteria of Reach, Quality, Impact and Value, Council asked about how 'impact' was measured? BBC Management responded by acknowledging that impact was difficult to measure and that a number of measures were used. These included the awareness of programmes, the extent to which people felt programmes had made a difference in terms of being challenging and memorable. Levels of awareness of the programme, the size of audience and a high audience Appreciation Index were also factors which were part of the evaluation.

Council was informed that S4C's Authority was also obliged to provide a report on the BBC's programmes to the BBC Trust.

08. BBC CYMRU WALES CONTROLLER'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Controller Wales began by saying that a key challenge faced by BBC Cymru Wales management during 2007 had been to **create impact on audiences**. *Coal House* had probably been the single biggest example of this. It had worked exceptionally well on TV, radio and on-line. The on-line provision had given depth to people's experience, as well as providing significant spin-off materials for schools.

She said that BBC Cymru Wales coverage of the Rugby World Cup Tournament had also been a success despite not having the TV rights to broadcast the tournament with coverage spread across Radio Cymru, Radio Wales, on-line and television.

She informed Council that pioneering work was being done too on multiplatform development with *Coal House*, *Mosgito* and *What's in a name* all being good examples of this - adding depth to the experience of service users. BBC Cymru Wales was a pioneer in this area as reflected in the multiplatform festival held earlier this year to showcase some of BBC Cymru Wales' innovations and share them with the rest of the BBC - a festival described by the BBC's in-house newspaper, *Ariel*, as "*a vibrant series of sessions*"

Controller Wales also outlined some of the challenges in creating impact, in particular the investment required to create and deliver big impact projects, inevitably resulting in fewer broadcast hours. She made reference to BBC Director General, Mark Thompson's response to the lower than expected licence fee settlement of a "10% reduction in TV output".

There were challenges associated with the merger of BBC TWO Wales and BBC2W as digital switchover approached. The merger was being driven by technology but welcomed by audiences. BBC Cymru Wales' commitment to quality English language TV was undiminished and would offer the best of Wales and Network to audiences in Wales. This would be done by having a bigger presence on BBC ONE WALES and BBC TWO WALES during peak viewing hours.

She informed Council that these developments inevitably brought challenges including the possibility of reputational risk.

Turning to **Network TV Production**, Controller Wales highlighted *Doctor Who*, *Torchwood*, *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, *Tribe*, *British Museum* and *Take a Bow* as having been particular successes for BBC Cymru Wales.

Mark Thompson's reference to the "irreversible shift ..." towards out of London production had been an encouragement as had his comments regarding the "brilliant success of BBC Wales" and the target of having 17% of Network production from the Nations being a floor not ceiling. The Controller said that the Network Supply Review being chaired by Caroline Thompson was looking at this area and she was herself a member of the group.

She acknowledged that there was some way to go in terms of the portrayal of Wales on Network output.

Turning to **distribution**, she reported some progress on the availability of Radio Cymru and Radio Wales on DAB – with the north east Wales multiplex now live and the mid and west Wales multiplex advertised recently. She observed that the launch of Freesat would also help somewhat since both Radio Wales and Radio Cymru would be available on television on Freesat. However, there were still some significant DAB black spots – particularly north-west Wales and the south Wales valleys.

She informed Council that there had also been a significant growth in broadband in Wales with 90% of internet users now having broadband at home.

Turning to BBC Cymru Wales' **radio stations** she reported that the Radio Wales and Radio Cymru schedule changes had inevitably led to some decline in reach – but that early indications suggested that the listener age range had lowered, without core audiences turning to other stations.

Radio had also made a big impact across the nation through such highlights as the Rugby World Cup Tournament and radio dramas such as *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd*.

She said that the key challenge for both stations was to extend their reach with Radio Wales' focus now being on the breakfast and mid-morning time-slots.

Controller praised the work of BBC Cymru Wales **New Media** and described their work as polished and innovative – citing as examples some of the web services produced to accompany Network TV productions such as *Amazon* and *Torchwood*. She said that the website created to accompany *Coal House* had added depth to audience experience and provided a means of extending the life of the project, facilitating contributions by audiences and enhancing the educational provision.

She informed Council that New Media also faced challenges related to internal structural changes being introduced and a new emphasis on producing fewer web pages but of a higher quality.

Turning to the BBC provision on **S4C** she said that the new Strategic Partnership was working well leading to more distinctive output by the BBC and joint promotion and marketing of BBC produced programmes. Future challenges were likely to include the outcome of S4C's consultation on a children's channel which could displace some, or all of the BBC provided coverage from the National Assembly on S4C Digidol.

The introduction of the **BBC Local** service was likely to be another challenge with structural changes already underway to accommodate this new enhanced service. Its introduction, subject to BBC Trust approval, would lead to new investment and jobs, a big opportunity to enrich journalism, additional jobs outside Cardiff, and a major extension of the BBC's commitment to the Welsh language (with 5 distinctive services in Welsh). However, she also informed Council that it would be important for the BBC Trust's Public Value Test and Market Impact Assessment to recognise and accommodate the different market conditions in Wales (since Wales did not have the same kind of commercial radio network as existed in England).

78% of BBC Cymru Wales' staff had attended the **Safeguarding Trust** course, including senior managers, at the time of the meeting. The reintroduction of competitions and the process of approving these would be challenges in the coming months.

There were however significant organisational challenges associated with delivering Creative Future, not least managing staff morale and the associated risk to the good reputation of BBC Cymru Wales. However, other challenges also included increased competition for audiences in the new digital broadcasting landscape as well as increasing talk about ensuring broadcasting plurality. The Public Service Broadcasting Review presently being undertaken by Ofcom would contribute to this debate.

Controller Wales finished her presentation by emphasising that the integration of BBC Cymru Wales local and Network production departments had been of crucial importance in terms of **talent development**. Had this not been possible then BBC Cymru Wales would have been significantly impoverished and diminished with audiences being the ones who would have suffered.

Council responded by endorsing the view that multiplatform activity was essential since it not only extended the life of a TV or radio programme, but also enhanced and enriched the experience of service users.

Council also raised the matter of broadcasting plurality, questioning whether the creation of an artificial market to boost plurality would really benefit service users. Council expressed the view that impartiality and quality should be the key broadcasting benchmarks.

Council asked Controller Wales about the matter of fewer hours of output being produced and the impact this would have on the audience experience? They also asked how this would impact on the 17% out of London production target?

Controller Wales said that audiences were unlikely to notice significant differences in output since this had already occurred to some extent e.g. during the past year funds which might in the past have been allocated to other TV programmes had instead been allocated to the production of *Coal House* – and the audience had clearly considered it a worthwhile project. Addressing the 17% out of London production target, Controller Wales acknowledged that a 10% reduction in the TV hours output inevitably meant 17% of a smaller total.

Council asked also whether challenging ‘one off’ programmes, might disappear as a result of budget cuts? Controller Wales emphasised that innovation and distinctiveness were the two things which the BBC Trust had highlighted as priorities and that consequently if risks were not being taken then BBC Cymru Wales wouldn’t be fulfilling its role properly.

09. NEW MEDIA AND BBC WALES CONTRIBUTION TO NETWORK **NEW MEDIA – Presentation by BBC Group Controller Future Media & Technology**

Group Controller Future Media and Technology, Erik Huggers, outlined the BBC Future Media strategy, summarising it as: Transform -> enable -> find -> play -> share

A key goal was to transform the BBC into a ‘tapeless’ organisation with all captured material entirely digital from the glass in the camera to the glass in the TV, computer monitor or mobile phone. This would enable the easier preparation of material for a variety of delivery vehicles. Sharing material was also essential and consumers should be able to find the BBC’s content more easily than at present.

Playing the material easily was also key to the consumer’s experience and developments were underway to simplify this process and follow the YouTube model of click and play with the long term vision being that consumers would become the number one distributor of the BBC’s material.

Outlining past developments, he told Council that the internet continued to evolve and since 1993 had developed rapidly from being primarily text based, to having text and images and more recently to also include audio and video material. A key question in planning future media and technology services was how people found material? The creation of aggregate or topic related pages might significantly improve access and would not mean creating new content but rather allow extant information to be accessed more easily.

He informed Council that across the BBC 60,000 hours of TV were produced each year. However, there were sites outside the BBC upon which there was more

information about BBC programmes than the BBC's own sites. This was now being addressed.

Work was progressing apace on an embedded media player (EMP) – so that the experience of accessing video material was easy for everyone and provided increased functionality, including the ability for users to 'share' videos with friends.

Group Controller Future Media and Technology informed Council that his brief also included BBCi – television based interactive services – which were becoming increasingly popular as greater numbers of viewers switched from analogue to digital TV. Investment was continuing in BBCi services to increase functionality and usefulness.

He also informed the Council that services were being developed for mobile phones, with a similar look and feel to web service.

Group Controller Future Media and Technology described the **BBC's Archive** as '*a diamond in the rough*' including as it did audio, video, letters, documents and so on. He informed Council that a trial had been conducted with the goal of making the material in the archive available to the public. The trial had also been used to add value to projects in production at that time, such as the Pakistan – India season in 2007.

Turning to the launch of the **iPlayer** project, Group Controller Future Media and Technology said that the iPlayer had been successfully launched during 2007 with the latest version of iPlayer now platform neutral. Early trial versions had been based on a download model, but streaming material was also possible now with streaming / download ratio at present 8:1

Radio was also a feature of the iPlayer which was sometimes forgotten and the growth in the accessing of streamed material and downloadable PodCasts was continuing.

Council asked about the mechanisms being put in place to safeguard the 'watershed' through a parental guidance facility. Council was assured that this could already be done through an iPlayer system which incorporated controls accessed by means of a personal identification number (PIN).

Despite the present success of the iPlayer, some 'critical gaps' remained – not least the availability of BBC Cymru's Welsh language TV. He informed Council that the aspiration during the first quarter of 2008 was to make available 5 hours per week of BBC Cymru Welsh language TV by means of streaming and downloading (7 days post transmission) and to introduce a Welsh language user interface during the second quarter of 2008. Another aspiration was the full integration of BBC Radio Player – including Network and Nations on demand and live programming into the iPlayer.

He informed Council that work was already being undertaken on the 'next generation' iPlayer which would be able to address issues such as High Definition content with the ultimate goal resulting in the iPlayer becoming a personalised content delivery system.

Turning to **BBC Wales' contribution to Future Media at the BBC**, he said that BBC Cymru Wales New Media was doing new innovative things through such developments as appeared on the *Torchwood* website – e.g. interactive games. He said also that the appearance of clips from programmes such as *Torchwood* on the YouTube video sharing web-site was also being used to attract people to the BBC's services.

BBC Cymru Wales was also contributing mapping technology which would be central to BBC Local – and was a recognised centre of excellence for the development of this kind of technology.

Council asked about the implications of some of these developments on the whole area of life-long learning and FM&T were invited to provide evidence to the work presently being done by NIACE (the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) on the educational role of new technology.

Council also asked about the issues arising from the sharing of materials and how this might be policed?

Group Controller FM&T responded by saying that there were different levels of control. For example geo-IP blocking has been implemented to stop iPlayer material being viewed overseas. He also said that the sharing of material was limited since it remained on the BBC's servers, with only the link to the material being shared.

10. PRIORITY ISSUES FOR THE BBC TRUST

1. Council raised the importance of any Public Value Test Market Impact Assessment, linked to proposals for the introduction of a BBC Local service, taking into account the particular circumstances and differences that exist in Wales (such as the absence of a network of commercial local radio stations, such as the one that exists in England and a weaker local daily press) rather than seeking to draw only UK-wide conclusions.
2. Council approved the BBC Programme plan for S4C for 2008-09, and recommended that the BBC Trust should endorse it.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Council was reminded that its next meeting would be on 7th March at BBC Broadcasting House, Cardiff and a private dinner for the Council would be held on the evening of 6th March.
