

BBC Audience Council for Wales
Cyngor Cynulleidfa Cymru y BBC

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIRMED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD
BBC BROADCASTING HOUSE, LLANDAFF, CARDIFF
FRIDAY 11th JULY 2008

Present:

Audience Council Members

Janet Lewis Jones (Chair and National Trustee for Wales)
Teresa Rees
Andy Carter
Dafydd Whittall
Sangeet Bhullar
Alex McMillan
Nicola Branson
Jane James
Dennis Gethin
Roy Grant
Arun Midha

BBC Cymru Wales staff:

Keith Jones
Mark O'Callaghan
Clare Hudson
Cath Allen
Rhodri Talfan Davies

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
Catherine Evans, Work Experience Student with Wales BBC Trust
Staff.

In attendance

Fran O'Brien, Head of Editorial Standards, BBC Trust Unit (by phone
for item 54)
Danny Cohen, Controller BBC THREE (for item 55)

49. APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Menna Richards
Carl Cooper

50. TRUST BUSINESS (IN PRIVATE)

The appearance of ACW members before the National Assembly's Broadcasting Committee was discussed. It was noted that the nature of the questioning by AMs had made answering questions directly difficult. Council members considered that the tripartite relationship between the BBC Trust, Audience Councils and the BBC had been very much under scrutiny.

The Council noted that many of the issues in the National Assembly's Broadcasting Committee report were matters for the UK Government.

The issue of public understanding of the role of the Audience Councils was addressed in the MACE (Maximising Audience Council Effectiveness) Implementation Plan and it was therefore agreed that a sub-group of members of the Audience Council should be established to address this whole area, with its first meeting to take place on the afternoon of 4th September and reporting to the full ACW the following day.

It was also suggested that the ACW should consider its scrutiny role, including commissioning research to supplement the research information it received from BBC management and the BBC Trust. The Council decided that research should be conducted on the elderly and those with dementia, and asked the Governance and Accountability team in Wales to explore commissioning research on this area. The Council was informed that the Audiences and Performance teams of the Trust Unit would in future be supplying the Audience Council with audience data to inform the Audience Council's decisions.

ACTION: HOGA

It was suggested that Audience Council members should seek invitations to attend other Audience Council meetings, and to invite members of other Councils to attend ACW, so that each Council could learn from the *modus operandi* of other Councils.

The Council asked for briefing sessions to be arranged on: a) the technologies related to 'on-demand' so that the practicalities could be explained, and b) an update on the situation regarding digital multiplexes.

ACTION: HOGA

The National Trustee informed the Council of how the Audience Council priorities had been agreed by the BBC Trust and incorporated into the Trust's future work-programme.

The Council agreed the Audience Council's forward work plan.

BBC Management joined the meeting

51. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND ANY MATTERS ARISING

With one minor additional redaction, the minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the Council's June meeting.

Under matters arising, (minute 42) Council was informed that Head of Future Media and Technology had responded to a letter from Head of Governance and Accountability Wales informing Council that Welsh language TV programmes would begin to be made available through the iPlayer in late August and that a Welsh language interface would be one of the features of the second incarnation of the iPlayer when this was launched during the early autumn.

The Council was updated on the situation relating to the release of BBC Jam assets. If the Trust agreed to this then work would begin as soon as possible with a team being re-formed in Wales to coordinate aspects of this work. The Jam branding will not be used and in future this material would be not branded under a discrete name but located in the present educational web-pages under the subject headings rather than as an entirely separate independent entity.

52. REPORTS

National Trustee

Nations and Regions Network News Impartiality Review – the National Trustee reported that the BBC Trust was still waiting for BBC management's detailed response to this report and that this was expected at the Trust's July meeting.

Network Commissioning was also a matter that would be discussed at the July Trust meeting. She informed Council that while the individuals involved in the Network Commissioning Review were setting about their task with a will, resolving the issues involved had been difficult.

BBC Response to the Ofcom PSB review

A response to Phase One of the Ofcom PSB review had been submitted by the BBC. The National Trustee informed the Council that the next step was for Ofcom to publish preliminary conclusions in the autumn with the Council then having an opportunity to respond.

Controller Wales

In the Controller's absence, Head of Programmes (English) gave the Controller's report. The Director General of the BBC had mentioned *Coal House* during his presentation at the launch of the BBC Annual Report illustrating the impact created by this BBC Wales series. She emphasised however that the present financial climate continued to be exceptionally demanding and was becoming ever more difficult.

A staff survey had been recently undertaken and detailed post-survey information made available to individual BBC teams. There were many positives in the survey results such as a pride in working for the BBC but also some challenging if unsurprising issues. The Council was informed that there was a plan of action to address some of the matters highlighted by the results.

The Council was informed that there had been several events during the previous month including a concert by the BBC National Orchestra for Wales coinciding with the *Wild about Nature* TV series.

Meredith Chambers had been recently recruited as an Executive Producer for the Factual Department of BBC Cymru Wales.

Head of Programmes (Welsh) and New Media informed Council that there had been a recent announcement regarding Radio Cymru's schedule, with the key change being an end to the south-west Wales opt-out – this had elicited the biggest reaction. He told Council that the opt-out was not adding to the reach of Radio Cymru.

The Council agreed that the time had come for a change to the Radio Cymru schedule. Management responded by saying that a key goal was to get local voices contributing to as many programmes as possible across the Radio Cymru schedule.

Board Report

Council was informed that a million unique users had visited the Doctor Who website after the broadcast of the final programme in the last series, with 10 million viewers having watched that programme.

The Council asked for future Board reports to look forward as well as back, so that Council could have some idea of major future events. BBC Wales management agreed that this would be considered in the context of focusing the Board's reports on the BBC's public purposes to a greater extent.

The Council was informed that two large BBC screens would be located in Wales, one in Swansea's Castle Square and the second in the Hayes in Cardiff's. The main material shown on these screens would be sport and news. It was hoped that further large screens would be located in other parts of Wales in future. The funding for these screens would come from Network resources but BBC Wales would have input into their management.

Council was informed that a special episode of *Torchwood* would be broadcast in the near future by BBC Radio 4, to coincide with the anniversary of the opening of the CERN facility in Geneva.

53. LOCAL VIDEO PVT

The Head of News and Current Affairs informed Council that there were significant differences in the responses to the proposals in England compared to Wales. The proposals for England had elicited a rather critical response, not least from the Newspaper Society. The Public Value Test was specifically about video provision, and it was clear from recent examples of audience response that there was an appetite for video provision on the web.

He informed Council that the context in Wales was significantly different to that of England. There was no network of either commercial or BBC local radio stations in Wales and the press was also relatively weak. He suggested that the introduction of a BBC Local Video service could go some way towards plugging the 'democratic deficit' in Wales which Electoral Commission had referred to in a report published in 2006.

Each of the proposed regions for Wales were far larger than the circulation area of any individual local newspapers and so would be a different offering to that offered by those publications. The proposals also articulated a desire to cooperate with local newspapers and establish partnerships with them with syndicated video material on offer free of charge to them for use on their own websites.

Local news would also be bought from independent providers and a training programme launched to train local newspaper journalists to shoot and edit news packages for inclusion on the BBC Local Video service.

The Council was reminded that this would be a broadband-only service, and that a memorandum of understanding had recently been signed with libraries across Wales enabling access to BBC Local video service in libraries.

The Council was informed that the period of consultation on the initial proposals had begun, with the closing date for submissions being 4th August. The consultation on the scheme's provisional conclusions would be conducted in December, with the new service, if approved by the BBC Trust, launched in 2009.

The Council emphasised that its response to the Public Value Test should clearly emphasise the differences in the media context between Wales and England – in both Welsh and English.

The Council asked BBC management whether any projections had been produced regarding the likely take up of this new local video service. Management responded by saying that research had demonstrated that there was a thirst for this new service and that the demand appeared to be increasing – not least because of the proliferation of platforms upon which it would be available with mobile phones and mobile broadband becoming more widely used. The Council was also reminded by the National Trustee that comments had been received about Local Video during outreach events in the past year and the Council resolved that a reference to these should be included in its response.

The Council emphasised the importance of the embeddable content in the contemporary internet context. Council members were informed that the *YouTube* website with its embeddable video offering was now the second most popular website. However, the Council was reminded that the BBC's editorial standards would be as central to BBC Local Video as to the remainder of the BBC's services. The possibility of content from Universities in Wales appearing on the BBC Local Video website was raised, as well as material from other local community networks.

It was agreed that a response would be drafted on the Council's behalf drawing on the rich discussion which had taken place at the meeting as well as comments made by the BBC's audiences during the Council's outreach events during the past year. It would be circulated to Council members for comments, before being submitted to the consultation by the revised submission date of 4th August.

54. PRESENTATION ON THE REPORT OF THE IMPARTIALITY REVIEW OF NETWORK COVERAGE OF THE NATIONS

Head of Editorial Standards, Trust Unit reminded Council of the documents which had been published as part of the Impartiality Review - the BBC Trust's report, two research reports, and Prof Anthony King's independent report.

She identified the key elements which had been identified by the Review, with the most critical being the lack of precision in Network News reports. She said that the second key weakness identified by the Impartiality Review was that Network News' reporting contained a huge proportion of stories which related only to England. The third issue identified in the Review was that Network News was consistently missing opportunities to enrich stories by introducing comparisons from across the constituent nations of the UK. The fourth weakness identified was the way in which Network News went about sourcing material for their news bulletins with no stories being reported in Network News output on education, arts, farming or health from Wales or Scotland during the 4 weeks reviewed as part of the research conducted by Cardiff University.

The Audience research had demonstrated that 88% of those from Wales who had participated in the research would like Network News to report on what was happening in other parts of the UK and more than 40% of Welsh respondents felt that much of the Network News was not relevant to them with 22% annoyed at this failure.

Head of Editorial Standards BBC Trust Unit said that the Executive's response would be presented to the BBC Trust at its July meeting and that the Trust would be looking again at this matter during the next eighteen months with the Audience Councils involved in that review.

She reported that the Audience Councils in some other parts of the UK had decided to seek reports from BBC management in their nations on the stories that the nation's newsroom had suggested Network should cover, with details of those stories that had been used on Network News. She also informed them that Audience Council Northern Ireland had offered to host a meeting for the Network correspondents of each of the UK's home nations. Audience Council Wales agreed that it should also seek reports of this kind from Head of News and Current Affairs Wales in his future contributions to the BBC Wales Board Report and that the Audience Council would also host a meeting of Network News Specialist Correspondents – with the suggestion being that it would be good to host a meeting of the Agriculture Correspondents from each of the UK's nations.

ACTION HoG&AW

Council members expressed their interest in seeing and considering the BBC Executive's response, but expressed their concern at the lack of progress thus far, citing the example of Network News' reporting of bovine TB in England, only 10 days after the publication of the Trust Impartiality Review, which had made no reference at all to the very different situation in Wales.

The Council reiterated the importance of developing constitutional literacy, not just within BBC Network News but also more widely amongst the BBC's audiences, and emphasised that this BBC Trust Impartiality Review should be seen as the first step in that process rather than the final destination.

The Council also expressed a worry that the research conducted as part of the impartiality review appeared to have failed to differentiate between audience attitudes towards the BBC more widely and their attitude towards BBC Cymru Wales. The Council also expressed the concern that the same was true in the National Assembly, suggesting that this failure had been made manifest in the recent response of the Welsh Assembly Government to the OFCOM PSB Review consultation and in the National Assembly's Broadcasting Committee report.

The Council noted that it considered Prof Anthony King's report 'a joy to read' being exceptionally well written and full of concrete examples to substantiate his conclusions.

55. PRESENTATION BY DANNY COHEN, CONTROLLER, BBC THREE

The Council was informed that the Controller had been at BBC THREE for just over a year, and that a key goal for him during that period had been to refocus on the 16-34 age range, with an emphasis on the lower end of the range.

A second goal had been to recognise that younger people were consuming material in a variety of ways, with on-demand and streaming content being increasingly important to them.

Thirdly, he informed the Council that the schedule had been re-ordered to include content which was more overtly serious than previously. *Sweat Blood and T-shirts* had been one example of this and more programmes of this kind were planned for the near future.

The performance of the channel had improved during the past year, and *Gavin & Stacey* had been a big part of that success, and developing new talent would continue to be a focus for the channel.

The Council said that it had been very refreshing to have seen Barry and Cardiff being portrayed in *Gavin & Stacey* - an independent production for Network. Controller BBC THREE responded by saying that one production such as *Gavin & Stacey* could make a significant impact upon the perception of geographical areas.

He was also asked by Council about the high level of independent productions commissioned by BBC THREE and he responded by saying that this was largely because many of the best ideas had come recently from independent companies – particularly for factual programmes.

Council commended BBC THREE for documentaries such as *Sweat Blood and T-shirts* which reminded young people of the real value of items such as clothing. Controller

BBC THREE responded by saying that further programmes were being planned looking at issues such as food production.

The Council asked about the extension of broadcast hours for BBC THREE? He responded by saying that the channel was hoping to change its starting time from 7pm to 3pm.

The Council also asked the Controller whether BBC THREE would be looking at extending its arts and music provision. He responded by saying that much of the present budget was allocated to live music provision and that there were no plans to change this at present.

The Council asked the Controller to elaborate on the relationship between BBC One and BBC THREE and he said that one goal was for BBC THREE to become a 'BBC One for young people'. Content was shared with BBC One and content also transferred from BBC THREE to BBC One.

The Council asked about the provision of sport on BBC THREE and Controller responded that this was something that was welcomed on BBC THREE and that it would be no disappointment if extended hours led to more sport on the channel.

The Council asked how Controller BBC THREE had responded to some of the criticisms levelled at the channel. The Controller responded by saying that while criticism had to be taken on the chin, it was also the case that criticism often originated with those who were outside the target audience. He also made the point that had some shows been a critical success, then they might not have been a success with the target audience.

The Council asked about the success or otherwise of '60 second news' bulletins. Controller BBC THREE responded by saying that there had been a change in these bulletins, with different themes brought to the fore during the various bulletins. He said that for him, a key goal for BBC THREE was to reach the target audience, but also to provide for a wider audience. The Council observed that good-natured warmth had been the most obvious aspect of *Gavin & Stacey*, and remarked this was also a feature of BBC THREE as a whole, which was to be welcomed.

Controller BBC THREE was asked about whether there were any formal links with any radio stations? He responded by saying that there was significant cooperation with BBC Radio 1 and tie-ins between particular programmes.

The Council asked how the channel received feedback from its target audience. The Controller responded by saying that the channel had developed an innovative process whereby there was regular contact with audience members with both face to face meetings with individuals from all parts of the UK and a website for responses.

The Council asked about the extent to which the channel discussed politics? The Controller responded by saying that young people were concerned about politics, were clearly ethically aware, though not necessarily interested in party politics.

56. PRIORITY ISSUES FOR THE BBC TRUST

BBC Local Video – the Council asked for the key matter raised during its discussion of these proposals – that the media context in Wales was very different to that in the UK as a whole – be highlighted as a priority issue for the BBC Trust.

57. CONFIRMATION OF DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Council was reminded that its next meeting would be on 5th September at BBC Broadcasting House, Cardiff and a public consultation event, hosted by the Council, would be held on the evening of 4th September.