

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

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**CONFIRMED**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD  
BBC BROADCASTING HOUSE, LLANDAFF, CARDIFF  
FRIDAY 02 MAY 2008**

Present:

*Audience Council Members*

Janet Lewis Jones (Chair and National Trustee for Wales)  
Jane James,  
Dafydd Whittall,  
Arun Midha,  
Roy Grant,  
Nicola Branson,  
Teresa Rees  
Sangeet Bhullar,  
Alexandra McMillan,  
Carl Cooper.

*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  
Mark O'Callaghan, Head of News and Current Affairs  
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*

Mike Arnold, BBC Cymru Wales News Technical Manager for item 34  
Clare Luke, Research Manager BBC Trust Unit for item 35

**31. APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Dennis Gethin  
Andrew Carter

**32. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2008.

**33. REPORTS**

**National Trustee**

The National Trustee informed the Council that she had attended a meeting of Audience Council Scotland which had been a useful introduction to the way in which it did its business

and informed Council that at its next meeting a review of its own activities and ways of operating would be conducted.

She informed Council that she had held a meeting with the leader of the Conservative Party in Wales, Nicholas Bourne AM, and would soon be meeting the Welsh Liberal Democrat MPs.

The report prepared by Ron Neill on the small number of examples of the BBC misleading viewers had been presented to the BBC Trust and that she would report more fully to Council after the Executive's formal response had also been received.

The Network Supply Review was not proving to be as simple as had been envisaged and that one difficulty had been agreeing a definition for 'out of London' production. She said that there were moves towards adopting Ofcom's definition which was more challenging than the one used by the BBC in the past.

The Trust had approved a technology strategy with a 3 year budget and she said that she considered it to be a good strategy.

She said that the Trust's forward work programme had been agreed.

In the context of the Trust's Service Review Of Children's Programming it had been agreed that the S4C children's provision was not a formal part of the service and so could not formally be considered as part of the Review but rather as part of the of the BBC-S4C programme plan. However, the team conducting the service review would have regard to the children's programmes produced by the BBC for broadcast by S4C.

The National Trustee informed Council that she would be giving evidence to the National Assembly's Broadcasting Committee in June.

She had taken part in a phone-in on Radio Wales in April and had found it encouraging that many of the questions raised were ones which the ACW had previously highlighted and addressed. She would be participating in a Radio Cymru phone-in in June.

### **Controller Wales report**

Controller had held meetings with two members of the National Assembly's Broadcasting Committee. The direction of the Committee's considerations already seemed apparent with questions relating to plurality and network portrayal to the fore.

It was understood that 5 bidders had emerged during recent days for the funds made available by the Welsh Assembly Government to produce a Welsh language (on-line) newspaper which indicated that there appeared to be some significant political will to increase media plurality in Wales.

Controller Wales informed Council that she would be attending a breakfast meeting with MPs from Wales the following week and noted also that the BAFTA Cymru award ceremony had been a great success with many BBC Cymru Wales winners.

### **BBC Trust Audience Councils Day**

The National Trustee expressed her gratitude to Jane, Nicola and Dafydd who had represented the ACW at the day.

Reporting back they said that it had been a useful session. The pooling of reporting on common priorities being a most useful development with Audience Council Scotland having led on Network Supply, Audience Council Northern Ireland having led on the portrayal of different parts of the UK on Network television and radio and the ACW having led on digital provision. It was reported that there now appeared to be a growing awareness of the real and serious nature of digital deprivation amongst members of the Trust and the hope that something would now be done was expressed.

A matter raised by the ACW – co-commissioning by Network and Nations & Regions – had also been discussed.

Head of Governance and Accountability Wales reminded Council that they would in future be setting priorities for the following year in December and that this would also mean that Audience Council's Day would need to be refocused. He also reminded Council that the Council's outreach working party would be meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> June, and the outcomes of the group's deliberations would also feed in to the MACE implementation plan and the future shape of the Trust's Audience Councils Day.

#### **34. PROGRESS ON BBC LOCAL PROPOSALS**

Mike Arnold, BBC Cymru Wales News Technical Manager, informed the Council that this was one of the most ambitious and exciting projects with which the BBC's Nations and Regions had been involved. He demonstrated the mapping interface to Council and elaborated upon the central five button structure of the service – news, sport weather, travel and community content. As an example of this he said that the community content could include such material as, for example, a link with the Network television *Coast* programme, providing instructions for walks which audiences could subsequently use.

In time the service could be extended to include provision on mobile devices such as phones. It would also include links to outside news organisations such as local newspapers, including local weekly newspapers in all parts of Wales.

He said that as part of this development, new ways of working were being explored with video journalists also being used to draft text pieces for the *bbc.co.uk* website. 10 services for 5 areas were being planned in Wales – the sites being coterminous with the existing *Where I live / Lleol i mi* areas, which were, in turn, based on the National Assembly's own regions. Government research had in the past demonstrated the importance afforded by people to local communities and this perception appeared to be getting stronger according to research conducted more recently by the Hansard Society and Electoral Commission.

It was also the case that the broadcasting landscape was changing and that the old model of linear news provision was slowly declining so something needed to be done to address this. He told Council that this did not mean that there wasn't a place in future for news bulletins within TV schedules, but rather that on-demand news was also needed. The introduction of a local service was entirely consistent with the BBC's Public Purposes and would help deliver them all to a greater or lesser degree.

In future it was hoped that there would be a greater geographic spread of journalists across Wales than at present with an aspiration that this would lead to a significant amount of material which could also be used on outlets such as *Newyddion* and *Wales Today*.

Council was informed that the new BBC Local service would incorporate the existing *Lleol i Mi/Where I live* services. However, as at present, the editorial agendas of the Welsh and

English services would not necessarily be the same and that the Welsh and English language services might well be significantly different.

The Council was informed that it expected the BBC Local proposals would be considered by the BBC Trust at a meeting in the near future with a public consultation on the proposals beginning soon after and the ACW being afforded the opportunity to consider the proposals at that time. It was hoped that the outcome of any Public Value Test and a final decision would be known during the spring of 2009.

The Council asked about the geographical spread of broadband across Wales and what impact this was likely to have on access? Management responded by saying that it was important that as much as possible of the material was accessible to as many people as possible. It was also said that a convergence of technologies was also in evidence and that it was likely that in a few years' time it televisions and computers would be offering similar access to broadcast material.

### **35. TRUST PURPOSE REMIT SURVEY**

Clare Luke, Research Manager of the BBC Trust Unit, was welcomed to the meeting. She reminded the ACW of some of the objectives of the research conducted in 2007 which had provided the Trust with key information as it finalised the BBC's Purpose Remits. In 2008, the objectives of the research had been to establish benchmarks for monitoring the delivery of the BBC's Public Purposes as well as identifying trends in attitudes towards the BBC amongst the Corporation's audiences.

She informed the Council that overall approval of BBC was highest in Wales and higher than the overall UK average and that it was apparent from the research that the respondents placed a great deal of emphasis on news and education from the BBC as well as increasing understanding of politics but that only 42% of respondents considered that the BBC Network was good at portraying Wales to other people in the UK.

The survey also addressed the issues of 'A BBC for ALL audiences'. One objective was to identify underserved audiences. The BBC should maintain perceived value among high approvers and increase it among middle and low approvers. High approvers included women (especially older women) and those in social classes ABC1 (especially older). Low approvers included middle aged, C2DE men and those living in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Usage and value for money were also addressed. BBC TV took around two fifths of all viewing and just over half respondents said they got good value for money from their licence fee.

The survey also considered participants on the basis of whether they lived in an urban or a rural location in addition to the more traditional measures of gender, social class, and ethnic background.

National identity, sexual orientation, people with disabilities and faith were also used as survey indicators.

The research also considered the BBC's competitors with respondents asked whether the BBC's competitors would be missed if they weren't there. For ITV the main groups which would miss it were it to disappear were younger respondents and in particular younger women. For Channel 4 those who would miss it also included younger audiences. SKY was identified by respondents from a minority ethnic origin as one which they would miss.

The survey had been very wide-ranging and work was still underway to extract all the information from this work.

The Research Manager was asked whether the survey differentiated between Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers. The Research Manager said that this had been a survey indicator but that more work was being undertaken to identify differences between these groups.

The Research Manager was also asked if there was a difference between perception and reality in terms of understanding how well the BBC was succeeding in realizing the Purposes. It was noted that this would be very difficult to do.

### **36. OFCOM PSB REVIEW**

Referring to some of the interesting points that had arisen during the previous evening's informal discussion with the Director of Ofcom Wales the National Trustee emphasised the importance of this discussion.

She informed the Council that time was short since Ofcom's deadline for submissions to the consultation was 19th June. She said that she hoped the comments of the ACW could inform the Trust's discussion and said that she would work with the Head of Governance and Accountability Wales to prepare a draft submission to the Trust to be ready by 13th May and ACW members were asked to respond and comment on that draft by 12th May. She emphasised that the ACW's voice in this debate was crucial so that those things which were of particular importance in and to Wales could be emphasised.

Head of Marketing Communication and Audiences Wales gave the Council a presentation highlighting some of the key issues that Ofcom were addressing in their current Review of Public Service Broadcasting. He said that these were whether the public service broadcasters were delivering what audiences expected of them, whether continued market intervention was required, whether there were new opportunities to deliver PSB, and whether there was a bespoke solution needed to address particular needs in Wales? He informed Council that there were significant market forces at play with advertising revenue of commercial public service broadcasters declining.

Outlining the current PSB mix in Wales, he said that this included BBC Cymru Wales (TV radio and on-line), S4C Welsh language television (including material from BBC) and ITV Wales which, from 2009, would provide 5 hrs of news and 3 hrs of non-news output per week.

Head of Marketing Communication and Audiences then informed the Council of some of the views gleaned by Ofcom during the research which had informed its Phase One consultation document. Members of the audience in Wales had told Ofcom that 'good quality regional news is important' – 81% of respondents said it was important but only 57% were satisfied with the current provision. Respondents also said that good quality regional non-news programmes were also important – 73% said that it was important but only 42% were satisfied. Respondents were also asked whether portraying Wales across the UK was important – 69% considered it important (same as Scotland) but only 40% were satisfied.

He informed the Council that Ofcom's analysis of the situation in Wales recognised that the 3 broadcasters provided strong TV output for Wales, but that the national (Wales) press provision was weak. Ofcom recognised that ITV Wales' financial situation was challenging

and that Wales suffered from a low level of network production despite the progress in this area by the BBC. ITV and Channel 4 did not broadcast any network material commissioned from Wales during 2006-07. It acknowledged also that online and local content was limited and while Welsh language provision on S4C was secure, news choice was limited. He also informed them that in Scotland and Northern Ireland the channel 3 licence was held by independent commercial broadcaster unlike Wales which was a part of ITV Plc.

While Ofcom recognised the financial issues facing ITV in Wales the question was where might any additional funds might come from? Ofcom's proposals at present considered direct taxation (as in the case of S4C), the licence fee (top slice or shared assets, or use mechanism of licence fee to bring cash in for broadcasters other than the BBC), a continued emphasis on regulatory assets e.g. spectrum, and industry levies e.g. levies on Internet Service Providers.

OFCOM had also identified three big issues of key interest to audiences in Wales, these being:

1. How was Wales being reflected to the rest of the UK and the amount of network production taking place in Wales. Ofcom's research demonstrated that audiences said these matters were important and the current situation wasn't good enough. Audiences in Wales considered that network news across the PSBs was not up to mark in terms of reflecting and representing the reality of post-devolution UK – something which echoed the thinking of ACW and BBC Trust. Council was reminded that BBC Management was preparing plans to submit to the Trust as part of the Network Supply Review.

2. How can choice (plurality) be maintained in broadcast news in Wales? Ofcom emphasised that diversity of voice and opinion was important and had asked whether the BBC could help support this in Wales? At present it seemed that ITV plc was the obvious option for providing the alternative to the BBC but a key question was whether it was financially worth its while in the present circumstances or whether additional funding would be required to sustain this?

3. Can choice be maintained in non-news programming in Wales? *Coal House, Scrum V, The Ferret, Week in Week Out, Fishlock's Wildtracks* were examples of present provision by BBC Wales and ITV Wales which provided significant viewing and audience value. Would the PSB in Wales in future see a BBC monopoly of arts, sports, history and factual TV programmes? The recent experience of BBC Wales demonstrated that talent development and network production were inter-related and there was a danger that an over-emphasis on issues relating to the news provision could overshadow the debate regarding non-news programming. It was important to remember that more people watched ITV Wales' non-news programmes than their news programmes.

Head of Marketing, Communication and Audiences Wales stressed that issues related to top-slicing were likely to play a big part in the UK PSB debate, and it was important to consider the impact in Wales if the overall BBC were required to reduce the scale of its operation? He emphasised that the future health of the wider BBC was crucial to the future health of BBC Wales, particularly given the inter-dependencies in areas such as network production, news, sport and the orchestras.

He also informed the Council, that because it was charged in statute with only looking at television PSB, Ofcom had largely overlooked key PSB matters such as the availability of DAB, the principle of universality, the provision of online services, rural infrastructural

provision including broadband, the role of commercial radio in the PSB mix, and the role of local services (which was an important consideration in the context of Wales where the daily newspaper press remained poorly developed).

The Council was informed that the National Assembly Government was conducting an audit of PSB in Wales which would be fed into its response to the Ofcom review. The National Assembly Broadcasting Committee was also conducting an investigation which would lead to a plenary debate in the Assembly. Both the National Trustee for Wales and Controller BBC Wales had been invited to give evidence to this Committee. Issues which had already been raised with the Committee included the matter of plurality and the dearth of network commissions from Wales. Some evidence to the Committee had suggested that Ofcom was too cautious and UK-focused and had ignored online services. It had also been said that the consideration of the role of radio and print was crucial to any consideration of public service broadcasting provision and others had said that Channel 4 had to provide a new focus on Wales ahead of digital switchover - something which was entirely absent at present.

The Audience Council for Wales in its subsequent discussion considered that the following issues were amongst the most important points it would wish to make in any submission:

- Institutional importance of the role of the BBC in the national life of Wales could not be over-emphasised with both the BBC's Welsh and English language provision pivotal to Wales.
- The recognition by Ofcom of the shortcomings in PSB provision in the nations was welcomed by the Council, but Ofcom's failure to properly explore and explain the meaning of the word 'plurality' and outline properly whether this meant in terms of geography, news, politics or any other sphere was criticised. The Council considered that Ofcom's document said far too little about the matter of language plurality and there was no recognition by Ofcom that that plurality could be delivered by one broadcaster's different services as well as by a competitive market.
- the Council observed that Ofcom's document said very little about audiences or their requirements and ignored the whole issue of access to the existing PSB model e.g. lack of full Freeview provision in parts of Wales and lack of access to Wales' national radio stations, Radio Cymru and Radio Wales, on DAB for a significant proportion of Wales' population.
- the Council considered that all the proposals relating to licence fee top-slicing were problematic, not least since accountability would be clouded.

The Council resolved that the ACW itself should seek an invitation to appear before the National Assembly Broadcasting Committee, in addition to the National Trustee since its input could offer an alternative perspective. The impact of a direct presentation was considered more likely to be effective than a written submission.

There was also consensus amongst the Council members that the word 'choice' was far preferable to 'plurality' and a lot of work had been done on the BBC's Purpose Remits to ensure that the BBC did serve its audiences well, not least by providing choice. The Council considered that the heart of the issue surrounding plurality was to ensure that a variety of voices were heard and that a healthy democracy was supported. The Council expressed its concern about the extent to which members of the National Assembly's Broadcasting Committee were aware of the range of voices delivered by BBC Wales.

The Council expressed the view that the BBC was not a *monolithic* entity, but rather one that provided a range of voices in both Welsh and English through its provision. Any submission prepared by the Council should emphasise the excellence and quality of the provision of BBC Wales. The Council also recognised the importance of making both the BBC Trust and the National Assembly Broadcasting Committee aware of this.

The Council considered that Ofcom's exclusive focus on TV was inadequate for a proper review of public service broadcasting and resolved to emphasise that the Ofcom Review should also consider the radio and on-line PSB provision in Wales in its submission. It also considered that accessibility (e.g. DAB and broadband) had to be part of the PSB review debate. Council agreed that audiences were the key starting point for its response and should include audience comments received by the Council at its outreach events on issues such as network portrayal, network production supply and so on. The key question for the Council in preparing its submission was what did audiences in Wales want and need.

The Council emphasised that it should not lose sight of the issue of future sustainability which it considered very important. Fragmentation was a very real danger and the loss of a critical mass could undermine the creativity of the BBC in Wales.

The Council agreed that it would like to see healthy competition to the BBC. However, it also resolved to demonstrate those areas where the BBC was already providing choice and to provide examples of this e.g. *Coal House* which had been an independent production but where cooperation occurred with in-house departments to ensure cross-platform provision.

### **37. PRIORITY ISSUES FOR BBC TRUST**

None were identified, with the Council resolving to concentrate on its submission to the BBC Trust on the OFCOM PSB Review.

### **38. Date of next meeting**

The Council was reminded that its next meeting would be on 6<sup>th</sup> June at BBC Broadcasting House, Cardiff and a private dinner for the Council would be held on the evening of 5<sup>th</sup> June.

\*\*\*