

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

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD
BBC BROADCASTING HOUSE, LLANDAFF, CARDIFF
FRIDAY 3rd OCTOBER 2008**

Present:

Audience Council Members

Janet Lewis Jones (Chair and National Trustee for Wales)
Teresa Rees
Andy Carter
Dafydd Whittall
Alex McMillan
Nicola Branson
Jane James
Roy Grant
Carl Cooper

BBC Cymru Wales staff:

Menna Richards, Controller BBC Wales
Mark O'Callaghan, Head of News and Current Affairs
Clare Hudson, Head of Programmes, English
Keith Jones, Head of Programmes, Welsh and New Media
Cath Allen, Head of Broadcast Development
Rhodri Talfan Davies, Head of Marketing, Communications 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
Jared Walters, Team Assistant, Governance & Accountability Cymru
Wales.

67. APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sangeet Bhullar
Dennis Gethin
Arun Midha

68. TRUST BUSINESS (IN PRIVATE)

The National Trustee informed the Council of the discussion that was taking place within the BBC regarding its response to the OFCOM PSB Review.

She informed the Council that the Trust was undertaking some work to see how it could streamline its activity which she hoped would have a positive impact also on the Council's workload.

She said that while the public was being regularly informed about the financial difficulties facing other broadcasters the BBC was also suffering in the present economic climate – with items such as rising energy costs having a significant impact since the BBC was a very energy hungry organisation.

The National Trustee informed the Council that the Ten O'clock news had been drawing huge audiences during recent weeks and that the recently launched BBC Arabic service was already attracting large audiences across north Africa and the Persian Gulf states.

Quarterly report on Trust Audience insight – the Council commended the paper and said that it had found it very useful, welcoming in particular the input of each Audience Council which provided an opportunity for Councils to learn from each other's activities.

Trust Review of Licence Fee Collection – this had now been launched and Council members were invited to take soundings on this matter before the November meeting, at which the review would be discussed substantively. The Council commended the Welsh and English pamphlets published to encourage responses to the review.

Trust Nations Impartiality Review – the Council was invited to agree to the proposal that Council members should review a week's Network news output. Head of Governance said that he would inform Council members of the week to be reviewed. He also said that tools were in development to ensure an objective evaluation, but also said that anecdotal evidence would also be useful.

Audience Priorities for 2009/10 – The Council commended the paper tabled which focused on the new parameters proposed for future setting of Audience Priorities by Councils and their adoption by the Trust. Head of Governance informed Council that it would need to decide on Priorities for 2009-10 at its next meeting. Matters which were raised as possibilities included on-going monitoring of Network News in the light of the 2008 Nations Impartiality Review. Another possible priority was the matter of access to the BBC's services – not least the availability of Broadband and the accessing of BBC services over the internet. Network commissioning outside London was also highlighted as a possible priority – with the addition of commissioning for radio being added. Portrayal was highlighted as was the independence of the BBC. The Council agreed to further discuss the matter of provision of services for older people with a view to prioritising this. The Council observed that portrayal of the UK outside London and Network commissioning outside London might be considered together. It was agreed that these possible Priorities be discussed further at the November meeting of the Audience Council.

Management joined the meeting

69. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

Under matters arising, Head of Programmes (Welsh) and New Media gave the Council an update on the funding of *bbc.co.uk* and the impact of funding cuts on New Media projects in Wales. Funding constraints had led for example to the cutting of the *Doctor*

Who Comic maker website, and had an impact on projects such as the website of *Human Planet*, the funding for which had been reduced by 75%. However, he said that the overall impact was to slow down development and reduce commissions.

70. REPORTS

National Trustee – she informed the Council that the Trust had recently considered the Ofcom PSB Review. The Council observed that it was a huge concern that views being expressed in Wales were not necessarily being heard outside Wales and that Ofcom's references to Wales seemed to be made somewhat in passing. The Council members remarked that it was vitally important to keep an eye on the way in which the discussion was developing.

The arguments around the absence of plurality in Wales were developing quickly and it was important for the BBC to be alert to the political and commercial differences which existed in Wales. The danger that the shortening of the expected time-table could lead to an ignoring of the complexities of the situation was also highlighted.

Making reference to Ofcom Tier 2 quotas the National Trustee informed the Council that the Trust had agreed to refer this matter to OFCOM at a recent meeting. With digital switchover requiring the merger of BBC 2 Wales and BBC 2W, it was necessary to have Ofcom's agreement to reduce the overall Tier 2 quotas including TV programmes broadcast by BBC Cymru Wales within peak hours and in 'shoulder peak' hours.

Controller Wales

Controller Wales informed the Council that on the previous Sunday there had been a 'catastrophic loss of power' to the BBC Wales site in Llandaff, Cardiff. She said that both Radio Wales and Radio Cymru had been off-air for up to an hour, with other services, such as digital television, also being affected. She informed the Council that there were several back-up systems in place but that they had all failed. An investigation was underway to discover why this had happened but had not yet been concluded. She said that this incident had demonstrated the high level of loyalty amongst staff (particularly the engineers, who had been remarkably ingenious in finding ways to get services back on air) and paid tribute to the Head of News and Current Affairs as Chair of the Business Continuity team at BBC Wales.

Head of MC&A informed the Council that around 500 calls were received by BBC Information in response to the situation with all the enquiries seeking further information rather than complaining.

The Council commended the response of BBC Wales' management to this situation and agreed to add a few paragraphs of explanation to its own website.

ACTION: Accountability Adviser

Controller Wales informed Council that further work had been undertaken with developers regarding BBC Wales' property strategy and that proposals were awaited shortly, which would then lead to further significant work on the costs involved.

She informed the Council that the *Proms in the Park* concert had been a huge success once again this year, with the weather having been kind for the event. BBC Cymru

Wales had attended each political party conference and its presence had been considered a success.

Board Report

Head of Broadcast Development informed the Council that the new Radio Wales Sunday schedule would be launched shortly with *Good Morning Wales* beginning on Sunday mornings and Ruth Jones presenting a new Radio Wales programme mid-morning on Sundays.

Head of Programmes Welsh and New Media informed the Council that Radio Cymru would be integrated into the iPlayer very shortly, that Wales was now a distinct iPlayer category and that the iPlayer Welsh language interface had recently been launched. He also informed Council that Radio Cymru's new winter schedule had just begun.

Head of Programmes English informed Council that the new *Merlin* TV programme had been an audience and critical success. She showed the Council a show-reel of forthcoming shows from the autumn TV schedules.

The Council remarked that the BBC's coverage of the Olympics and Paralympics were still eliciting positive comments, some months after the event.

71. OFCOM PSB REVIEW STAGE 2

The National Trustee reminded Council of the discussion which it had undertaken at its private dinner the previous evening and said that it was important to ensure that responses were presented as strongly as possible and to ensure that the unique situation of Wales was highlighted clearly.

The Council commended the briefing paper on the issue which had been prepared by BBC Trust Unit staff. Those members of Council that would be attending the forthcoming Ofcom Content Board meeting agreed to feed back impressions of that event to the next meeting of Council in November at which meeting this matter would again be on the Council's agenda.

The Council was reminded of the BBC Cymru Wales event on 19th November which would have a *Coal House at War* theme to which Trust members and the Council members would be invited.

72. DISCUSSION ON TRUST REVIEW OF SERVICES FOR YOUNGER PEOPLE

The National Trustee reminded the Council that this Review had been launched earlier in the week. The Council observed that the Review encompassed a huge age-range – 13-34 years old - and that consequently it would be important not to over-generalise its response, but rather to reflect the differences made evident in the responses of audiences of different ages and of those whose first language might not be English.

The Head of Governance informed Council that outreach events were being arranged with audience members from within the age range. These would be in Bangor (1st December) and Aberystwyth (to coincide with the ACW meeting there) and would concentrate on different age ranges. The Bangor event would concentrate on those of school age and the event in Aberystwyth would be with university students. Head of

Governance informed the Council that a joint-event was being organised with the Girl Guide Association and details about that proposed event would be circulated to Council members shortly.

The National Trustee said that while the Review was concentrating on BBC Three, Radio 1 and IXTTRA, it was in no way limited to these and so could also include the BBC's output on S4C and those for young people broadcast on Radio Cymru and Radio Wales. The Council asked for clarification on the way in which this additional information would be used by the Trust since it would clearly not be used in the formal review of the Radio 1, BBC Three and IXTTRA Service Licences. Head of Governance agreed to seek clarification on this.

ACTION: HoG&AW

In looking forward to the Aberystwyth outreach event, the Council said that it would be helpful to explore with participants the way in which they accessed the BBC's services, which programmes they appreciated and how they viewed their relationship with the BBC as well as their level of recognition of the BBC brand.

The Council reiterated that it would be important to give careful consideration to the way in which the sessions were structured and the language used. The Council also emphasised the importance of 'giving permission' to participants to address the widest range of the BBC's services.

The Council raised the provision of educational materials in Welsh emphasising that the forthcoming discussions would need to focus on the key BBC principles to inform, educate and entertain.

Head of Governance agreed to circulate discussion starting questions for each event beforehand for comment.

ACTION: HOG&AW

73. ACW OUTREACH STRATEGY

Head of Governance and Accountability informed Council that work was already underway with the Voluntary Action Councils to encourage applications for membership of the Audience Council, and that opportunities were also being explored on other ways of cooperating such as outreach work.

Outreach activity during the coming year would be coordinated to the extent possible with the BBC Trust's work but at present the Trust's forward work plan for 2009/10 had not yet been agreed. Its next iteration was likely to be fuller, and this would in turn inform the Council's activity.

Making reference to the Council's past comments regarding the BBC provision for older people Head of Governance said that work was underway to arrange an outreach event with older people which could inform a Council Audience Priority.

The Council commended that ACW Outreach Strategy document, agreed with its conclusions and noted that regular reference should be made to it to inform the Council's activities.

The Council was also informed that a leaflet on the Audience Council's work and role was in preparation, as suggested by the Council at a previous meeting, and this would be available shortly.

The Council was informed that BBC Trust Audience Councils Day would now be held on 21st January 2009.

The Council asked whether further thought could be given to the use of the internet and e-mail distribution to encourage input from audiences, as well as informing event participants of Trust actions arising from their comments.

74. PRIORITY ISSUES FOR BBC TRUST

There were no specific issues highlighted for the Trust's attention.

75. CONFIRMATION OF DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Council was reminded that its next meeting would be on 7th November at the Conrah Hotel, Aberystwyth, followed by an outreach event with students from the University of Aberystwyth. The Council members would be attending a concert given by the BBC National Orchestra for Wales on the evening of 6th November.

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