

**REGIONAL AUDIENCE COUNCIL for BBC East Midlands**  
**Venue: BBC Broadcasting House, London Road, Nottingham**

**Wednesday 22 April 2009, 6.00pm**

**Present:**

Phillippa M Denton – Chair	(PMD)		
Nigel Hallam	(NH)	Lillian Nevins	(LN)
Glennis Taylor	(GT)	Brian Chance	(BC)
Pip Ostell	(PO)	Bindu Modi	(BM)
Dorothy Wright	(DW)	Belinda Basson	(BB)
Sarah McCann	(SM)	Katharine Stewart	(KST)

Charles Runcie – Head of Sport, BBC English Regions	(CR)
Emma Agnew - Editor, TV News	(EA)
Kate Squire – Acting HRLP	(KSQ)
Carol Webster – Public Accountability Manager	(CW)
Rachel Gunn – Accountability Assistant	(RG)

Apologies: Tracey Davenport  
Barry Morris  
Jonathan English  
Hannah Rogers-Gee  
Paul Dickerson

**1. Welcome and introductions**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Charles Runcie and Emma Agnew.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising**

**Matters Arising:**

- PMD explained that a representative from BBC Marketing would be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss trails.
- It had been suggested that each member should be given a letter which could be shown to employers explaining the work of the RAC. A letter signed by Louise Hall Head, of Governance and Accountability was given to each member.
- A request for more information on the proposed partnerships with ITV: the Chair suggested this should be covered during Item 4 (ACE minutes), since the subject had been extensively discussed at the last ACE meeting; this was agreed.
- PMD reminded members to let CW know of their Radio 2 listening patterns in preparation for the review later in the year.

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

**3. Programme & service review**

**BBC Sports Output:**

The Chair thanked Charles Runcie for coming to the meeting and invited him to explain his role for

the benefit of new members.

#### Local coverage

CR asked members where they would go generally when looking for sports programmes and news. They used a variety of sources including Teletext, Sky Sports, the local radio stations and their websites, Radio Five Live and the BBC Sports Website. One member listened to other local radio stations on line for particular sports events.

Members felt that several local sporting events recently had been covered well by EMT and local radio, mentioning in particular, the Carl Froch fight, coverage of water sports and EMT journalist Mark Shardlow reporting on the golf from Boston. Derby-based members had found that Radio Derby featured more specialist sports on the Drivetime programme, such as hockey and Paralympics sports.

There were a number of general criticisms for example one member was disappointed that the recent Norwich versus Nottingham Forest game had not been broadcast. Some criticised trails for non sporting events during matches etc. although others felt that it was appropriate for the BBC to inform licence fee payers of other similar events coming up.

The website was considered to be interesting, with varied and comprehensive information.

Female members were asked their views on local sport coverage. Most said they had an interest in large scale national events (i.e. major football matches, Wimbledon, the Olympics etc.) but otherwise did not consume much sport. One watched the sports round up at the end of the news to keep up with conversation in the office. One was taught the rules of rugby and will now listen to rugby matches on the radio. At least two female members reported being fans of Leicester Tigers.

PO, who is involved in the Leicester Special Olympics this year, reported that the event is being covered by ITV and asked what this would mean for *East Midlands Today*. EA said that EMT was hoping to show highlights but this was still being negotiated with ITV.

Some members had attended the BBC East Midlands Sports Awards in Nottingham last year and had been disappointed at the number of empty seats on the night. KST suggested that members could be given contact details for sports clubs/ groups invited to encourage them to attend. KSQ said she was sure the organiser of the event would welcome this help. CW said she would need to seek advice on this and would feed back at the next meeting. PMD wondered if this being a public event made a difference to the 'talent' attending.

**Action: CW**

#### National sports review

Members were pleased to see the return of Formula 1 to the BBC after 12 years and found coverage good so far. There was a discussion on whether the cost of Formula 1 rights was worthwhile and a parallel was drawn with the debate on talent costs as it was noted that sports rights can be equally expensive. However CR pointed out that Formula 1 appeals to an audience which is not usually attracted to the BBC. The cost was justified therefore both because it widens the BBC's portfolio of featured sports and because it draws in people who are hard to reach.

*[Withheld from published minutes under section 36 of the Act.]*

There were some criticisms of the style of the current snooker commentary line up. CR said that there had been a shake up, but this had not been popular as many viewers seemed to prefer the old players and their stories.

Charles asked if any members used the red button for additional sports coverage. Around a quarter of members had used the red button, for Final Score, tennis and Motor GP. It was asked if red button

events were listed anywhere. In response, CR said that because it is not an official channel, it is not listed in the Radio Times, but is trailed and noted as covering events.

Members commented on the Hillsborough coverage which they thought had been very good, well and comprehensively covered, both regionally and nationally.

A few members praised the “Goals on Monday” feature on EMT but noted that this did not show all the goals from matches in the region. EA explained that the goals came from ITV, so EMT can only show what ITV has recorded. However from August this will be different, as the BBC have the rights for next season. Goals will also be shown on the website.

CR left the meeting at this point to travel to another engagement.

### **Regional TV News**

Members were asked to watch *East Midlands Today* on Wednesday and Thursday 15 and 16 April. EA gave an overview of the programme, describing it as both a programme of record and a magazine programme, designed to inform and entertain the audience and include sport and the weather as well as news. She commented that the East Midlands is a large region with rural and urban geography. She said that the changes at Central were not good for the region and that EMT was trying to fill the gaps that Central no longer provided. It is easy to do this on big news days but on a slow news day it is more difficult. She said that they try to have stories of real people so the audience identifies with them.

Members felt that on both days the news content was very Leicester focused with Nottingham a close second, although in general there was good coverage of the whole region.

The main focus on Wednesday was the Hillsborough commemoration which featured in both news and sports sections. Members found this very moving and emotional and felt that the local relevance was covered well. Some members felt that the running order of the programme was a little grim; the Hillsborough feature was followed by news of an attack on a pensioner. They suggested that the third story, a more optimistic perspective by John Hess, the political editor, on an increase in house prices despite the recession might have been placed second to alleviate some of the gloom.

On the Thursday the lead story was on greater numbers of tourists visiting the East Midlands with features on the National Space Centre in Leicester and Calke Abbey in Derbyshire. It was noted that it was relatively unusual for a good but factual news item to lead the programme.

One member commented that on some occasions the news is not ‘news worthy’, for example a story of a company taking on three people was billed as the East Midlands bucking the recession trend! As a general viewpoint it was felt that there was not enough on how the region is affected by the recession; the editor said there were plans for a mini series on this subject.

Members noted a number of changes of weather presenters and asked why this was. EA explained that a regular presenter was on maternity leave.

*[Withheld from published minutes under section 36 of the Act.]*

Members appreciated that having five weather presenters provided good variety and scope for individual personalities. On the whole members felt the main presenters (Anne Davis and Dominic Heale) worked well together, and liked the fact that both presenters are of comparable ages rather than the formulaic combination of a mature male with a young female. Special mention was made of John Hess and Mark Shardlow for their reports and features.

Overall members agreed that *East Midlands Today* fulfils the Public Purpose of Sustaining Citizenship and Civil Society well. More could be achieved in the area of Bringing the World to the UK and the UK to the World by showing the relevance of national stories in a regional context.

EA asked members to email any comments to her directly. CW was asked to forward her email address to members.

**Action: CW**

### **Local Radio**

The RAC considered the linked members' reports and highlights arising from them.

NH reported on the focus group being set up at Radio Derby and BB commented on the station's recent excellent coverage of cervical cancer.

There was no report for Radio Leicester as the link member had resigned.

The report for Radio Nottingham had been sent out with the meeting papers, but the member had sent his apologies for the meeting. He had asked if someone else would be prepared to act as the link to Radio Nottingham as he was finding it difficult to do this due to pressure of work.

PMD invited members to contact CW if they were interested in being the link member for either BBC Radio Leicester or BBC Radio Nottingham.

**Action: All**

## **4. Reports**

**Audience Council England:** The draft ACE minutes were sent out with the meeting papers and PMD invited questions on the minutes and particularly the proposed ITV partnerships. Members agreed that ACE had discussed the issue very comprehensively and there were no further queries at this stage.

**ACE/RAC Work Plan:** A paper entitled 'The Accountability Year' was sent out with the meeting papers. This was to give members an idea of how the new system would work and traffic to and from the Trust. At least one member expressed regret that there would only be four meetings a year, and asked if this was set in stone. PMD suggested that because of the length of time between the June and November meetings, a short business session should be held before the outreach event scheduled for September/October. Members agreed to this.

### **Head of Region's report**

KSQ talked to her report and reported massive hits to the website following stories such as the body parts found in Leicestershire. *Inside Out* has performed well, but the 10.30pm news bulletin currently has the lowest audience of all the regions. This is being looked at to try to determine the reasons for this and will be reviewed again in six months to monitor improvements. Various options are being considered including having a consistent presenter. She also said that the best four *Inside Out* programmes would be going out on BBC Four and that she is lobbying for an East Midlands edition to be one of them. She highlighted the Schools Report News day, which had gone well. Members were pleased to see Top Valley school taking part, following our event there last November.

KSQ asked members to watch Central News at 6-630pm for feedback at the next meeting. It was agreed to select two days when everyone would watch.

**Action: CW/All**

## **5. Trust business & feedback**

The following papers were sent out to members with the meeting papers and there were no comments or questions.

- Trust briefing paper – Network News Impartiality
- Trust approval of the BBC Budget
- Trust Work Plan

- Feedback – Children’s Service Review

## 6. Outreach

Generally Accepted Standards – final plans

The date agreed for the event was Tuesday 19 May, and it would take place at a venue in Leicester (either the City Rooms or De Montfort University). CW would confirm the chosen venue as soon as possible. She outlined the event and explained that it would be smaller than originally planned. Members were asked to let CW know who from their networks would be attending and to look at a cross section to give good spread of age and diversity. A fuller brief would be sent out at a later date.

**Action: All/ CW**

## 7. Burning issues

Two members of PMD’s network had contacted her regarding the BBC Trust’s criticism of Jeremy Bowen. She asked if this was an issue for any one else. It had not been brought to other members’ attention by their networks and none saw it as an issue themselves.

## 8. Any other business

KST informed the meeting that she had put an article in her local free paper asking for contributions from the public on BBC out put. CW asked for a copy of the free paper with the advert. KST agreed to forward one to her.

**Action: KST**

CW explained the paper on Local Radio charitable appeals in members’ packs and that this was sent in response to members questions.

Glennis asked if the Eggheads get paid: CW agreed to try to find out!

**Action: CW**

*[Withheld from published minutes under section 36 of the Act.]*

PMD thanked retiring member Sarah McCann for her commitment to the RAC and for her contribution to meetings and outreach events. Sarah expressed her thanks in turn. She said that it had been tremendous fun and she would miss everyone.

## 9. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 17 June 2009, BBC Radio Derby

### Endnote

*[We aim to make as much of the minutes available as possible. However, there will be times when sections of the minutes will be withheld from publication. These will be kept to a minimum and clearly marked.]*

*The reasons for withholding information are consistent with the Freedom of Information Act which applies to some of the BBC’s information. See [www.bbc.co.uk/foi](http://www.bbc.co.uk/foi) for further explanation.]*