

## Regional Audience Council, East Midlands

Wednesday 18 April 2007, BBC Nottingham

### Minutes

#### **Members present:**

Phillippa Denton	Samson Ayi Ake	Katharine Stewart
Glennis Taylor	Nigel Hallam	Jeanne Nicholls
Andy Zadora-Chrzastowski	Paul Burgin	Paul Dickerson
Guy Fennimore	Thalej Vasishta	

#### **BBC Staff:**

Aziz Rashid, Head of Regional and Local Programming (HRLP)  
 Laura Curnin, Public Accountability Assistant  
 Carol Webster, Public Accountability Manager

#### **Apologies:**

Pip Ostell	Sarah McCann	Tracey Davenport
------------	--------------	------------------

#### **1. Chair's Introduction and Welcome:**

The Chair welcomed all members and especially new members attending their first meeting.

#### **2. Minutes of previous meeting:**

##### Matters Arising:

##### 5) HRLP report:

a) Members asked if the bedtime stories from the Radio Nottingham competition could be published. This has been done and members have been sent a copy.

b) Clock on Breakfast; this will be done by May.

c) Local Audience Forum link members were confirmed.

The link for Radio Leicester said that the managing editor was not aware of what the link members' role was. Aziz said this was the first time he had seen the document and that managing editors were not aware of the role.

CW was asked to ensure managing editors knew who the link members were and what was expected of them.

d) Mainstream Partnership feedback: Guy and Jeanne attended the event.

All three local radio stations used the event to do some Local Audience Forum outreach. Each had a pack which included questionnaires, which were to be returned. To date nothing had been received by the Nottingham team. No information as yet from Leicester or Derby.

e) Glennis asked for feedback re the newspaper clipping on 'I love the C word'. The programme editor was emailed with no response to date – to be followed up.

The minutes were then agreed as a true record and signed off by the Chair.

#### **3. Programme Review:**

##### **National: Bi-Centenary of the Bill to Abolish the Slave Trade**

This had been a wide ranging and extensive series with output on all platforms and various live events. Overall, members felt the productions were worthwhile, being diverse and educational. The series had raised awareness of all the issues; what had happened in the past and were still happening. It provided a broader perspective.

A member singled out the Rageh Omaar documentary that highlighted the current trade in child slavery. This helped to put into context the historical and current situation. The programme was considered to be well presented and produced with high emotional content. It had been a balanced assessment although there should have been a follow-up also indicating what action was being taken on child slavery.

There was praise for programmes on other platforms. Local and regional output was interesting and relevant, highlighting local connections to the slave trade. One member stated that he had learnt a lot from the website that he was unaware of before, for example the story of John Newton who wrote *Amazing Grace*.

Other highlights included a Radio 4 docu-drama which had clarified previously vague historical knowledge. Another member, brought up in the Wirral and always aware of the legacy of the slave trade, had not re-evaluated the legacy specifically as a result of the programmes but had listened to an excellent production on local radio in Merseyside whilst on a family visit there.

#### **Chair's summary:**

In conclusion the various productions were regarded as informative, balanced, well produced and educational. Awareness of the issues, past and present, had been raised by the output. Members had gained a broader perspective from the programmes and had accessed information on several platforms.

It was felt that of the six Public Purposes, those of Citizenship; Education; Reflecting the UK's diversity; and Bringing the UK and the world together were particularly well fulfilled by the broad spectrum of programmes.

The BBC was commended for the series; it was felt to be the type of initiative only the BBC would undertake.

#### **BBC comment:**

Each website did three stories with local connections and a woman from Leicester related to Edward Juba (former African slave) had appeared on *East Midlands Today*. There was output on local radio and live coverage of events that took place at Rothley Court.

#### **Comic Relief: 'The Big One' (March 16)**

Members dipped in and out of the programme during the evening, while a few watched in larger chunks. Some people expressed disappointment and frustration that they were unable to watch the whole event, as it went on late into the night and inaccurate timings did not allow for recording.

A number of members expressed being affected emotionally by the output, and one cried at what they saw.

In general members enjoyed the programme, they felt that there was a very good mix of items and it was not felt to be contrived. Most said they thoroughly enjoyed the evening although there was some irksome repetition.

The programming quality was good and made favourable comparisons with *Children in Need* which was not considered to be as well produced or polished. The cost of producing the show was questioned.

One member listened to Radio 5 Live where a presenter was making negative comments about the show and questioning how much money actually went to the charities.

The charity also benefits from wide schools participation as it is a fun event.

**Chair's summary:**

The programme was educational and insightful as well as entertaining. Most members enjoyed the output and felt it was good value, although there was some question about the production cost.

It was felt that the programme met some of the Public Purposes; that the reach was good and it offered value for money.

**BBC comments:**

*Comic Relief* is not a BBC production; it had a larger staff pool than *CIN* and people were more willing to participate and contribute, including performers and celebrities. The BBC contributed to the charity by donating airtime on BBC1 for the night.

**Regional: BBC School News Day (March 22) (360 degree coverage)**

Everyone felt this was an excellent initiative, that it was a good idea well worked. It was refreshing to see a positive 'spin' on young people. It was accepted that the presentation was not as slick as usual, but it still made good viewing. The programme was educational, showing the students using technology and doing research. The passion and enthusiasm of the students came across very clearly. Members wanted to commend the BBC on a wonderful project and hoped it would be ongoing.

The only criticism was that of the four regional schools taking part, only one was mentioned on *East Midlands Today*. However it was understood that this was due to timing constraints and some members had followed up the other schools on the website.

**Chair's summary:**

Everyone enjoyed the programme. The Public Purposes of Promoting Education and Learning, Emerging Communications, Sustaining Citizenship and Civil Society and Stimulating Creativity and Cultural Excellence in particular were all covered.

**BBC comments:**

The School Report (News Day) was piloted last year. This year four regional schools took part, three were broadcast on each radio station and on the station websites, whilst the fourth was on *East Midlands Today* and on the EMT website.

This would be ongoing, hopefully encouraging more schools to be involved. However, not all schools would or could be featured.

Members asked that schools are mentioned on the BBC website; the head of region said that there were links to schools website, from the BBC Schools Report site. The link is still there under <http://www.bbc.co.uk/school-report/news-day>

**Other TV:**

At least two members expressed their pleasure that *Dr Who* is back!

#### **4. Chair's Report:**

- Audience Council England

The chair fed back on the meeting in Birmingham on 26 – 27 March.

The Chair reported on the decision to withdraw BBC Jam due to a competition issue. One member reported that the communication of the decision from the BBC to teachers who contributed material had been bad with some people still waiting to be informed. The Chair agreed to follow this up.

There was further discussion on purpose remits and service licences. Our views were communicated, and were reflected across the country.

iPlayer and Freesat were also discussed – Freesat would improve on Freeview with a wider range of channels. There was a large section of the viewing population which was unable to get Freeview and therefore could not receive digital TV except through a subscription service. Freesat would enable these people to access BBC digital services for free (there is a one off charge for the Freesat set top box as with Freeview) before Digital Switchover. Freesat would provide a substantial range of channels, but not as many as Sky.

- Head of Region's Report

The report had been forwarded to all members. Comments and questions were invited.

*Inside Out* was commended for the tagging report – members felt this was excellent journalism which had received nationwide attention. The report had also featured on the subsequent *Inside Out England* programme.

Members wished Radio Derby luck in its nomination for a gold Sony award.

#### **5. Trust Business:**

Nothing at this meeting.

#### **6. Outreach:**

Two events were to be staged this year. The Chair and PAM are looking at forthcoming BBC events to see if we can link to these for outreach.

There was discussion on who the targets should be. The RAC concluded that these should be younger people and hard to reach communities.

It was agreed to hold an outreach event during the *News and Sports on Tour*, in Nottingham on 24 -27 May. Carol and Phillippa will follow up.

Members also requested clarification of the budget available for outreach events. Carol agreed to find out.

#### **7. Any Other Business:**

- Key Points for ACE

Phillippa asked members to email her if there are any issues they would like raised at ACE.

BBC Jam issue.

iPlayer

Cricket World Cup: a member stated that the coverage had been excellent, but noted that there has been no mention or link to *Test Match Special* which was live on Radio 4 longwave. He asked if this was a deliberate decision to encourage people to use digital radio.

One member, who had sent a text message to the Breakfast Show on Radio Nottingham, felt the message, when read out, was interpreted differently to the way it had been sent. Aziz asked for examples to follow this up.

- Venue for Future Meetings

It was resolved to hold one meeting a year in Derby and one in Leicester, ideally coinciding with planned events at each venue. The Chair and PAM would meet with Kate Squire (Managing Editor, Radio Leicester) to agree a suitable date for the Leicester meeting. The next RAC meeting would take place in Derby on the date of the Big Screen launch there.

Members agreed to exchange email addresses; to be circulated by CW.

Members asked for the meetings to start at 6.15 to allow for traffic etc. This was agreed. Refreshment would be available from 6.00.

Other News:

Radio Leicester update: The 'Big Debates' on multiculturalism and travellers, produced quality discussions on these important issues online and on radio.

The Ruby Rainbow Appeal had raised around £70k.

There were some changes to schedule.

The Director-General visited Leicester recently

Radio Derby update: hoping for an award at the scheduled Sony Awards ceremony

The Big Screen coming to Derby very soon

Radio Nottingham update: Sophie Stuart was now acting Managing Editor. Another Groundswell event was scheduled for next Tuesday.

The New Chairs' Induction Day was to be held at the Mailbox on 30 April to which members were invited. Andy and Katharine volunteered and were accepted.

**Meeting Closed**