

Regional Audience Council
 BBC East Midlands
 Wednesday 21st February 2007
 BBC Nottingham
Minutes

Members present:

Phillippa Denton – Chair	Samson Ayi Ake
Pip Ostell	Glennis Taylor
Andy Zadora-Chrzastowski	Tracey Davenport
Sarah McCann	Guy Fennimore
Paul Dickerson	Jeanne Nicholls
Peter Gadd	Katharine Stewart
Andy Harrison	Nigel Hallam

BBC Staff:

Aziz Rashid, Head of Regional and Local Programming (HRLP)
 Charles Runcie, Head of Sports, BBC English Regions
 Matthew Postgate, Executive Producer, iPlayer demonstration
 Laura Curnin, Public Accountability Assistant
 Carol Webster, Public Accountability Manager

Apologies:

Paul Burgin
 Thalej Vasishta

Marilyn Hall did not attend

1. Chair’s Introduction and Welcome:

Phillippa asked those present to briefly introduce themselves, and gave an overview of the role of RAC members, reminding members of the importance of reviewing programmes, even those they would not normally choose to view.

2. Minutes of previous meeting:

Accepted as an accurate record.

Matters Arising:

Action Point from the last meeting: RAC Website; CW explained that work was in progress.

3. Programme Review:

a) Charles Runcie was introduced; he explained his role as having a more strategic focus by hooking in local/ regional sports to the national agenda.

Following Charles’ input, discussion followed around future plans for sports broadcasting. Some members were concerned that *Grandstand* had been scrapped; one that there was not enough live coverage of cricket; one asked if the BBC had thought of a sports channel as they were unhappy that regular programmes were replaced by sport. One member asked if the BBC received many complaints about sexist remarks made during sports commentary, and cited snooker and darts where it was felt that patronising and inappropriate comments were made. One member of council felt that disabled sport did not feature on a regular basis; another member who is a wheelchair user disagreed with this and said that there was a fair representation.

Members felt that commentators on *Match of the Day* should include professionals (ie umpires) and not solely ex-players as they in general did not understand the rules.

The consensus was that sports coverage in the East Midlands regions was good. Members also felt it was good to see other sports being featured, ie rowing. Paralympics sport was also discussed. Someone asked what is happening in the lead up to 2012.

Charles responded to members' comments.

He said that sport was now promoted as what it was. He explained that *Match of the Day* was safe until 2010 and that the BBC had expressed an interest for the cricket contract which was up in 2009. A sports-only channel would not be allowed by government. He talked of other ways to access sport through the BBC, ie behind the red button. It was agreed this needed to be promoted and ways of doing this were being explored. It was also pointed out that not everyone had the red button facility. Aziz explained restrictions regarding digital access and that only up to 70% of viewers had access.

Charles told the meeting that the East Midlands was the best for sport out of the 12 English regions. He agreed to pass on concerns to the appropriate people.

There was discussion around other options the BBC is exploring as a platform for sports; ie a sports portal, podcasts etc.

Chair's summary: There was a constructive, varied and interesting discussion, with good feedback from Charles. Most of the discussion centred on national sports, but regional sport was also raised and it was encouraging to hear that the East Midlands sports coverage was the best. The Chair thanked Charles for his input

Nature's Calendar. The general feeling of the council was that the programme was well done and enjoyable. References to the websites were good and frequent. Members went on to the Derby and Leicester websites, one stating they found it engaging. There were mixed views about the presenter, with one member complaining there was a lack of personality, another saying they watched because of the presenter. Some members found the constant reminders that they were watching *Nature's Calendar* interrupted the flow and one would have preferred more advice on constructing and positioning the nesting boxes.

Chairs summary: The consensus was that the programme was well presented and signposted people to the websites and the nest box events. Members had various comments on the presenter, but it was felt that he bridged the gap for younger people. Although not the type of programme normally watched by some members of council, members noted that the programme was well made and interesting.

4. Report from Council Chair:

a) i-Player: Matthew Postgate: The Chair explained that this was an opportunity to get answers to some of the questions asked at the January meeting. Matthew made an updated presentation then took questions from council members. He explained that i-Player was a brand that brought together the BBC's on-demand services.

Comments and questions included: makes viewing a solitary activity (one member). Matthew responded that this was a concern to the development team, but this development was a response to audience need.

Downloading took almost as long as the programme took to broadcast. This depended on a number of variables including how many people in the locality were on the same ISP, and the time the download took place.

Would the service be free as part of licence fee? Free to download, but usual ISP costs apply.

Would there be a time when people won't need to buy a licence? On-demand programmes don't need a licence.

What was the potential of advertising in the future? BBC Worldwide was looking at a commercial proposition for i-Player.

Chair's Summary:

The Chair thanked Matthew for his input, which had helped to clarify some issues. Although there were concerns that i-Player could result in solitary viewing, it was felt that this could also generate some community/shared experiences as others were given the opportunity to catch up. There were obviously issues to be ironed out, and we looked forward to future updates.

5. Report from HRLP:

Aziz headlined his report which had been circulated prior to the meeting. Members' questions included:

Could the Bedtime stories be put together and used to fund raise for *Children in Need*?

Why don't we see the clock when the regional news was on BBC *Breakfast*?

Action: Aziz

Why had the link from national to regional news gone to the South East for five to ten minutes during the evening news, about three weeks ago? People on digital didn't get this problem, but people on analogue did. Aziz replied that a technical problem here had caused this. There was a similar occurrence about two weeks ago on *Inside Out*.

Snow-related coverage was a waste of resources; Aziz responded that this has been heard and taken on board by the BBC.

Breakout Groups.

Group A Service Licences: i) Local Radio - the discussion covered who was it aimed at, who set the protocols and the demographic profile – was it right to aim to engage with people over 50? Overall the Service Licence reflected the service as it was now but the interpretation of the document gave a very general impression which may be too broad and needed to go down another layer. ii) CBeebies and BBC7 – why did these services exist, who are they aimed at? Again the licence statements were general, but do give some guidelines.

Group B: Radio Leicester/World Service event last week was referred to. One member had discussed this with Kate Squire and felt it was a lost opportunity for public engagement! The group proposed that outreach activities should give an opportunity for people to look behind the scenes, to see what goes on. Using road shows, the bus or the Halls of Justice might also encourage contact with marginalised young people. Activities should not be too

Nottingham-centred. What events were already in the BBC diary? There was a need to focus on specific and excluded groups and events should be interesting and fun. Sarah had a contact at East Midlands Government Office we might be able to engage with.

Action: Carol

6. Any Issues about Regional TV, Local Radio or Online Services:

As yet it had not been agreed who would be the link members for Local Radio. It was agreed that this item would be deferred in the light of the longer agenda.

Chair's Summary:

This would be looked at and discussed at the next RAC meeting

7. Any Other Business:

- a) ACE annual report: This was being finalised.
- b) Jeanne - Commented on *Don't Die Young* – a wonderful find, excellent programme; also Kate Squire's interview with David Attenborough on the website and the Radio Leicester Event were very good.
- c) Guy – The output of BBC drama had been outstanding recently and the makers deserved great credit – some good collaboration.
- d) Glennis – "I love the C word" documentary – would be disgusted if it goes ahead – reference the Mail on Sunday article. Would like feedback from the BBC.

Action: Carol

- e) Phillippa presented Andy and Peter with their paperweights and thanked them for their time and input into the RAC.

Peter said that he had gained insight on how the BBC worked behind the scenes, seen how things have developed over time and made a plea for rural and agricultural interest to be kept on the agenda.

Andy said he had enjoyed his time on the council and it had been interesting to listen to other people's viewpoints.

- f) Carol reminded members to claim expenses as soon as possible and within three months at the latest.
- g) Papers circulated: HRLP's overview of East Midlands Region
Audience Council England: Working with the Trust

Meeting closed at 8.40pm