



- Extra cost implications of digital switchover were raised – West Cumbria was an impoverished region and this could be significant

BBC response: Digital UK had responsibility for informing the public about switchover, rather than the BBC. However the BBC had a public service role in the region, and we were carefully considering how to get messages across on television. BBC Radio Cumbria had a full programme of public information underway.

#### Action

- CC to contact the BBC Audience technical team regarding the Freeview comment
- CC suggested that we think about digital switchover in terms of an Outreach Event at Whitehaven during the Whitehaven Maritime Festival

The minutes were passed as an accurate record.

### **3. PROGRAMME REVIEW**

#### (i) BBC School News Day

Andy Cooper introduced a film made on the day. The aim of the project was to reach a younger audience and get them interested in the BBC. Comments from the council included:

- One member watched on the internet and said she felt the piece on RAF Boulmer was uninteresting and wondered why it had been selected, although the initiative as a whole was very good.
- Children were quite stiff when dealing with national stories but relaxed when dealing with local stories.
- Members thought it was a very creative idea and would like to see it developed with primary school children
- The project opened up the world of work for young people
- Members wondered if radio might be easier to manage
- Children who were on the programme were very articulate. Members wondered if other children who were less articulate could also be involved and suggested that more BBC mentoring would be necessary.
- Schools could encourage more children to offer ideas, or suggest pieces which could contribute to the whole programme.
- A comment from the education secretary and the chair of the children's commission would have been useful on the national news.
- There could be content behind the red button for people who did not have access to the internet.
- The website was fantastic; it was a fun and informal way of helping young people to learn and become interested in the news.
- It was interesting to read about the young peoples' views
- The comic strips were very creative
- Overall the tempo and tone were appealing to young people without being condescending.

- Members liked the piece on Mike Parr's Radio Newcastle show where a pupil's dad reviewed the papers.
- More than 1000 schools were involved and this was regarded as very impressive
- It was great to get Tony Blair, David Cameron and Alastair Campbell involved.
- The report from the deaf pupils was brilliant
- Members asked why only five schools in the north east were involved.

BBC response: The project would continue next year with regional BBC having more of a steer as to which schools took part.

Chair's summary: This is the kind of campaign where the BBC could really add value to the citizenship agenda. It could develop the critical thinking of young people, whilst being fun and exciting for them, and also help to develop more practical literacy and editorial skills.

[Andy Cooper left the meeting. Matthew Barraclough entered the meeting.]

(ii) BBC Cleveland report from Matthew Barraclough

- The BBC Bus activities were now focused around user generated content. Skills were given in exchange for stories which meant that there was a value to licence fee payers.
- In August the radio station was to be renamed BBC Tees, with a new station sound comprising new jingles and a new logo.

Comments from the council included:

- Members felt that an audio tape would have been useful.
- One member preferred double-headed presentation rather than the solo presentation he'd heard on Radio Cleveland.
- Mark Turnbull's Sunday morning show, broadcast live from the Open Centre, worked well.
- The bus doesn't at present visit Wensleydale and rural Durham.
- The station had changed its style. Alex Hall presented a quirky programme where her personal life predominated but it was an absorbing programme which tackled difficult issues in a matter of fact way.
- Matthew Davies' programme was good.
- One member wanted presenters to speak more grammatically.
- The music was right for the audience but content could at times be uninteresting
- One member said Mark Turnbull was currently being underused and that the station missed his brand of journalism.
- There was a request for North Yorkshire to be mentioned at weekends; currently there were shared bulletins and it was not mentioned.
- There was good, local, in-depth and up to date coverage of the closure of Teesside airport.

- Evening programmes, especially the shared, minority programmes, were good generally and David McMillan served a niche market.
- There could be more publicity around these niche programmes

BBC response: The River Tees ran through the region and so was felt to be a suitable and unifying name. The name 'Cleveland' had lost a lot of its energy and public bodies were pulling away from using it as a title. The BBC was aware that there were risks involved but believed the plan was future-proof in that it identified with the place it served rather than the platform it broadcast on (eg radio, web, TV). The bus would in future be deployed in outlying areas because the Open Centre now served urban audiences.

#### Chair's summing up

The Open Centre was welcomed although there were mixed feelings about the name change. John Forster was judged to be good, and Mark Turnbull under-used. There was a plea for idents to include North Yorkshire.

[Matthew Barraclough left the meeting.]

#### (iii) Abolition of the slave trade programming

Comments from the council included:

- Members generally enjoyed the Simon Schama programme although some found the format and presenter irritating. This made for a somewhat disjointed programme.
- The church service was an example of what the BBC does well.
- The afternoon play with a cast led by Lenny Henry was excellent
- There was excellent material on the Cumbria website.
- The Moira Stewart programme was fascinating and revealed the issues, while debunking lots of myths.
- Related issues came up on *Question Time*
- Gloria Hunniford's walk of witness was interesting, but perhaps broadcast at the wrong time of the day
- Ms Dynamite programme was informative, but there could have been more than one white voice to explain the situation.
- The *Roots* documentary could have been re-shown on BBC1
- Radio 4 broadcast a good programme featuring school children who had decided to be called by a number rather than a name to empathise with the experience of slavery.
- One big programme to sum up the whole thing, probably on a Sunday night, would have been very useful.
- It was difficult to find out when everything was broadcast in order to plan.

Chair's summing up: This was a fascinating and educational strand; everyone learned something, with compliments expressed on the successful cross-platform programming.

The programmes were sometimes victims of their own success as there was so much and it was difficult to find out what was being broadcast, and when. A landmark programme would have pulled all of the strands together. Overall very well done, and using all of BBC services.

(iv) Comic Relief

Comments from the council included:

- As a television spectacle the programme was judged as not being worth doing, and the quality poor. However money was still being raised in huge amounts
- It was slicker than *Children in Need* and the inserts were good although the transition from film inserts back to studio did not really work.
- One member felt that the Ant and Dec reports was good and hit the right notes: sensitive and showing real emotion. Others felt that they were inappropriate.
- Catherine Tate, *Dr Who*, *Little Britain* and *Mitchell and Webb* were all good value.
- The programme appeared to be aimed at young people and could be judged to be successful as lots of schools get very involved.
- Did we now need the programme or could the fund raising be done without broadcasting? Perhaps there was a way of reinventing the format so that money was raised but the programme was different.
- One member enjoyed *Comic Relief* and thought it good quality family entertainment with a great set and impressive line up of stars.
- Fern Cotton was very polished and professional
- One member enjoyed 'beat the boss' feature and said that Duncan Bannatyne was a good sport.
- One member felt that there was a measured and delicate balance between the powerful clips from Africa and comedy sketches. The Africa clips were very moving and beautifully filmed, with powerful music.
- Members enjoyed the change of presenters which kept the audience interested. However, they felt that there was no real hand over between the presenters which caused problems for people recording on Sky Plus as the programme stopped recording every hour.
- Davina and Chris Evans were a poor partnership; they didn't gel and the re-hash of the *TFI Friday* table was weak.
- The Paul O'Grady magic tricks were lame, boring and old fashioned..

Chair's summing up: A largely tired format which we had to put up with because it generated money; we hoped that it could be reinvented. Changing presenters was effective but the presentation was largely mediocre and the switch between clips and comedy was often uneasy. There was however ingenuity in the branding which was trailed on lots of different programme and on products such as toilet rolls. The event was embedded in the school calendar and remained a good educational tool.

#### 4. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Audience Council England report had been previously forwarded to council members. A member asked why Local Radio is currently a priority.

BBC response: Breakfast shows were relatively well resourced and had benefited from a good deal of attention over recent years. As this show had been re-focussed, some mid-morning shows had experienced an identity crisis and needed more review and attention – hence the current focus on mid-morning shows on local radio.

#### 5. HRLP'S REPORT

Wendy Pilmer's report was circulated prior to the meeting. She added that Proms in the Park in Middlesbrough could be seen as a good example of partnership working between the BBC and Middlesbrough Council. BBC News and Sport on Tour, *Look North*, Radio Cumbria and the Cumbria BBC bus would have a strong presence at the Whitehaven Maritime Festival.

#### 6. AOB

- Members would hold the next RAC meeting at Whitehaven and follow this with an Outreach Event on digital switchover.
- One member deplored the appointment process for the new BBC Chair of Trustees and felt that the process should be more open.
- Ageism and racism at the BBC was raised, personified in the Moira Stewart situation.
- There was no information on what was coming up on Radio Cleveland on Breakfast television  
Action: Wendy Pilmer will investigate
- Via email from Colin Boothroyd - The BBC was reported to have made a payment of £75,000 to Lady Marcia Falkender as a result of the broadcast of the BBC production *The Lavender List*. Colin understood that the programme made no new or previously unpublished allegations and asked if the programme had been reviewed for legal implications before broadcast, and if so why was no defence offered?  
Action:CC to investigate
- Members wanted information on Local Audience Forum events.  
Action CC to circulate plans for NE&C LAF events
- There was a discussion about changing the times of the RAC meeting from lunchtime to early evening, 5.30-7.30, to better accommodate members who were in paid employment.

#### 7. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The date and time of the next meeting was circulated

**Programmes to be reviewed at June meeting in Whitehaven**

- Regional Politics Show, other regional/national issues (local elections etc), Blair resignation.
- *"White Fright" Panorama.*
- *Play it Again.*
- *Where I Live* sites

ends