



**2008/09
AUDIENCE
COUNCIL
REVIEW/**



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NATIONAL TRUSTEE'S FOREWORD



The Audience Councils advise the BBC Trust on how well the BBC is delivering its public purposes and serving licence fee payers across the United Kingdom. The four Councils – serving Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales – are supported by the Trust to provide an independent assessment of audience expectations and issues.

This report shows how active the Audience Council for Wales has been during the year. It has responded to policy consultations by the Trust, drawing on the views of audiences in meetings throughout Wales. The Council continues to monitor and report to the Trust on whether the BBC's Network news adequately reflects the reality of devolution in the UK. It has advised on the issues which cause concern to audiences in Wales and the Trust has adopted these as priorities.

The Audience Council serves licence fee payers in Wales with energy and commitment.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Lewis-Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Janet Lewis-Jones
National Trustee for Wales

REPORT ON AUDIENCE COUNCIL WALES ACTIVITY THROUGH THE YEAR

The Council met 11 times between April 2008 and March 2009 in various locations around Wales and received presentations during the year from heads of programme genres and services. The Council also had the opportunity to discuss strategy with senior BBC staff from outside Wales and discussed BBC Network TV and radio and BBC Cymru Wales output. The Council considered Welsh and English language TV programmes, the local and Network programming of the BBC Cymru Wales Factual and Music Department and the BBC's North Wales Centre, the work of the BBC Cymru Wales News and Current Affairs Department, and the BBC's Strategic Partnership with S4C. The Council also considered proposals for a

multimedia politics portal, future developments in BBC Audio & Music, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales' education and outreach work and the local and Network productions of the BBC Cymru Wales Education and Learning Department.

The Council contributed to the BBC Trust consultations held on the proposals from BBC management for the release of the nations' versions of content of BBC jam, the online learning proposition not approved by the Trust; the BBC Local Video Public Value Test, the BBC iPlayer programme pre-booking consultation, BBC Local Video Provisional Conclusions consultation and the BBC Trust Review of Services for Younger Audiences.





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Accountability events were held by the Council in Blaenau Ffestiniog in April, in Llanwnnen in July, with representatives of Wales-wide national organisations in Cardiff in September; and four events, related to the BBC Trust Review of Services for Younger Audiences, in Aberystwyth, Cardiff and two in Bangor (with different age groups) between October and December.

Some of the issues raised during these events included the lack of availability of Wales' national radio stations by means of DAB, the portrayal of Wales in Network TV and radio output, the failure of BBC Network News to reflect post-devolution UK, which prompted the Impartiality Review conducted by the BBC Trust on this matter; and the importance of local information – particularly weather, news, traffic and sport. The Council was also informed of the pivotal position of the BBC's television, radio and online resources for children and young people including the huge success of the BBC iPlayer for younger audiences – many of whom told the Council that this was now their primary means of accessing the BBC's audio-visual output. Another consistent matter raised with the Council during its outreach events was the unhappiness felt by many sections of the

audience at the Radio Cymru schedule changes implemented in autumn 2008.

Members, who are not paid, represented the Audience Council for Wales at various BBC Cymru Wales corporate and community events throughout the year:

During 2008/09, the Audience Council took significant further steps to increase the use of technology in its consultation and outreach activity and the further development of its website resulted in a significant increase in visits. The Council developed the site to include additional video content during the year under review and increased its interactivity.

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AUDIENCE COUNCIL WALES REPORT ON BBC PERFORMANCE IN WALES 2008/09

OVERVIEW

At its November 2008 and February 2009 meetings, the Audience Council for Wales received presentations from Controller BBC Cymru Wales outlining how she considered the output of BBC Cymru Wales – on radio, television and online – had contributed to fulfilling the BBC's Public Purposes. The Council also received presentations during the year from BBC Directors and senior managers from outside Wales which indicated how the BBC as a whole was performing in Wales.

With reference to the BBC Trust's Reach Quality Impact and Value for Money (RQIV) framework for assessing performance, the Council was content that during the past year

the weekly reach of all BBC Television in Wales had remained broadly level at 85%, though expressed some concern that the weekly reach of all opt-outs on BBC One and BBC Two in Wales had stalled in 2008/09 at an overall level of 31%. The Council was encouraged that the 3-minute consecutive weekly reach of all *BBC Wales Today* bulletins was 1.2 million in 2008/09 and that Radio Cymru had increased its reach during the past year. BBC Wales' English language websites also showed further strong growth in the numbers of unique users and the BBC scored strongly on quality with approval in Wales slightly above the UK average. On impact too the Council considered that the BBC was successful in Wales with 39% of



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“The Council is committed to continuing to evaluate the success or otherwise of Network News in implementing its action plan arising from the conclusions of the BBC Trust Impartiality Review.”

audiences agreeing that BBC coverage reflected 'local interests and concerns' and 56% of the opinion that *BBC Wales Today* was best for news from Wales. The Council also considered that impact was delivered by creative cross-platform scheduling decisions such as that for 'Big Bang Day' to mark the switch-on of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN. Approval of the licence fee also increased in Wales during the year under review.

Based on discussion and engagement with audiences, and the management and Trust audience data provided, the Audience Council for Wales concluded that the BBC's output had fulfilled its public service broadcasting responsibilities in both Welsh and English on all platforms and had contributed significantly to fulfilling the BBC's Purposes.

AUDIENCE COUNCIL WALES REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST 2008/09 AUDIENCE PRIORITIES

For 2008/09, the priorities set for the BBC by the Audience Council for Wales were as follows:

1. That BBC management bring forward plans for addressing the inadequate reflection of devolution in the UK, including any issues identified in the Impartiality Review by Professor Anthony King, in a comprehensive and timely way.

The Council is committed to continuing to evaluate the success or otherwise of Network News in implementing its action plan arising from the conclusions of the BBC Trust Impartiality Review. Its own assessment, conducted in January 2009, concluded that there had been some improvements in the way in which Network News differentiated between the nations of the UK and the differing governance arrangements in each nation. However, there remained room for improvement, in particular in presenting the differences in the approaches of the various nations to particular issues.

2. That BBC Network bring forward proposals to ensure that Wales is adequately reflected in its output and programming.

The Council welcomed the BBC Trust's decision to consider this matter in some depth during 2009 and has commissioned its own research to evaluate this crucial area of the BBC's activity entitled *Screening the Nation: Wales and Landmark Television*.

3. That the BBC does all within its power to ensure that there is maximum access to Wales' national radio stations – through FM, AM and DAB.

The Council remained seriously concerned about the availability through DAB of Wales'

national radio stations, BBC Radio Cymru and BBC Radio Wales, which are broadcast on the commercial DAB multiplexes. The continued lack of availability of Radio Cymru and Radio Wales on DAB in north-west Wales and the south Wales valleys means that much of the core audience of the two national radio services in Wales cannot access them by DAB. The lack of availability of a good FM signal for Radio Wales in many parts of the country made this an even more serious issue which was consistently drawn to the attention of the Council by the public. The Council's concern was reflected in the low take-up of DAB at home in Wales which at 17% was six points lower than the UK level.



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The Council would monitor digital switchover when this occurred in Wales during 2009 and committed itself to continuing to invite representatives from *Digital UK* to its outreach and accountability events.

Digital television and radio availability and switchover related matters were a shared priority with the Audience Councils for Northern Ireland, Scotland and England.

4. The fulfilment of the BBC's PSB responsibilities in the Welsh language be central to the renegotiation of the BBC-S4C Strategic Partnership

The Council was pleased at the success of the second year of the three year Strategic Partnership agreement between S4C and the BBC which covers the relationship by which the BBC provides S4C with at least ten hours a week of Welsh language programming paid for from the licence fee. After considering the performance of the BBC's programming on S4C during 2008/09 it was satisfied that the BBC fulfilled the performance requirements. It welcomed the BBC's proposals to further enhance the Welsh language news service provided by it to S4C, with the introduction

of additional news bulletins, but remained concerned at the low level of recognition by S4C's audiences that the programmes supplied were produced by the BBC.

5. The Council also noted the importance of the BBC's education provision to audiences in Wales, and looked forward eagerly to considering the proposals in this area expected in the near future from BBC management.

6. In addition, the Council had followed the TV Network Supply Review, the BBC's project to increase the hours of Network programming produced outside London. It noted the importance of this to BBC Cymru Wales and to the Welsh economy and committed itself to monitoring the way in which the outcomes of the review would be implemented.

REPORT ON BBC PERFORMANCE IN WALES AGAINST THE BBC PUBLIC PURPOSES

SUSTAINING CITIZENSHIP AND CIVIL SOCIETY

A key part of the provision of this Purpose by the BBC in Wales was through its News and Current Affairs programmes. *BBC Wales Today* had an average audience of 266,000 giving a share of 29% – slightly ahead of other 6.30pm news broadcasts across the UK. During 2008 550,000 people (20%) had tuned into *BBC Wales Today's* 6.30pm bulletin each week. The Council also commended the local government election coverage in May 2008, which had been the most comprehensive yet utilising television, radio and online.

Newyddion continued to be a cornerstone of S4C's weekday schedule and was now attracting more viewers than at any other time over the last six years, averaging 30,000 viewers with *Yr Wythnos*, *CF99*, *Pawb a'i Farn* and *Taro 9* also contributing strongly to this Purpose.

Current Affairs programmes also contributed substantially to the understanding of viewers on key issues of the day with subjects covered during 2008 including hospital cleanliness and drug resistant hospital infections, the safety record of foreign truckers in the UK, bovine

TB and the cleanliness standards of abattoirs – some of which had resulted in immediate action by the relevant authorities.

The Council also commended the BBC's Welsh language programming broadcast by S4C observing that while it provided under 20% of S4C's total output, BBC Cymru Wales nevertheless delivered over 40% of S4C's total viewing. However, a key concern expressed by the Council remained recognition by audiences of the BBC's contribution to the channel, particularly since in 2009 the BBC was scheduled to provide 650 hours of programming to S4C as part of its obligations under the terms of the BBC/S4C Strategic Partnership – significantly above its statutory obligations of 520 hours per annum.



PROMOTING EDUCATION AND LEARNING

The Council considered that this Purpose was fulfilled both through formal learning provision such as *Bobinogi*, *Campyfan* and *TGAU bitesize*, but also through learning by entertainment with programmes such as Welsh language magazine programme *Mosgito* targeted at young teenagers and broadcast on S4C. *Mastermind Plant Cymru* also contributed to this Purpose, as well as demonstrating the way in which a BBC brand could be extended positively.

The Council also considered that *Coal House at War* had fulfilled this Purpose, being educational as well as entertaining, achieving audiences of 230,000 and appealing to the key but elusive 25–44 age group as had *Not in My Nature* which had been another ambitious multiplatform programme which had appealed to the same age group as well as contributing to the promotion of education and learning. The Council also considered that *O Flaen Dy Lygaid* had become a significant documentary strand which had contributed strongly to the realisation of this Purpose during the year under review.

STIMULATING CREATIVITY AND CULTURAL EXCELLENCE

The Council considered that everything done by the BBC in Wales contributed in some way to this Purpose but one particular highlight had been the BBC's rugby coverage. *Scrum V Six Nations* on Sunday evenings had proved very successful, and had complemented the weekly Friday night *Scrum V live* programme which regularly delivered high audiences. The Council also commended the BBC's coverage of the Beijing Olympics in 2008, which audiences identified as a highlight during the Council's own outreach events.

In the sphere of comedy drama, *High Hopes* had continued to appeal, as had *Coming Home* which had followed a number of celebrities as they discovered ancestral roots in Wales and *Welsh Greats* had featured contemporary Welsh celebrities exploring the lives of key figures in their particular field of excellence. The Council commended *Pobol y Cwm* which continued to be S4C's most popular programme and considered that the BBC's provision from the National Eisteddfod of Wales on TV, radio and online had been excellent, with television

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audiences being the highest for six years. The Council also observed that this provision had been strongly appreciated by a wide age range within the audience – something which had been made evident during the Council's own outreach events during the second half of 2008.

The depiction of seven days in the life of Wales' largest hospital, the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff, in *Hospital 24/7* had proved popular and had appeared in the 10.35pm slot each night for a week during January 2009, gaining a share of 25%.

Network Television successes had also relied heavily on local excellence which included *Doctor Who*, *The ONE Show*, *Amazon*, *Torchwood* and *Young Musician of the Year*.

The Council also identified the opening of the BBC Hoddinott Hall in Cardiff in January 2009 as a highlight for the year, considering that it promised to be a significant future platform for cultural excellence in Wales. In the context of this purpose the Council also welcomed the 1.1 million increase in audiences for *Last Night of the Proms*.

REFLECTING THE UK'S NATIONS, REGIONS AND COMMUNITIES

The Council was glad to note that several Network series now offered representation of Wales to some degree on Network Television including *Torchwood*, *The One Show*, *Gavin and Stacey* and *Coast* and commended BBC Cymru Wales for providing a range of national series to Wales and to areas within Wales, complementing and supplementing the Network provision across the three main platforms.

The Council noted that the report of the BBC Trust's Impartiality Review on Reporting the Nations and Regions, authored by Professor Anthony King, had highlighted deficiencies in Network News coverage of the nations and was glad to note that since the report's publication there had been much closer cooperation between Wales and Network News teams encompassing newsgathering and contributions from specialist correspondents. However, the Council considered that there remained some way to go before this matter was resolved satisfactorily.

“Network Television successes which had also relied heavily on local excellence included *Doctor Who*, *The ONE Show*, *Amazon*, *Torchwood* and *Young Musician of the Year*.”



BRINGING THE UK TO THE WORLD AND THE WORLD TO THE UK

The Council was glad to be informed that *Doctor Who* and *Torchwood* had now been sold to about 40 countries, which would serve to raise the profile of Wales across the world.

The Council appreciated that while the US presidential election had received substantial coverage across all news outlets it commended *America 08: Dewi Llwyd ar Daith* for having provided a personal and landmark account of the views of Welsh-speaking Americans across the USA from California to Maine in the run up to November 2008's election. It congratulated BBC Cymru Wales for the critical success of this programme, while expressing some disappointment that the S4C schedulers had broadcast the programme at a time which had resulted in lower than expected viewing figures.

The Council noted that the BBC's online services continued to provide worldwide access to news from Wales with a significant number of users based overseas.

DELIVERING TO THE PUBLIC THE BENEFIT OF EMERGING COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES AND SERVICES

The Council observed that 89% of people in Wales now had digital TV – the highest level of any of the UK's four nations. The Council was also glad to note that Wales now had a category of its own, as well as a Welsh language interface on the BBC iPlayer. This ensured access to most of the BBC's cleared output initially broadcast on BBC TV, S4C, Radio Wales or Radio Cymru – the importance of which the Council had taken a vigorous stance during the year under review. The Council was glad that much of BBC Cymru Wales' Welsh language TV output was also available on S4C's *Clic* service.

However, the Council was concerned that some significant problems remained in the context of communication technologies in Wales with DAB coverage of BBC Cymru Wales radio stations remaining unavailable in much of Wales.

The Council also continued to be concerned at the level of broadband availability and take-up in Wales which was lower than the UK average and which could impact upon the core BBC principle of universal provision.

AUDIENCE PRIORITIES FOR 2009/10

During the year under review, the Audience Council for Wales (ACW) hosted seven outreach events at which it had opportunities to meet and hear the concerns and praise of the BBC's audiences in Wales for the BBC's services and provision. While each event focused on new issues, there was also a degree of consistency in the concerns expressed by members of the BBC's audiences and these have informed the Audience Priorities highlighted jointly by the Audience Councils and adopted by the BBC Trust for the coming year:

These included transmission issues – such as the availability of Wales' national radio stations on DAB and of Radio Wales on FM; Freeview's patchy coverage in Wales and welcome given to the introduction of the Freesat digital TV service for which the ACW had campaigned vigorously; the patchy coverage of broadband provision in Wales and danger that technological developments could lead to some members of the audience feeling peripheralised both geographically and technologically.

The Council also regularly heard comments about the lack of the portrayal of Wales in Network output including drama, factual, sports and indeed all *genres* represented in the BBC's output – but also in the coverage of devolved matters by Network News.

While audiences in Wales told the Council that they took great pride in the success of BBC Cymru Wales in producing highly successful Network programming, they considered that while commissioning Network output in places other than London would make some difference in the portrayal of the whole country on Network, there remained some significant way to go. The Council welcomed the 2008/09 Review of the commissioning of Network Television productions outside London, and looked forward eagerly to considering the outcomes of the Network Radio Supply Review currently underway.



Local information continued to be a priority for audiences in Wales, and the ACW was told regularly that audiences greatly appreciated the present provision but still thought that the BBC could do more to extend both the range and depth of its local and regional news provision.

The Council was also told during its outreach events that, as the key conduit between the BBC's audiences in Wales and the BBC's sovereign body the BBC Trust, it was essential that it should have a higher public profile than at present in order for it to do its work properly. Audiences considered that its role as the voice of the BBC's audiences in Wales (rather than the representatives of the BBC Trust in Wales) should be clarified further so as to ensure that the advice it provided to the BBC Trust reflected to the greatest extent possible the views of audiences in Wales. To this end a key priority for all the Audience Councils in the UK's constituent nations was to raise their profiles so as to ensure that they fulfilled this key role more effectively.

I. DIGITAL AND OTHER ACCESS ISSUES

The BBC Trust should ask the Executive to develop plans to work towards greater access for all BBC content on digital platforms. In particular Audience Councils attach importance to DAB radio across the UK; in Scotland for BBC ALBA on DTT; in Northern Ireland, DAB carriage for BBC Radio Foyle; and carriage for BBC Radio Cymru and BBC Radio Wales on DAB and FM across the whole of Wales.

“The Trust should undertake work to gather audience views on acceptable editorial standards and improve audience understanding of the BBC's complaints procedures.”

2. NETWORK COMMISSIONING OUTSIDE LONDON

That the Trust should monitor the delivery, within the timescale which it set, of the proposals announced by BBC management arising from the TV Network Supply Review. That in monitoring the roll out of the plans it ensures that the BBC maintains and develops sustainable production centres across the UK.

Within this it was of particular priority for Audience Council England that whilst welcoming the creation of a new hub in Salford, particular attention should be paid to the sustainability of Bristol and Birmingham. Audience Councils welcome the commitment to undertake a Network Supply Review for Audio & Music in 2009 and request that the Trust keep Councils informed of the progress of this review.

3. PORTRAYAL

That the Trust should investigate ways in which the BBC might better portray the full diversity of the UK's nations and communities in the regions of England, across its Network services, significantly enhancing the cultural representation of the English regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

4. IMPARTIALITY REVIEW OF THE COVERAGE OF DEVOLVED MATTERS

That the Trust should carefully monitor the implementation of the BBC management's actions regarding the Impartiality Review of Network News and Current Affairs coverage of devolved matters.

“The Audience Council for Wales hosted seven outreach events at which it had opportunities to meet and hear the concerns and praise of the BBC's audiences in Wales.”



5. AUDIENCE COUNCILS OPERATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

That the Trust should strengthen its relationship with the Audience Councils through the implementation of the outcomes of the Maximising Audience Council Effectiveness project, and seek to achieve more visible participation of the Audience Councils in its work to ensure the widest audience participation in the processes leading to its decisions. This should include a review of a communication strategy for the Trust and Audience Councils.

6. EDITORIAL STANDARDS AND COMPLAINTS HANDLING

That the Trust should undertake work to gather audience views on acceptable editorial standards and improve audience understanding of the BBC's complaints procedures.

7. NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL NEWS SERVICES

That the Trust should keep in mind that Audience Councils continue to attach importance to ensuring the BBC delivers high quality services to its audiences at a national, regional and local level, including ensuring sufficient investment in the infrastructure of local and regional radio services and seeking ways to improve the range and depth of regional and local news coverage.

CONTACTS

If you wish to find out more about the BBC's year – including full financial statements and each service's performance against its Statement of Programme Policy – then please visit

www.bbc.co.uk/annualreport

If you want to know more about how the BBC is run then please **visit www.bbc.co.uk/info**

BBC Information is our audience's virtual front door to the BBC. If you have a question, comment, complaint or suggestion about BBC programmes and services, then please write to us here:

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Last year we had over 1.6 million contacts from the general public.

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* 0370 numbers are called 'UK wide' and cost no more than calls to 01 or 02 geographic numbers.

BBC Audience Council, Wales

From left to right:

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Nicola Branson

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Fifth row:
Teresa Rees,
Dafydd Whittall

“AUDIENCES TELL THE COUNCIL THAT THEY WANT TO SEE MORE OF WALES ON NETWORK TV.”



“COVERAGE OF RADIO CYMRU AND RADIO WALES ON DAB IS JUST NOT GOOD ENOUGH.”



“THE COUNCIL CAMPAIGNED HARD FOR THE REVIEW OF NETWORK NEWS AND AGREED WHOLEHEARTEDLY WITH ANTHONY KING’S CONCLUSIONS.”

“THE COUNCIL MET LOTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO INFORM ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE TRUST’S REVIEW OF THE BBC’S SERVICES FOR THEM.”

