

REGIONAL AUDIENCE COUNCIL BBC WEST

Minutes from meeting held on Monday 9 May 2011
Broadcasting House, Bristol

IN ATTENDANCE:

Stuart Paterson	Chair
Mel Poolton	Local Radio Link for BBC Gloucestershire
Roy Jones	Local Radio Link for BBC Wiltshire
Ray Storey	
Gina Sangura	
Michael Natarajan	

New members

Helen Richmond
Bev Wildeboer
David Holmes
Justine Roberts
Sean Jarrett
Jacqueline Hughes
Raines (Lorraine) Walker

Mark Hurrell (part of the meeting)	Managing Editor, BBC Gloucestershire
Frances Bryant	Public Accountability Manager

APOLOGIES had been received from Ben Batley, Angie Carmichael and Austin Myrie.

1. Welcome and introductions

Stuart Paterson welcomed everyone, particularly the seven new members, to the first meeting of the Business Year 2011 – 2012. Mark Hurrell, Managing Editor BBC Gloucestershire was introduced, Mark was deputising for Lucio Mesquita, Head of Region who had sent his apologies.

2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes were agreed as being a true record.

Matters arising: members discussed the move of Bristol productions to Cardiff (*Casualty*, *Holby City*) and the long-term impact on the Bristol production base. Members asked for a list of network programmes that were currently produced in Bristol. ACTION

3. Programme Review & Service Review

3.1 Royal Wedding – BBC Coverage

Pre-Wedding coverage – one or two members had watched some of the documentaries, which they had found interesting, but admitted they had watched because they were coming

to the meeting, rather than through choice. It was generally felt that there was too much pre-wedding coverage and it was difficult to avoid references to the 29th. There was praise for *Have I Got News for You*.

On the day – the majority appreciated the BBC coverage – there was a gender divide with some women expressing a greater interest in the day than the men. There was criticism that the commentators had been very formal, perhaps a little too deferential and had lacked information about the dress and fashions; they had stated the obvious rather than providing interesting facts and figures. There had also been a certain amount of filling which gave a lacklustre feel to some of the commentary. One member would like to have seen more coverage of street parties, and another commented there had been little output for children.

Overall, the members and the majority of their networks felt that the BBC set the standard and one member felt the BBC had become more a part of the event than other channels – with good camera positions, good production and presentation.

However, members felt that many significant events, around the world, had been pushed onto the back burner; had it not been for events in Pakistan post-wedding coverage might have continued for longer.

3.2 Local Radio – Service Licence

(Sport, Faith, minority/specialist programming and social media)

Sport: Those members who were interested in sport were complimentary about the coverage on their local station, but it was generally agreed that while the mix was ‘about right’ and the stations provided good commentary, a greater variety of sports would be welcomed. There were a number of top sporting people living within the region who were rarely mentioned, because they were involved in minority sports eg: bowls, snow-boarding – listeners take pride in ‘home-grown’ success.

Faith: Some members had tuned in to the faith programmes and had enjoyed what they had heard – *Soul and Inspiration* (BBC Wiltshire), and Trevor Fry’s Sunday programme on BBC Somerset and Radio Bristol. Members felt it was important to reflect the different faiths within the local radio areas, coverage appeared to be mainly Christian and this was felt to be a missed opportunity. It was generally agreed that the website was not particularly informative about the faith programmes. No-one had been aware of ‘faith-issues’ within the general output during the week.

Minority/specialist programmes: It was noted that most minority/specialist programmes were put out at the weekend or very early morning – although it was agreed that with ‘listen-again’ people set their own schedules. It was important however, to provide as much information as possible on the website. Radios Bristol, Somerset and Gloucestershire shared a programme for the Asian community, and Gloucestershire and Bristol shared an programme for the African community, but member’s were not familiar with the output for minority groups in the region.

Social Media: There was praise for the improved navigation and access to the Local Radio websites, but as previously said – more programme content information was needed. A few members thought Twitter worked well with radio, for news etc., but some felt that Facebook was ‘too removed’.

Not everyone listened to local radio but had been pleasantly surprised by what they heard when they tuned in for this review.

3.3 Local Radio Link Reports

BBC Radio Gloucestershire: Mel Poolton did not add to her report. However, she raised the issue of a need for greater links with *Midlands Today*, Gloucestershire was divided between two regional TV services, *Points West* and *Midlands Today* rarely covered the county.

BBC Radio Wiltshire: Roy Jones praised the station’s reporting of the death of Sandy Martin, a former presenter on the station. The coverage had been both professional and sensitive at what must have been a sad time for the staff.

A number of the new members noted that among their networks, many linked to community-orientated groups, there were few who tuned into Local Radio; it was felt that the BBC needed to make people more aware of the valuable service it provided.

4. Reports

4.1 Head of Region’s Report

Mark Hurrell referred to Lucio Mesquita’s report.

He explained the diary process for recording and collecting radio listening figures – this research was carried out on behalf of the BBC and commercial stations. Figures are produced every quarter, but the important comparisons are made year on year.

(Share is always given as a percentage and is the station's share of all the broadcast hours in its area. Weekly reach is the number in thousands or as a percentage of the area adult population who listen to a station for at least five minutes in the course of an average week.)

4.2 English Regions Draft Objectives

Stuart explained that these were the objectives set for the coming year.

Concern was expressed that there would be more shared commissions. It was hoped that *Inside Out* would remain relevant to the region; it had a strong audience following.

Mark Hurrell explained the reduction in online staff, with a greater focus on news.

4.3 Chair’s Report

Stuart gave brief headlines from the April Audience Council England (ACE) meeting.

Helen Boaden, Director BBC News had been a dinner guest – she had reassured the members that no department was exempt from the proposals being considered under Delivering Quality First (DQF).

There was also a discussion about the 'older aged' audience and the need for the BBC not to ignore this group - this would remain on the ACE/RAC agenda.

Stuart explained that he had led a debate on DAB; the debate included the views from the February RAC meetings plus feedback from a meeting Stuart had had with a member of the Trust Unit. A significant amount of money had already been spent, with concern about the cost of completing this service which was not only being overtaken by other technology but was not compatible with European or American systems. It also appeared that no consideration had been given to the environmental impact of replacing existing analogue radios.

5. Trust Business

5.1 BBC Trust Workplan 2011 - 2012

This workplan sets out the main focus of the Trust's work and includes the audience priorities identified by the Audience Councils – Ref. page 7. The most important element this year will be the delivery of the new BBC strategy, following DQF, within the licence fee settlement.

BBC 5 Live Service Review – 23 audience councils members have volunteered to take part in this review. The Trust consultation was launched in April to be completed in early July (slightly longer than usual because of the number of Bank Holidays).

BBC Asian Network – Following an announcement by the BBC Executive in mid-March, the Asian Network would continue but with half its budget.

BBC News and Parliament Channels Review – A proposal was to set up a virtual group across the four national councils (two/three per council). The review was expected to be launched towards the end of this month.

6. Outreach

6.1 Local Radio Service Licence Review

The proposal was to hold two events – one in Bristol on June 20th (date already in members diary), with a further event to be held in either Gloucestershire or Wiltshire – date to be agreed.

7. Burning Issues

No matters were raised

8. Any other Business

Snooker/advertising – one member felt there had been unnecessary shots of sponsors' logos during the snooker coverage. The shots had not been incidental; they had been very specific and could have been avoided!

Religious broadcasting – members had been invited to consider an article written in The Reader. The introduction to the article states that the BBC has marginalised religion and broadcasts very few services of worship.

Members discussed their listening and viewing of religious programming some felt there was still a need for programmes such as *Songs of Praise*, it was recognised that these served a purpose particular for those unable to get out, or unable to attend church services. Others queried if there was a need for a wider understanding of ‘ethical’ rather than religious issues. In a multi-cultural society should dilemmas and ethical matters receive wider coverage, than church services?

Coverage of events such as the Greenbelt Festival (a Christian youth festival) was thought to be a way of appealing to a wider audience – *‘religion was not something that appealed to the over 50s only’*.

Members were interested in knowing which programmes came from the BBC’s Religious department. ACTION

9. Date of next meeting

June 2011 – Outreach dates to be confirmed
Monday 5 September, 2011 (Business meeting)

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.]