

Minutes of the Cross-party Group

1 October 2013

Agenda

1. Introduction by the Chair
2. Apologies
3. Discussion of the new rules for cross-party groups at the Assembly
4. Discussion of the next meeting of the Cross-Party Group and ideas for future discussion topics
5. Presentation by Ian Jones, Chief Executive of S4C
6. Presentation by Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director of BBC Cymru
7. Questions from the floor
8. Any other business

Apologies: Dr Huw Thomas, Gill Griffiths, Leighton Andrews AM, Bethan Jenkins AM, Angela Burns AM, Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM, Emily Cole, Hywel Jones, Janet Finch-Saunders AM, Dafydd Idris Edwards

Present: Keith Davies AM, Penri Williams (Celebrating our Language), Alun Ffred Jones AM, Simon Thomas AM, Rhun ap Iorwerth AM, Suzy Davies AM, Rhodri Talfan Davies, Delyth Issac, Ian Jones, Catrin Hughes Roberts, Colin Nosworthy, Ceri Owen, Lowri Hughes, Calum Higgins, Catrin Dafydd, David Wyn Williams (The Welsh Language Society), Elin Maher (Parents for Welsh-Medium Education), Catrin Davies (Plaid Cymru Support Officer), Meinir Jones (Welsh Language Commissioner), Gwyn Williams (Welsh Language Commissioner), Hywel Glyn Lewis (University of Wales Trinity Saint David), Elin Wyn, Osian Rhys, Ian Jones

1. The Group's priorities

The group's future discussion topics were discussed. The following subjects were suggested: second-language education, the planning Bill, Flying Start in Welsh, Welsh for adults, ethnic minorities and the Welsh language.

Where there had been developments in the area of the five topics decided upon at the group's inception, these were also discussed. The five original topics were: The Welsh Language Commissioner and the language Measure, the future of Welsh-speaking communities, education, the media and the Government's language strategy (to be discussed at the next meeting).

It was decided that the Chair would consider these matters and come to a decision after the meeting, and the group would decide on a new list of topics during the next meeting.

A report was tabled on the new rules governing cross-party groups.

2. Broadcasting

Ian Jones, Chief Executive of S4C

A presentation was given by Ian Jones, Chief Executive of S4C. A number of recent developments were outlined to the Channel, including the possibility of relocating outside of Cardiff and the digital element. The speaker noted that there has been a significant shift towards online use of the „Clic“ service instead of traditional television. He said that a further agreement with the BBC meant that S4C's output would be available on 650 different platforms across the British nations and beyond through iPlayer. He referred to research commissioned jointly by BBC Wales and S4C to people's use of the Welsh Language.

It was noted that the BBC Charter has been secured until 2017, which means that 90% of S4C's funding is known until then, and that the corporation had received the same budget for an additional year from the UK Government, but funding from that source has not been confirmed 2016-17. The speaker emphasised the importance of partnerships with other institutions in Wales such as that enjoyed with the Urdd. „Hinterland“ was noted as an example of partnership and a „good“ relationship with the BBC, which ensures „operational“ independence. He said that there is a question as to how S4C will be funded after 2017, and enquiring whether a funding guarantee could be secured within the BBC Charter.

He said that research shows that S4C is worth £2.2 billion to the Welsh economy and that there is a return of £2 for every £1 that is spent by the channel. He also said that the number of bodies that advertise on the channel has increased significantly over the past few years.

The speaker talked about research undertaken regarding moving the headquarters, to ensure that benefits are spread throughout the country, as well as the possibility of collocation with the BBC in Cardiff. He referred to the importance of digital content and the success of a number of recent apps.

It was asked why S4C uses the English language to such an extent on social media. The response was that research shows that there is a lack of confidence among Welsh speakers and that it is, therefore, important to find middle ground to facilitate and attract the audience.

Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director of BBC Cymru

A presentation was given by Rhodri Talfan Davies (RhTD). It was acknowledged that the current financial situation is difficult and that it raises questions about maintaining quality. He said that the linguistic situation is also challenging. The speaker also mentioned collaboration with S4C, and that both organisations are looking at joint investment.

In reference to Radio Cymru, the speaker noted that they had received over 1,000 responses to the “national conversation”, and that Betsan Powys is currently considering them and formulating a response that combines listener feedback and welcoming a new audience. In terms of digital developments, he said that on average 20,000 users a week visited BBC Cymru’s Welsh Language websites last year and this rose to 35,000 this year, the aim is to raise this to 50,000 per week by the end of 2014. He said that the corporation is creating 6 new jobs as part of the “Cymru Fyw” platform.

In response to questions, RhTD said that he would not support the establishment of a second station by the BBC, but that he would consider supporting anyone else wishing to do so. He said that 75% of the audience already listens to the BBC’s stations.

Questions

Concerns were raised regarding the availability of DAB radio and S4C’s financial situation.

Rhun ap Iorwerth argued that the BBC and S4C should play a much more prominent role as ambassadors for the Welsh language. Ian Jones and RhTD

said that their main function should be producing programmes. RhTD said that the news needs to be unbiased and that there is no consensus on linguistic matters. Rhun ap Iorwerth responded that there is a consensus that the Welsh language should survive.

Suzy Davies asked how broadcasters are going to increase awareness of the Welsh language among non-Welsh-speakers and beyond Wales. Ian Jones agreed that the channel needs to be inclusive.