

Minutes wpradio Board meeting 20th March 2008 12.15 noon in Crush Bar, 4 Millbank.

1. Said they were attending: Jackie Ashley Chair, Deborah Mcgurran BBC East, Boni Sones Executive Producer, Vandna Gohil Voice4Change England, Boo Armstrong, GetWell UK, Jake Rigg, STEP, Barbara Keeley MP, office of Jo Swinson MP, office of Eleanor Laing MP, office of M Moran MP.

Late apologies: Deborah, Vandna, Jake, as did Margaret's office and Jo Swinson's.

Others: Professor Joni Lovenduski, apologised for not attending.

In attendance: Jackie, Barbara, Boni, Boo.

2. Margaret's letter asking MPs to donate to wpradio – is this a good road to go down?

Boni thanked Margaret and Jo for sending the letter, which she didn't know about and asked if wpradio should be fund raising in this way.

Barbara asked how much content cost to put on the site and Boni quoted the Cambridge University broadcast units costs of £370 for an internal market one to one interview, and £750 for external market one.

Boni said she was not charging for her time against fixed costs total but that of the web company Magstar and Sound Engineer Pete Cook of ScreenSpace. Thus a typical 20 minute one to one interview cost £80 for web, and sound engineer costs, but if she employed a journalist to do it that would be another £80 taking the total to £160, including the journalists travel expenses. However, those were the bare minimum for the industry and not a realistic commercial figure.

Barbara, and Jackie, thought asking for individual donations from MPs was not a good idea and Barbara suggested asking for the party groups to take on fund raising in some way, for instance, in her role as Chair of the Labour PLP as an alternative.

It was thought individual contributions from MPs might look too much like MPs were paying to be interviewed.

It was agreed that group contributions from MPs would be welcome but not individual donations and that if MPs did want to contribute they would be re-directed to their group leader on the Board and in their parties.

Barbara suggested a sponsorship event might be held.

It was agreed Barbara as Chair of the Labour Women's PLP, should join the Board of wpradio.

Boni pointed out that the content of wpradio was mediated by journalists and journalisticly run to high production values in terms of content and balance between parties. The content had wrongly been described as self-mediated and this had been corrected.

It was agreed that the names and pictures of the journalists working on wpradio should be displayed more prominently on the site. Boni explained that the team of

journalists working on wpradio reports reflected a broad spectrum of journalism from serious political, to magazine style and said how welcome Anne Garvey's reports were, although lighter in style.

3. Who to accept money from and when?

Boo, Jackie and Barbara thought that banner advertising on the site was a bad idea and should not be encouraged. Boo said sponsors should be told this and that if organisations did want to sponsor the project in some way, like at an event, they should be acknowledged but that banner adds should not be allowed as it would destroy the clean look of the site. This was agreed by all.

Boo asked if Boni's time should be taken into account and paid for, and Boni said she was happy to work as she was at the moment but for her time to be taken into account in the long term or the event of a take-over.

4. ERS sponsorship of journalism. £5,600 to date all on journalism, of which approximately £2,500 has been given to fixed costs.

Boni thanked the Electoral Reform Society for sponsoring two pieces of journalism to date and said when sponsorship for journalism was given she employed other journalists to do the reports. The ERS international report on the site had gone down well by Linda Fairbrother. Another ERS sponsored report in the form of a round table debate Chaired by Jackie Ashley with three MPs across party and an academic was about to be put on the site. The ERS has also sponsored two more head to head interviews in the coming months. The surplus money had gone towards fixed costs.

Barbara agreed that ERS was a good source of sponsorship as it worked across party. Others agreed.

Boni said all sponsorship money was going through her company, ERS, in the name of wpradio and her accountant Mavis Driver of Histon in Cambridgeshire was keeping proper receipts, records and separate accounts as was Boni herself. No other sponsorship apart from the ERS, had been received. Boni said she tried to keep administration to a minimum until the project had proper financial resources and backing.

Boni said she knew how difficult it was to get sponsorship for this type of project as she had tried for five years with the book before as well. However continuing on this basis was feasible as the site had been designed to be self sufficient. Content need not be updated, keeping costs to a minimum, or if more money was available it could be updated more regularly. A business plan had been drawn up.

5. Should we accept sponsorship for ads on site, ie public affairs companies, Scottish Widows etc?

Barbara said wpradio had to be as careful as MPs in who to accept money from. This was agreed by all Boo, Jackie and Boni. Jackie thought we could continue much as we are for a few more months to see how things went.

Boni suggested asking MPs to write letters to potential sponsors, such as Scottish Widows.

Barbara said that she had learnt from her work with Charities that if you asked for sponsorship you should not undersell yourself and the value of your audience. It was good to place a higher value on your product.

Barbara thought it would be alright for an organisation like Scottish Widows to sponsor a fund raising event but not necessarily to sponsor the site itself. Jackie agreed and so did Boo.

Boo asked if we could sell the programmes we made, and Boni and Jackie said that it was unlikely that would be possible as all news outlets have their own reporters and styles.

The meeting also discussed linking to the site of other MPs. Boni said she had put many requests to MPs to do this, but getting MPs and others to follow through took a great deal of time and effort as did securing the interviews themselves with MPs as cancellations were often the norm and re-scheduling. Barbara suggested talking to the web designers for the individual parties and asking if they would automatically link to us in some way. Boni said she would do that.

Barbara and Boo talked of including the Lords in the interviews. Boni said Baroness Uddin was on our Board but that she did not want to extend the project further until there was funding for it but that women in the Lords would be interviewed in time.

6. What about take-over by Hansard, House Mag, ERS, Parliamentary Education services, etc? What road to go down?

Jackie thought it would change the nature of the project if we got taken over by Parliament itself and that it would suffer journalistically. Others agreed. Boo wondered if we could team up with a like-minded magazine but Barbara pointed out that Magazines can be very political even if at first they did not appear to be so.

7. Do we need editorial Board, to decide who to interview and when?

Boni said she did most of the interviews at present because there were then no costs involved. She said she paid all journalists for their work and the work of all others on the site to ensure production values and journalistic standards and rules were kept. The interns too had been paid their travel expenses as is the rule with interns. Nobody had worked on the project unpaid for, apart from Boni.

Boni said as she commissioned all the work and paid for it, she owned the copyright to the site and the reports, making it a very tidy project to date and keeping the product "clean".

It was agreed to keep the editorial commissioning process informal but to email one-another if we had ideas and for Boni to ask all what they thought we should report on, once a month by email.

8. Finances, Boni spent to date on fixed costs website and production values for pieces ie sound engineer, web company £7,158. In April another £1,500 needs to be spent (to Magstar, the web company), to go over to self managed content to enable us to manage the site content ourselves. The ERS will soon have contributed approx £2,500 to those fixed costs. Thus the sum total for fixed costs approx stands at £4,658 with another £1,500 to spend.

Approximate accountant to approve:	Incoming Costs	Outgoing Costs
Fixed production costs to date		£7,158.50
Still to pay: self managed content to web company Magstar		£1,500.00
Approx: Electoral Reform Society sponsorship contribution to fixed costs	£2,500	
Total		£4,658.50

Outgoing costs as yet unrecovered by Boni £4,658.50

Boni thanked the ERS for this contribution from its sponsored journalism budget and said some of this money would be put towards fixed costs as agreed by ERS.

Barbara raised the issue of who to accept money from and said wpradio had to be careful not to get taken over by a philanthropist with party affiliations. This was agreed and Boni said any acceptance of money or sponsorship and the terms of that acceptance would be put to the Board. She said her time could then be taken into account in some way as and when and a formula devised for all to be considered if that eventuality arose.

Boni also said she was happy for wpradio to build up an audience slowly but surely and internationally too. She said the site was now reaching a small but significant audience and that she had had a request from the NASUWT to be a media partner in a forthcoming event. Boni thought such profile in schools could help the audience figures over time. This was noted.

Boni wondered if in the long term an organisation such as Dods might want to absorb wpradio, and said that the terms and conditions of any such offer would be put to Board members.

Boni said that wpradio had had a high profile because of the award nominations and that stabilising the project and progressing at a slightly slower pace for the next few months was a good idea. Jackie agreed.

Boni thanked Boo for nominating wpradio for the Channel 4 awards and Jake Rigg, another Board member, for the political journalist of the year award. Both had been genuine nominations that she had not known about.

9. Good luck to interns with new jobs and thanks as they leave us; Lucy Fairbrother, Sophie Kinradl, who are now working for Margaret Moran, and Sophie for Margaret's Equalities Network. Appointment of new intern from journalism college in future.

Boni thanked the interns Sophie and Lucy who had now left wpradio and are working for Margaret Moran MP in her office. She said she had made it clear that wpradio could not be associated with one organisation or MP. Sophie had asked if she could say she was working for wpradio and Margaret's Equalities Network, but Boni said she had said "no", because wpradio had to be impartial. This was agreed by all.

Boni asked if we should recruit our next intern from journalism college and then she would have support doing the interviews. This was agreed.

Boni thanked Margaret Moran, Jo Swinson and Eleanor Laing for their support for the project, particularly Margaret. She also wanted it to be noted that Dan Beagle in Margaret Moran's office had done work to progress the project in his own time and thanked him for this. She also asked it to be noted that our original founder MPs were Sandra Gidley LD, Caroline Spelman Cons, and Margaret Moran Lab. David Howarth, MP had also been encouraging in the early stages.

Boni also thanked Paul Foulsham of Magstar the web designers and Pete Cook of ScreenSpace, the sound engineer for their commitment to the project.

The others noted this.

It was agreed Boni would call another Board Meeting in six months time, unless others thought there was a need for one sooner.

End.