

Public Service Broadcasting Review Team
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Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review - Phase 2: preparing for the digital future

- 1.1 The Welsh Language Board welcomes the opportunity to respond to this important consultation. In summary, the Board appreciates the clear consideration given within the consultation document to the need for Welsh language public service broadcasting. We trust such consideration of the language within planning of the future of public broadcasting will ensure the continuation and development of the wide range of high quality Welsh language programming currently available. Broadcasting plays an essential role in increasing opportunities to use and learn Welsh and in enhancing the status of the language.

The Welsh Language Board

- 1.2 The Welsh Language Board (the Board) is a statutory body established under the Welsh Language Act 1993 to promote and facilitate use of the Welsh language. The Act established the principle that, in the conduct of public business in Wales, the Welsh and English languages should be treated equally. The Board has statutory responsibilities and powers to ensure that public bodies prepare Welsh Language Schemes which detail how the above principle will be realised in practice. Welsh Language Schemes have been agreed with the UK Government's Department for Media, Culture and Sport, S4C, OFCOM, the BBC and the Welsh Assembly Government. All these organisations are involved in maintaining and developing the provision of public service broadcasting in Wales.

The Policy Context

- 1.3 The Welsh Assembly Government's Action Plan for the Welsh Language, *laith Pawb*, was published in 2003 and aims to creating a truly bilingual Wales. This document assumes a central role for broadcasting within planning for the future of the Welsh language. The First Minister of Wales' foreword to this document identifies the launch of S4C as a critical step forward within development of the Welsh language, along with the passing of language legislation and establishment of the Board. More recently the Welsh Assembly Government stated that broadcasting in the Welsh language had

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generated a range of public benefits and that it had significantly contributed to making Wales a bilingual society¹. The Board believes public broadcasting can continue to make a substantial contribution to the future of the Welsh language. We state below how we would like to see Welsh language requirements considered within the planning of the future of public service broadcasting in Wales.

Maintaining the Current Provision

1.4 *Iaith Pawb* states that

“...Broadcasting plays an important role in reinforcing many aspects of the Government's wider language policy and underlines the status of the language. The television service provided by S4C together with BBC Radio Cymru make it possible for the language to be part of everyday life. Television in particular can be an important source of support for those learning the language².”

- 1.5 Providing more opportunities for Welsh speakers to use the language in every aspect of their lives is a fundamental aim of language policy in Wales. The number of hours of Welsh language programming broadcast annually increased by 190 hours between 2003 and 2007³. The variety of programming offered is also important. As noted in the consultation document, the range of Welsh language programmes has been extended over the last few years including launch of the vital, new children's service, Cyw. Targeting this young audience is vital for the future of the Welsh language and is also a very important factor strategically within purposeful language planning. When planning the future of public service broadcasting in Wales, we trust appropriate consideration will be given to the aims of current language policy by increasing the opportunities available for people of all ages to watch and listen to Welsh programmes.
- 1.6 The provision offered by broadcasters such as S4C and the BBC is without doubt a key resource for Welsh learners. The period 1997 to 2007 saw a substantial increase in the number of adults choosing to learn Welsh⁴. At the same time, the provision of programmes and resources available to learners, especially by S4C and the BBC, has also increased. In accordance with the aims of *Iaith Pawb*, the Board considers the support available to learners within public broadcasting as essential to the future prosperity of the Welsh language. We trust therefore that the high level of support for Welsh learners currently available within public broadcasting will continue.

¹ Section 5.83 of OFCOM's consultation document 'Second Public Service Broadcasting Review - Phase 2: preparing for the digital future'

² Section 4.47 – *Iaith Pawb* (2003)

³ Page 9 – The Vitality of Welsh : a statistical balance sheet (Welsh Language Board 2008)

⁴ Page 7 – The Vitality of Welsh : a statistical balance sheet (Welsh Language Board 2008)

- 1.7 One aspect of language status is its visibility. Seeing and hearing Welsh within public service broadcasting is a means of enhancing the status of Welsh amongst Welsh speakers and Non-Welsh speakers alike. Plans for the future of public service broadcasting should ensure that changes aim to enhance the status of the Welsh language as a modern, highly respected language which is available to everyone. As stated in the consultation document, developing the provision of Welsh language programmes available has led to the establishment of a vibrant production industry in Wales and this is also extremely important for the future of the language i.e. ensuring a highly respected industry which uses Welsh professionally on a daily basis.

Developing the Provision

- 1.8 The consultation document proposes 3 possible models for the future of public service broadcasting. There are clear advantages and disadvantages for all models which vary from one devolved nation in the UK to another. The Board therefore agrees with the suggestion in Section 5.94 of the document that the provision in each devolved nation should be developed based on their specific circumstances, including their linguistic circumstances. The Board recommends that the following factors should be considered within the planning of the future of public service broadcasting in Wales:
- As noted above in this paper, it is considered that the current provision of Welsh language public broadcasting succeeds from a linguistic perspective i.e. it contributes significantly to growth of the Welsh language. As use of Welsh increases, the provision of Welsh language public service broadcasting should be enhanced and developed also.
 - Whichever model(s) of public service broadcasting are adopted within the UK, the resources made available should be sufficient to enable success. Sufficient resourcing to enable the production of high quality Welsh language provision will be critical in order to attract viewers in an increasingly competitive industry.
 - Reference is made within the consultation document to use of new technology within public service broadcasting. The landscape of Wales varies significantly from one geographical area to another as does the availability of new technology, such as broadband. The consultation document states that 'indigenous language broadcasting will benefit from the transition to digital⁵'. Regarding the Welsh language, this will be true if technology is available to enable effective broadcasting to all parts of Wales.

⁵ Page 82 of OFCOM's consultation document 'Second Public Service Broadcasting Review - Phase 2: preparing for the digital future'

Conclusion

The Board appreciates the obvious consideration given to the Welsh language within this consultation document. It states that 'an appropriate level of output in indigenous languages', which includes Welsh, should be ensured. We completely agree and trust that comments provided within this paper help in deciding an 'appropriate' level of Welsh language broadcasting, and in planning how to provide it.

Yours sincerely



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