

S4C

Parc T Glas

Llanishen

Cardiff

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Mr Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM

Chair

Culture and Welsh Language Committee

NAfW

Cardiff Bay

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Dear Rhodri

During our evidence presentation to the Culture Committee as a result of the Welsh language Review, I was asked to convey a request to the S4C Authority to consider the practicality of relocating the S4C headquarters.

The Authority decided that it was appropriate for it to consider the matter and this was done in its last meeting.

Following the discussion, the Authority decided that it was not practical to relocate the S4C headquarters as such, in light of S4C's statutory responsibilities, under the present circumstances. However, the officials were asked, over a period of time, to consider the practicality of devolving some aspects of the administration work where it would contribute to maintaining and strengthening the quality of the service and the Channel's relationship with all its viewers, and where it would be consistent with the duty of ensuring the best use of the finance available.

I was asked when conveying the Authority's conclusion to also give the Committee some information that would place the Authority's decision in its wider context.

When S4C was established in 1982 two far-reaching decisions were made. For practical reasons, mainly with regard to ensuring effective daily technical links between the S4C and BBC broadcasting centres in Cardiff on the one hand and Channel 4 on the other, it was decided that the S4C headquarters should be located at Cardiff. Secondly, it was decided that S4C itself would not produce programmes but would commission them from external producers that include HTV and independent producers. S4C was aware that this would prepare the way for establishing production companies and centres in various parts of Wales and it supported these efforts to the extent that they are consistent with the broadcasting service's requirements.

According to the WERU survey (2000), there were almost 2000 jobs in Wales stemming from the activities of S4C with 41% of these in Objective 1 areas. Of these 2000 jobs, approximately 10% are directly employed by S4C itself, i.e. 211 people. This suggests that there is already 4 times the amount of people working in the S4C headquarters working in the North, the West or the Valleys following the Channel's commissioning.

Over the years, substantial money was invested in broadcasting resources and equipment in the centre at Cardiff. Relocation would mean spending a very substantial amount in re-investing and replacing equipment as well as implications regarding redundancy or the relocation of staff. Some permanent technical costs, together with some administration costs would be substantially higher in a location other than Cardiff. S4C considers it their main duty to ensure that the finance available to them is sufficient to provide the complete and competitive service that Welsh speakers have the right to expect in this multi-channel age. The S4C Authority does not see any justification in weakening the programme service by diverting money to meet the substantial costs arising from the relocation of the headquarters.

However, S4C is aware of the need to keep in close contact with viewers from every part of Wales and has taken many specific steps in this direction. There is an office at Caernarfon that employs 6 people, including one member of the team that commissions programmes. On more than one occasion S4C has responded positively to the requests of staff members to work

permanently from the Caernarfon office where that is practical. Two programme commissioners have worked from home in West Wales for many years and recently there has been an announcement that the Commissioner of Factual Programmes is also going to work from the West.

Following the Authority's decision, S4C will carefully consider what other opportunities exist to relocate individual posts, or specific elements of the Channel's activities, in locations other than Cardiff, by carefully considering the financial and executive implications.

Yours sincerely

Huw Jones

Chief Executive