

Agenda – Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 3, Senedd

Meeting date: 4 October 2023

Meeting time: 09.30 – 12.15

For further information contact:

Lleu Williams, Committee Clerk

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Pre-meeting registration

(09.15 – 09.30)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.30)

2 Public service broadcasting in Wales: evidence session with S4C

(09.30 – 10.30)

(Pages 1 – 13)

- Rhodri Williams, Chairman, S4C
- Siân Doyle, Chief Executive, S4C

Attached Documents:

- Research Brief: Public service broadcasting in Wales – S4C

Break

(10.30 – 10.40)

3 Public service broadcasting in Wales: evidence session with Ofcom

(10.40 – 11.40) (Pages 14 – 29)

- Lord Grade of Yarmouth Michael Grade, Chair, Ofcom
- Siobhan Walsh, Interim Group Director, Broadcasting & Media Group, Ofcom



Senedd Cymru
Welsh Parliament

- Eleanor Marks, Director in Wales, Ofcom

Attached Documents:

- Research brief: Public service broadcasting in Wales – Ofcom

4 Papers to note

(11.40)

4.1 Scrutiny of the Welsh Language Commissioner

(Page 30)

Attached Documents:

- Letter from the Welsh Language Commissioner: Assurance Report 2022–2023 – 15 September 2023 (Internally translated)

4.2 Existence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)

(Pages 31 – 32)

Attached Documents:

- Letter to the Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism: Existence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) – 18 September 2023

4.3 Media Policy

(Pages 33 – 37)

Attached Documents:

- Letter from Tom O'Malley: Media Policy – 28 August 2023
 - Annex 1: Media North: Putting media reform at the top of the political agenda

4.4 Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024–25

(Pages 38 – 39)

Attached Documents:

- Letter from the Finance Committee to the Minister for Finance and Local Government: Evidence papers supporting the 2024–25 Draft Budget – 22 September 2023

5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting

(11.40)

Break

(11.40 – 11.45)

6 Public service broadcasting in Wales: consideration of evidence

(11.45 – 12.15)

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Agenda Item 3

By virtue of paragraph(s) vii of Standing Order 17.42

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Agenda Item 4.1

Cyfieithiad I'r Saesneg gan Gomisiwn y Senedd / English Translation by Senedd Commission

15/09/2023

Dear Delyth,

It was good to meet you in London at the beginning of the summer. I look forward to appearing before the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee on 8 November. This will be a good opportunity to discuss our Assurance Report, which will have been published at the beginning of October, and to discuss our Annual Report 2022-23, among other matters.

Having been in post as Welsh Language Commissioner since the beginning of 2023, I would be very pleased to have an opportunity to meet you to discuss my priorities as Commissioner and to outline what I have learned in the period since my appointment. I wonder whether it would be possible for you to contact [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], to arrange a convenient time for us to have a conversation.

Yours sincerely,

Efa Gruffudd Jones
Welsh Language Commissioner

Dawn Bowden MS

Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism

Welsh Government

Existence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete

Dear Dawn,

Following recent reports of the existence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete ("RAAC") in St David's Hall in Cardiff, the Committee would like to ask you a number of questions regarding the existence of RAAC in areas that fall within your ministerial portfolio.

Cardiff Council's **statement** on RAAC in St David's Hall notes that they've been aware of its existence since 2021. They note that they've also been aware of, "...the need to manage it from a health and safety viewpoint since 2021, and it has always followed government guidelines and advice to ensure the building was safe."

You will also be aware of **concerns** the Committee has regarding the capital investment required to protect our national collections housed at Amgueddfa Cymru and the National Library of Wales. We are unclear whether any of the previously identified capital work is related to RAAC.

In addition, the Committee is wary that it is possible that cultural and sporting venues may have RAAC related issues in their buildings. Such venues may include sports team clubhouses or local theatre venues for example.

The Committee would like to know the following:

- What assessment have your officials made before this summer and what assessment has been made since September 2023 of the existence of RAAC in buildings that help deliver the policy objectives which fall within your ministerial portfolio, for example Amgueddfa Cymru sites and local authority leisure centre buildings?
- Following any such assessments, have these assessments identified any immediate risks to workers or the public? If so, could you provide a list of the buildings at risk and what actions have been taken remedy identified risks?
- If any RAAC has been identified since this summer, what is the anticipated cost of remedying the issues identified and who would be responsible for meeting these costs?

Finally, the Committee will be writing to Welsh Government sponsored bodies within its remit to ask for any information they have regarding the existence of RAAC in the sectors in which they work. The First Minister **noted** in Plenary on Tuesday 12 September 2023 that, "...liabilities that are incurred because of decisions made prior to devolution remain the responsibility of the UK Government." However, the Welsh Government's **website** notes that, "The UK Treasury has said that there will be no new money to deal with RAAC." In light of this, the Committee would like to know:

- What plans do you have in place to address any immediate concerns related to RAAC in Welsh public sector buildings within your ministerial remit?
- What consideration have you given to creating a RAAC related remedial fund to support non-Welsh Government organisations, such as sports and culture venues, with the cost of putting right any RAAC related risks?

I look forward to receiving your response in due course.

Yours sincerely



Delyth Jewell MS

Committee Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.
We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Agenda Item 4.3

Dear Members of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee,

I live in Wales, near Aberystwyth, and have had a long standing interest in UK and Welsh media policy. I co-authored a book on the Media in Wales (UWP, 2005), and have written much on the topic over the years. I am aware of the work of the Committee and recognise that it has given issues to do with Welsh media and communications policy much attention over the years.

I attach a document relating to the broad issues of Media Policy. It has been produced by a group called 'Media North' details of which can be found at:

<https://medianorth.org.uk/>

The issues it deals with range more widely than the remit of the Committee, but many do touch on them, as well as providing context for discussions about media policy more generally. Media North considers that media policy is a deeply political issue and that not all parties or people will agree on everything that we outline here. It is document designed to encourage discussion, not to close off issues. We have produced it because we think that this issue should be of major concern to all political parties in the UK, and that, unfortunately, it is still only, at best, peripheral.

We hope you find the document of some interest, and if you want to follow this up, please contact me, or Media North.

Yours faithfully,

Tom O'Malley

PUTTING MEDIA REFORM AT THE TOP OF THE POLITICAL AGENDA

We need to talk about media reform. Why?

Broadcasting, the internet, social media and the national and local press are the means whereby the majority of us receive information about the key issues that affect our everyday lives.

A democracy needs a healthy and diverse media. But, for good reason, many people do not trust the media that we currently have. We need media that are fair and informative, but too many media outlets are neither. Even public service broadcasters, such as the BBC, often do not live up to the standards set out in their own codes of practice and policy statements.



Ofcom has proved itself far too keen on promoting commercial as opposed to public service values in the media which it regulates, and has been subject to considerable criticism over its failure to enforce its impartiality regulations in the case of GB News and TalkTV

Today fewer people are directly dependent on the mainstream media for their news and information than used to be the case, relying instead on various forms of social media. But these in fact draw heavily on the mainstream, and tabloid newspapers in particular are filled with sensational ‘clickbait’ stories specifically designed to make their way online.

Furthermore, the online world (with the notable exception of online versions of national newspapers) is soon to become subject to an unprecedented degree of censorship and surveillance via the misleadingly titled Online Safety Bill, which may well cause services such as WhatsApp and Signal to withdraw altogether from the UK market.

Although relatively few people now read daily papers, a significant number of these

have very considerable power over our daily lives because of the way in which the dominant Conservative-supporting press has largely become the propaganda arm of government. This, not Parliament, is the forum in which, increasingly, policy is promoted and legitimated. And in the event of a Labour government – however moderate – being elected, that press will be utterly relentless in its opposition to it.

Those with political influence should be putting media reform at the top of their agenda. Here are eleven points that any reforming government should commit to if it is to deliver a healthier media environment and defend and develop democracy. They highlight a number of the major issues that we should be talking about, now.

Broadcasting and Online Media

ONE The BBC needs to be made more accountable to the public that it serves,

and government influence over it needs to be reduced. One way to bring this about would be to change how the Corporation is governed – in particular, legislation should be introduced which takes out of government hands decisions about the level of the Licence Fee and appointments to senior positions.

TWO All commercial television and radio services in the UK are licenced by the Office of Communications (Ofcom), which also regulates the BBC in certain respects. Ofcom publishes the Broadcasting Code, a series of rules which all broadcast content on television and radio must follow. Licensed broadcasters must comply with the terms of their licence, which includes obeying the Code, or risk having it revoked.

The commercial public service broadcasters ITV and Channel 4 have particular public service obligations, and channels such as Sky News, GB News and Talk TV are also subject to obligations, such as the impartiality regulations enshrined in the Code.

However, Ofcom has proved itself far too keen on promoting commercial as opposed to public service values in the media which it regulates, and has been subject to considerable criticism over its failure to enforce its impartiality regulations in the case of GB News and TalkTV. We need to radically transform Ofcom’s governance and purposes and charge it with setting tougher rules regarding ownership and public service values in the commercial media, rules which protect and promote public service standards.

In particular it should minimise the influence of commercial values on media content – for example, clamping down on ‘news’ channels which promote controversy as a means of ratings chasing, and on sponsorship deals and hidden commercial promotions (known as branded content).

THREE Particularly in light of the above, there should be a new organisation charged with promoting the making of

public service content for TV, podcasts and social media apps. This could be funded by a levy on the major media tech companies – Google, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp etc. These companies currently benefit from extremely low levels of taxation: they should be required to contribute to society by supporting public service content.

FOUR The media need better regulation. The BBC and Ofcom are run by boards whose members are drawn from highly unrepresentative groups, mainly from the upper echelons of the media industries. Regulators should be run by a wide range of those involved in these media, including trade union representatives, as well as by those drawn from the wider listening and viewing public. Media regulation is also too important to be left to those appointed by government.

FIVE The infrastructure of the online world is dominated by a tiny handful of extraordinarily powerful companies that are both hostile to external forms of regulation and highly opaque when it comes to their own forms of content moderation.

Such companies should be held ultimately responsible for the information that travels on their systems, but heavy-handed state censorship of the internet and the attendant surveillance of its users, as in countries such as Russia and China, is wholly undesirable, although it is threatened by elements of the mis-named Online Safety Bill.

However, internet service providers should certainly be required to establish clear, publicly available codes relating to the kind of content that they will and will not allow. They also need to be entirely open about any blocking or filtering that they undertake.

As a general principle, material that is legal offline should be legal online. All forms of online regulation should adhere to the requirements for freedom of expression online laid down by bodies such as the UN and the Council of Europe and should be entirely in line with the

European Convention on Human Rights.

Press – On and Offline

SIX Artificial Intelligence offers many benefits to society, but our awareness of its potential needs to be balanced by a clear sense of some of its more negative implications. The use of AI in the creation of ‘news’ poses a genuine threat both to journalism as an occupation and to the public interest in communications, not least when it comes to the matter of trust.

It poses risks not only to jobs but also to the quality of reporting and requires strong regulation in order to enable readers to identify the sources and creators of media content. Immediate steps must be taken, in consultation with news providers and trade unions, to manage its impact on both news content and employment practices.

SEVEN The government should launch a new fund aimed at improving the supply of public interest news on a local basis in order to fix the effects of the damaging decline in the number of local newspapers and journalists in recent years. This money should be used to support independent, locally-based, community-orientated news providers, and not to subsidise those private companies that have spent decades cutting journalists’ jobs on local papers whilst handing out extremely generous dividends to shareholders.

EIGHT We still allow some of the largest newspaper publishers to regulate themselves through their own – now widely discredited – organisation, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO).

The Leveson Inquiry, which was set up in the wake of the phone hacking



The government should launch a new fund aimed at improving the supply of public interest news on a local basis in order to fix the effects of the damaging decline in the number of local newspapers and journalists in recent years



IPSO should either be made to be fully compliant with Leveson's proposals for effective and independent press regulation or should be abolished

scandal, recommended the establishment of a truly independent regulatory body that would provide a cheap, speedy and effective complaints procedure for the public. The industry was always determined to crush this proposal and did so partly by persuading the government not to sign into law Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013. This would have required all publishers to either sign up to a Leveson-compliant regulator or be liable for their own and the defendants' legal costs in the event of a complaint going to court.

IPSO should either be made to be fully compliant with Leveson's proposals for effective and independent press regulation or should be

abolished. Leveson also recommended a second inquiry, this time into the relationships between journalists and the police, and into corporate governance failures at news organisations. The government refused to implement this. It must be implemented.

Ownership

NINE The laws governing media ownership

and cross-ownership need to be revised. It should be made much harder to build up concentrations of ownership in areas such as television, the press or the online world. Where high degrees of concentrated ownership already exist, more effective forms of regulation of media content, informed by public interest values, are required in order to prevent media owners exploiting their media holdings for their own political and ideological ends.

The Digital Divide

TEN Many people, for largely economic reasons, are still unable to access the digital infrastructure which plays an increasingly crucial role in modern life. And many of those who are physically able to access it lack the skills to navigate it in such a way as to inform themselves of matters in the public interest. These are both aspects of the digital divide, which needs to be remedied by government action.

Media Education

ELEVEN Given that media, in all their forms, are central to the political, social and cultural life of our society, it follows that the school curriculum at all levels should include programmes in media education. These would provide children and young people with the knowledge and critical skills needed to navigate and assess the nature of the content they will



● **MediaNorth** is published quarterly by the Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom (North). www.medianorth.org.uk. We are also on Facebook: **Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom North** and X (formerly Twitter) **@campaign_and**

● **CPBF (North)** believes that diverse, democratically accountable media are essential for our democracy. That's why we have taken this initiative to promote our policy ideas for media reform at the October 2023 Labour Party conference in Liverpool.

● We think media policy should be at the centre of Labour Party policy debates, not pushed to the margins.

● If you want to support **MediaNorth** you can sign up to receive your free on-line copy of the magazine and other information on our activities. Send your email to cpbfnorth@outlook.com. We do not share any of your details and you can unsubscribe at any time.

● Invitations to speak at our events or for other ideas are also welcomed.

Agenda Item 4.4

Senedd Cymru
Welsh Parliament
Finance Committee

Rebecca Evans MS,
Minister for Finance and Local Government

22 September 2023

Dear Rebecca,

Evidence papers supporting the 2024-25 Draft Budget

Many thanks for your letter of 8 September.

I am grateful for the constructive manner in which you have engaged with the Finance Committee on ways that ministerial written evidence on the Welsh Government's Draft Budget proposals can be improved, with the aim of addressing the issues identified in my letter of 23 June.

I welcome your intention to confirm when Ministers will provide their evidence papers to Senedd Committees ahead of the 2024-25 budget round. I am also grateful that Senedd Committees will be offered a technical briefing on the Draft Budget.

In terms of your request for a clear indication from the Finance Committee on what would be considered essential for inclusion in ministerial evidence papers, it would not be appropriate for me to provide a single list of proposals without consulting Committee Chairs first.

Whilst I see benefits in developing a high level template for evidence papers, and although I am supportive of co-operation between committees to avoid duplication and overlap in its areas of focus during budget scrutiny, a consistent



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approach may be difficult to achieve in practice given that Committees will naturally have different priorities and areas of focus.

I would also want to guard against the development of a template that may foster a prescriptive approach to the provision of written evidence, which may end up diluting the information made available to individual Committees as they seek to hold ministerial spending decisions to account.

The difficulties faced by Ministers in providing specific details for Committees relating to each MEG during the 2024-25 budget is a case in point. Although I recognise the challenges posed by this year's budget timetable, this should not restrict Committees from requesting detailed information relating to individual portfolios as this is crucial to informing public evidence sessions with Ministers, particularly when time to consult with stakeholders is limited.

I am therefore willing to explore ways in which a template could be developed, although I also acknowledge that developing consensus on this issue may take time and that it is unlikely that any changes will be agreed for the forthcoming budget round.

I am copying this response to all Senedd Committees with an interest in budget scrutiny to facilitate further discussions, and will raise this matter at the next meeting of the Chair's Forum on 23 October.

Yours sincerely



Peredur Owen Griffiths MS
Chair of the Finance Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

