



BBC Cymru Wales

Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

**Inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on the creative industry
June 2020**

Support for the independent production sector

On 6 April, BBC Cymru Wales announced a special package of support to assist independent production companies in Wales working with the broadcaster during the Coronavirus crisis. Aiming to support the sector during the current Coronavirus crisis, it complemented proposals introduced by BBC network television to support independent producers across the UK.

The package included:

- A new BBC Wales commissioning round looking for TV and radio programmes reflecting life during the current crisis and beyond.
- A doubling of the BBC Small Indie Fund (from £1m to £2m) - managed by BBC Content - to support smaller independent companies across the UK, who are most vulnerable at this time. BBC Wales and BBC network television commissioners will work together to identify suitable companies.
- A one-off BBC Wales fund to turbo-charge TV development projects such as drama and comedy with an eye on future schedules beyond 2020
- A radio development fund to support new programme ideas across BBC Radio Wales and BBC Radio Cymru which can be turned around quickly for broadcast over the next few months.
- New short-form commissioning opportunities for BBC Wales' social media platforms aimed at educating and entertaining audiences - particularly those under 45 years of age.
- Increased investment in BBC Wales' archive content for BBC iPlayer by acquiring programming from partners in the sector. The aim is to introduce a substantial archive of great Welsh content to iPlayer over the coming weeks and months.
- A commitment by BBC Wales and network television to work closely with production companies on current projects which have been disrupted, to find supportive solutions wherever possible. This will include being flexible around delivery, and varying cash flow as appropriate on a title-by-title basis

BBC Wales is also working in partnership with the Welsh Government's Creative Wales unit to identify opportunities for collaboration in supporting the wider sector.

Following the commissioning call for TV, radio and online, BBC Wales announced that independent companies would produce over 30 new programmes for BBC One Wales, BBC Radio Wales and BBC Radio Cymru to be broadcast before the end of September. They include:

- On BBC One Wales, Carol Vorderman hosted a brand new programme every Thursday evening on BBC One Wales at 7.30pm. *The Great Indoors* saw Carol joined by a host of guests to steer viewers through the best and most uplifting stories in Wales. The production – a first for BBC Wales - is a collaboration between a range of independent production companies including BBC Studios, Boom Cymru, Marmalade TV, One Tribe, Hall Of Mirrors, Darlun and Yeti.
- BBC Wales commissioned a one-off programme putting the spotlight firmly on the Royal Gwent Hospital and staff at the Critical Care Unit for *Critical*:

Coronavirus in Intensive Care. The powerful documentary made by Folk Films and filmed entirely by NHS staff on mobile phones and small cameras, giving viewers rare access to the Intensive Care Unit.

- The hit TV comedy, *The Tourist Trap* will take to the airwaves for a one-off special *The Tourist Trap: The Stay at Home Radio Special* on 22 June on BBC Radio Wales. Sally Phillips is joined by comedians Elis James, Mike Bubbins, Tudur Owen and Sarah Breese as once again WOW Wales, the ill-fated tourism agency takes on the quest to stop tourists visiting Wales. (Produced by The Comedy Unit)
- A special programme for Mental Health Awareness Week, *The Mind Shed* on BBC Radio Wales looked at how social distancing and self-isolating are affecting our mental health with men, in particular at risk. (Produced by One Tribe)
- On BBC Radio Cymru, Dylan Ebenezer hosts a new panel show, the *Ynys yr Hunan-Ynyswyr* (Island of Isolationists) as he invites two guests to compete for the luxury of staying on the island with him, based on their choice of books, music and films. (Produced by Rondo Media)
- And in a first for the Radio Cymru, Jon Gower is inviting listeners to submit their ideas and create a crowd-produced daily novel in the style of a soap opera for our times, every day on the *Aled Hughes programme*. (Produced by Cwmni Unigryw).
- BBC Bitesize launched Bitesize Daily/Bitesize Daily including a significant amount of content commissioned from the independent sector.

Supporting the wider creative industries

Since entering the lockdown phase, the following partnerships and initiatives have been introduced:

- BBC Wales and BBC Arts are broadcast partners for National Theatre Wales' Network initiative – a new digital programme of opportunities for theatre makers, delivered in partnership with two of Wales's leading theatre organisations, Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru and Sherman Theatre – and developed in response to impact of COVID-19 lockdown
- BBC Radio Cymru and BBC Cymru Fyw are working in partnership with Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru on their Creu Ar-Lein (Create On-Line) programme bringing a selection of Micro Plays to digital platforms.
- A partnership between BBC Radio Wales and The Machynlleth Comedy Festival saw the festival – which was cancelled as a result of the current crisis – brought to life on radio with a range of programmes over the first weekend in May
- The Urdd announced a new kind of Eisteddfod – Eisteddfod-T - following the cancellation of this year's youth festival in Denbighshire. The Eisteddfod-with-a-difference broadcast its final rounds on specially scheduled programmes on BBC Radio Cymru.
- Similarly, we're working with the National Eisteddfod to bring Gwyl AmGen to BBC Radio Cymru and BBC Cymru Fyw for a long weekend of cultural celebration from 30 July.
- Horizons/Gorwelion – the music project funded by the Arts Council of Wales and BBC Cymru Wales has been supporting musicians the length and breadth of the country by streaming live music from the intimate setting of living rooms to an

ever growing audience on social media platforms. The initiative has only been possible, due to the projects existing connections with the industry.

- BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales – while the orchestra and chorus may not be packing out the concert halls, the players and staff have been creating engaging, uplifting and unique digital content to keep audiences entertained during lockdown. Orchestra members are taking part in online education initiatives, digital music events, and fun video strands. To celebrate Welsh Heroes day they worked - from home - with bass-baritone, Bryn Terfel to bring a rousing new digital version of the anthem Men of Harlech to the airwaves of BBC Radio Cymru and BBC Radio Wales.