



Delyth Jewell MS,  
Chair  
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee  
Senedd  
Cardiff Bay,  
CF99 1NA

2nd September 2021

Annwyl Chair,

I am writing to respond to the committee's invitation for stakeholders to outline their priorities for the committee's work programme.

We are proud to have built a strong relationship with the committee during the 5th Senedd and appreciated member's ongoing interest in ITV Cymru Wales and the wider Welsh broadcasting sector. We welcomed and appreciated the opportunity to address members on several occasions over the last few years and to aid their understanding of the challenges facing commercial public service broadcasters. As we outlined in our submissions to the committee during the 5th Senedd, it is becoming increasingly difficult to create bespoke content in Wales for the people of Wales in a market increasingly dominated by a small group of global players offering little or no Welsh content.

The last year has shown the vital importance of a strong and pluralistic Welsh media landscape in which audiences can find a range of trusted, authoritative news and current affairs sources offering accurate and detailed information about the pandemic and the response to it at an all-Wales level. We are especially proud here at ITV Cymru Wales to serve a loyal audience that might get little, if any, news of Wales from any other source. We are making huge efforts to serve that audience on air, online and across social media with trusted content which continues to reach substantial proportions of the Welsh population on a daily and weekly basis.

We understand that the remit of the new committee is wide-ranging, but we do hope that the committee will be able to continue with the important discussions around the future of public service broadcasting, and the urgent need for a new settlement between PSM providers and platforms to secure prominence, inclusion and fair value.

There could not be a better illustration of the critical role that ITV as a PSB plays than during the COVID-19 crisis where the need for quality, trusted information, as well as an escape through entertainment, was at its most important. At a time of real worry and social isolation, a free, reliable and universally available PSB system stepped up to serve our viewers in Wales and across the UK in an era of misinformation online.

Our strategy to meet the challenge presented by a market that is changing (and globalising) very rapidly is to become a digitally led media company that creates and delivers brilliant content to audiences when and how they want it. We have invested heavily in digital technologies and increasingly create news and current affairs content specifically for digital audiences. We are also very proud to be producing current affairs programming and innovative digital content for S4C's platforms whilst growing the slate of productions we make outside of licence commitments for the ITV Network and BBC Wales.

But despite our efforts, ITV cannot meet this global challenge on its own. Ofcom's recent recommendations to the UK Government on the future of public service media following its **Small Screen: Big Debate** consultation concluded that current, outdated legislation needs a radical update and we now encourage the Government to move with speed to bring forward legislation to help secure the ability for PSMs to compete and thrive in a market that is increasingly dominated by a small group of global players as TV is increasingly delivered online.

The single most important recommendation that Ofcom made to UK Government was for a new regime to secure both the prominence and availability of PSB content and services on major platforms with a dispute resolution role for Ofcom. Ofcom proposed that in designing the framework and in settling any disputes a key consideration should be that the terms offered by any platform are "*consistent with the sustainable delivery of PSB*". It is hard to understate the importance of this recommendation for the future of PSB in Wales (and the rest of the UK). Accordingly, it is vitally important that the recommendation is accepted by UK Government and that the sustainable delivery of PSB is incorporated as the most important consideration in any new regime for PSB prominence and availability.

The huge advantages enjoyed by global online platforms mean that they will thrive whatever regime is in place but PSB might well not if its sustainability is not front and centre of any new regulatory regime. More than ever, we need to ensure that this important discussion remains high on the political agenda, and we would welcome the committee's support with this.

## Digital Transformation

In terms of our other priorities for the committee's work programme, we would also welcome the opportunity to discuss our digital strategy and vision in further detail with members of the committee, and how delivering digital transformation is key to our continuing success..

In an ever growing digital world, we, along with other broadcasters, are working hard to evolve and adapt in order to meet the pressing challenges facing commercial public service media. We were the first of the Welsh broadcasters to move to a new purpose built headquarters investing heavily in digital technologies and new ways of working and increasingly creating news and current affairs content specifically for digital audiences. Indeed, the latest survey by OFCOM Wales shows that for audiences in Wales digital news from broadcasters is now just as important to them as newspapers.

Indeed, our news website [itv.com/wales](http://itv.com/wales) is delivering significant growth for trusted, impartial news about Wales that can be accessed by audiences anywhere, anytime on mobile devices. In 2020, page views doubled to 20 million.

ITV is doing everything in its power to modernise its business for the online era but we also need the policy framework to move at pace too to recognise the new realities and market power of global platform operators.

## Welsh Language Provision

We would also appreciate the opportunity to highlight to the committee our commitment in offering plurality for current affairs and factual content in the Welsh language. The committee might be unaware that ITV Cymru Wales provides over 30 hours of current affairs and factual content per year in Welsh for S4C, ranging from long running series to short form reactive digital content.

We supply S4C with many of its most popular and most talked-about programmes. These include the political series ***Y Byd yn ei Le***; the award-winning current affairs series ***Y Byd Ar Bedwar*** and the ever popular ***Cefn Gwlad***.

At the same time, Boom Group, part of ITV Studios, includes production divisions Boom, Boom Cymru, Boom Kids and Boom Social, and is one of Wales' largest production companies, responsible for over 400 hours of programming annually for BBC, ITV, Channel 5 & S4C with a slate that includes S4C's children's service Cyw and the tense crime thriller 35 Diwrnod.

Members might also be unaware that we also became a partner of S4C's news app and website in April 2021 and we help to provide vital plurality to their service. The team share and package ITV Cymru Wales news content daily in Welsh for S4C's digital service - further proof of our

growth in digital content and production and how we can collaborate and utilise the wider team's skills whilst showcasing our original journalism on other platforms to reach new audiences.

## Diversity and Inclusion

As a significant employer and broadcaster in Wales, we have a crucial role to play to use our platform to reflect the diversity of modern Wales. This is essential if we are to remain relevant to our audiences, attract the best possible talent and creative ideas and maintain our role at the heart of popular culture. We monitor the diversity of our on-screen portrayal and feed findings to the news and current affairs teams so that colleagues are aware of where we need to make improvements.

As a part of our [Social Purpose Strategy](#) ITV Cymru Wales is proud to be involved in several initiatives to increase diversity both on screen and behind the scenes. We have a vibrant Diversity Panel that brings together a wide range of stakeholders in Wales to inform our content strategy and commissioning decisions. We are an award winning employer of apprentices working in partnership with **Sgïl Cymru**, with most of our recruits coming from an under-represented background and going on to either secure permanent roles within ITV or other media companies in Wales. This year, we are focussing our acclaimed News Trainee Scheme to people with a disability and along with Creative Wales and other broadcasters, ITV has financially contributed to the founding of a pilot project to increase diversity in tv and film in Wales. The **Culture Connect Wales** initiative aims to create a bespoke network for those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, as well as engaging with partners to provide practical advice and opportunities and widening the knowledge of the sector and the opportunities it provides.

We are a proud Media Partner to **Chwarae Teg** for their Womenspire Awards and to **Pride Cymru**, Wales' largest annual celebration of diversity. We supported both organisations to run online events during last year's lockdown and will be doing so again for this year's Womenspire 2021 Awards. We have also offered 'media familiarisation' sessions to a variety of groups ranging from the **Ethnic Youth Support Team** to the **Women's Equality Network**.

## Network Production

One of the committee's recommendations in its report "*Exploring the devolution of broadcasting*" was that there should be a requirement for the Channel 3 licence in Wales to deliver a greater proportion of network content in Wales. We would welcome the opportunity to inform members about our efforts in this area.

We work very closely with ITV's commissioning team and in the last few years we have had a number of co-commissions between ITV Cymru Wales and the ITV Network. These have included, *The Wonders of the Coast Path*, *A Year in the Beacons* and *Wonders of the Border*. These series demonstrate our commitment in highlighting all parts of Wales in our productions.

ITV's three-part true crime mini-series *Pembrokeshire Murders*, broadcast at the start of this year proved a ratings success. The launch episode was watched by 11.2 million people in the first week of broadcast – the biggest new ITV drama launch since *Lewis* in 2006. With a consolidated 37.4% share for the premiere, it was double ITV's Monday 9pm slot average (18.7%). The drama was based on a book co-authored by ITV Cymru Wales journalist and presenter Jonathan Hill, and this led to the commissioning of the network drama. It was made by World Productions, part of ITV Studios, in association with Cardiff-based Severn Screen. The drama, distributed internationally by ITV Studios, has, at the last count, been bought by almost 30 territories worldwide. The inside story of the investigation was told through a network documentary produced by ITV Wales, *Pembrokeshire Murders: Catching the Gameshow Killer*. It told a uniquely Welsh story for a UK audience and brought in a consolidated audience of 5.7 million viewers, the biggest crime factual audience since 2013.

*I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here* - from Gwrych Castle near Abergele broke the record for the number of viewers for the launch with 14.3 million watching. We are delighted to see the series returning to Abergele once again this year and playing a key role in raising the profile of the wider North Wales region and the Welsh creative sector as a whole.

We hope that the committee finds our submission helpful in shaping the forward work programme, and we look forward to engaging further with yourself and the members over the coming months.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Henfrey', written in a cursive style.

Phil Henfrey  
Head of News and Programmes  
ITV Cymru Wales