

Rt Hon Nadine Dorries MP

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

17 November 2021

Dear Nadine,

Future of public service broadcasting and media in Wales

At its meeting on 13 October 2021, the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee of the Welsh Parliament heard from public service broadcasters about the challenges facing this sector.

The Committee heard that Wales' public service broadcasters are facing considerable pressure from global streaming companies, such as Netflix and Amazon for several reasons. These include the fact that these streaming companies are not subject to the same regulatory environment, and that public service broadcasters have considerably less financial resource to compete for the rights to content.

In particular, the Committee heard of the challenges facing public sector broadcasters in competing with international content streaming services for rights to broadcast live sport, including international rugby. At our meeting, the Chief Executive of S4C, Owen Evans stated the importance of sport to the channel. Mr Evans noted that "sport brings a great crowd to the channel... it's an opportunity for us to cross-advertise the content of S4C to an audience that doesn't often come into contact with the Welsh language." This includes programmes for children and Welsh language learners.

The importance of sport, and in particular rugby, in Welsh culture was further emphasised by Rhuanedd Richards of BBC Cymru Wales, "in terms of the Six Nations, of the people watching television on that day, three quarters of them in Wales are watching rugby games. That's why it's important. It's important to our audiences."

Concern was also raised regarding the importance of national events (including sport) and ensuring that they continue to be broadcast by public service broadcasters. Phil Henfrey of

ITV Cymru Wales noted that “the tradition of public service broadcasting has been to cover a broad range of content” which would include programmes ranging from international rugby to coverage of the Royal Opening of the Welsh Parliament. Whilst international streaming content services might compete for rugby internationals, as Mr Henfrey noted regarding the Senedd’s Royal Opening:

“I don't see any global streamer competing for the rights for that, but all three of us as public service broadcasters will be giving that really close attention tomorrow and will be making it available to audiences in Wales for free and universally.”

In addition to the concerns outlined above, the Committee would also like to draw your attention to the conclusion of its predecessor committee. In its report, “**Exploring the devolution of broadcasting**”, the Committee was unanimous in its view that the supply of media content for Wales is inadequate. It noted “that the growth of global streaming giants has led to a boom in content, but within narrowly confined genres. It has done little, if anything, to provide more content specifically for Welsh audiences.” These are matters that warrant further discussion over the coming term.

Given the concerns raised during our meeting and during the last Senedd term, the Committee would welcome the opportunity to discuss your priorities for public service broadcasting. Would you be available to join our meeting virtually on any of the following dates:

24 November

8 December

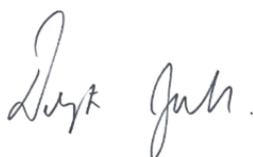
15 December

2 February

16 February

The Committee is looking forward to welcoming you to one of our future meetings to discuss these issues. Should none of these dates be suitable, the Committee would be more than happy to seek alternative dates.

Yours sincerely,



Delyth Jewell AS

Chair

**Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, International Relations and Sport
Committee**

