



Delyth Jewell MS
Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations
Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

7th November 2022

Dear Chair,

I'm writing to highlight a pressing legislative matter to your attention. Along with other public service broadcasters and the wider creative industries, we are growing increasingly concerned about a further potential delay with the UK Government's proposed Media Bill. There is a clear consensus for a new public service media settlement to maintain the prominence and sustainability of public service content which as you know plays such a vital role in the political, cultural and economic life of our country.

The timing of the Media Bill is particularly important in the context of the expiry of ITV's PSB licences in 2024 which underpins what ITV Cymru Wales does in Wales. Indeed, we are now well into the statutory process for the review and renewal of our PSB licences - a process for which a clear understanding of our future PSB commitments is fundamentally important. The deadline for ITV to decide whether to apply for a renewed PSB licence, and hence remain a PSB, is April 2023.

As OFCOM's latest Media Nations reports points out, PSBs remain the most trusted and most consumed news brands in Wales - providing reliable and impartial coverage of events in a world of online misinformation. Within that ITV Cymru Wales currently provides the only national, video news alternative in Wales to the BBC. With a weekly television reach of 1.4m, we are especially proud here at ITV Cymru Wales to be providing a universally funded and free public service to a loyal audience that might otherwise get little, if any, news of Wales.

You are also well aware that in Wales we have a thriving, independent production sector and the crucial role that PSBs play, creating jobs and nurturing talent all across Wales. Together with the ITV Studios company Boom Cymru, ITV is a significant employer here in Wales with some 400 staff operating from various locations right across the country. Indeed, across the UK, ITV spends more on new UK content, more with independent producers and more on programmes made outside London than any other commercial PSB. Nearly half our staff (over 2,100 people) are based in 34 centres outside London.

We also have a vital role in the political and cultural life of Wales. PSBs bring people together to celebrate or cope with adversity. Our sensitive and extensive coverage of the recent death of the Queen is a prime example of this. At the same time we are very much



looking forward to bringing the nation together later this month for Cymru's opening game in the Qatar World Cup as well as following Wales in the upcoming Six Nations Tournament.

However, there is a risk our contribution is taken for granted. I believe the Media Bill and the legislative reform it proposes is crucial and urgent for audiences in Wales.

Without wishing to be too stark about it, it's becoming increasingly difficult to create bespoke content in Wales for the people of Wales when we're now competing with global streamers offering little or no Welsh content.

TV is increasingly delivered and consumed online as global online technology platforms become the gatekeepers for TV in Wales and the UK. Without reform to the current system audiences in Wales and in the wider UK will not only struggle to find the PSB content they value, but large financial sums will be extracted from the PSB ecosystem and the UK creative economy by global online platforms. Put simply, without urgent reform, we are already seeing at first hand how these platforms will extract greater and greater sums from PSBs and the UK creative economy, increasingly threatening employment in TV at scale across the UK and the PSB contribution to national life.

Furthermore, there is a prospect of listed sporting events - that are so crucial to Wales' sense of itself - disappearing entirely from free-to-view TV unless the regime that safeguards them is updated.

Reform of the PSB system is needed urgently if the PSB system that plays such a vital role in the life of Wales is to continue to thrive. ITV Cymru Wales very much welcomes the UK Government's recognition in the Broadcasting White Paper of the huge value that PSBs deliver to the UK's creative economy and society and their fundamental role in growing the creative economy. The Media Bill is critical to ensuring, in an era of online TV that the PSBs have prominence, inclusion and fair value for their content competing fairly with global streamers and securing fair value for our investment in original UK content which has clear value for the UK.

In your role as Chair of the Senedd's Culture Committee we would be grateful if you could support us by amplifying our calls and concerns with DCMS, to ensure that the Government's Media Bill is introduced to Parliament as a matter of the utmost urgency and without further delay.

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.