

## **Cross-party Group on Digital in Wales (15.2.24) – Minutes:**

### **Attendees:**

Rhun ap Iorwerth MS
Rhys Hughes
Pryderi ap Rhisiart
Ffion Davies
Tom Burke
Gemma Halliday
Cath Morris-Roberts
Joshua Roberts
Sam Rhys
Phil Stead
Klaire Tanner
Rhoslyn Prys
Huw Ynyr
Sion Huw
Brandon Wilson
Stephanie Yau-Jones
Candice Chartrand
Kirrie Roberts
Sian Adler
Stephen Edwards
Danielle Haggard
Jj Haggard
Anwen Davies
Gwyndaf Rowlands
Carol Jones
Owain Llyr
Gerwyn Evans
Aled Parry
Catrin Owen
John Jackson
Daniel Evans
Meg Gregory
Derick Murdoch

### **Location:**

- M-SParc, Gaerwen, Anglesey, LL60 6AR
- Virtual (Microsoft Teams)

### ➤ Rhun ap Iorwerth MS opens meeting

- Chair opens the meeting by explaining the purpose of the Cross-party Group and what it has achieved thus far
- Thanks M-Sparc for their continued work as secretariat of the group
- Shares apologies from Delyth Jewell MS and Peredur Owen Griffiths MS for being unable to attend
- Moves on to discuss the focus of this particular meeting: Digital creativity and explains the basic format the meeting will take
- Chair concludes his opening by welcoming first speaker to the stage

### ➤ Gerwyn Evans (Creative Wales)

- Preview of work created in 2022, working on a new video with work from 2023.
- CW focus on a number of key sectors; music, games, publishing, TV/Film, animation, CreaTech, R&D.
- A substantial part of the economy and the fastest growing part of the economy. Want to prioritise investment.
- **Music:** CW work across grass roots music venues, provide funding to support these venues. £500k of funding support to show talent in Wales. £475k towards industry partners and events. Wales is on the cusp of making a global breakthrough. CW Spotify account where 30-40 new tracks are uploaded regularly to showcase current and new talent.
- **Games/Animation** - £652k invested via digital development fund and £360k invested in Cronfa Cynnwys i'r Ifanc.  
CW support grassroots games talent development with a programme partnership with Glyndwr University in Wrexham.  
CW recently took 18 gaming businesses to San Francisco and plan on doing the same this year with 13 businesses.
- **Publishing** – CW fully fund book council and add additional funding - £610k invested in new audience fund. Trade mission to Frankfurt last year with 13 publishers.
- **TV/Film** – Production funding of £18.1m, 37 projects generating £208.7m. CW aim to be doing more in north Wales. Lots of investment for independent production companies. Invest in training opportunities.
- Fair work agenda – Policy and economic community; a report on how to improve fair working conditions. There are underlying issues which are trying to be worked through.
- Ffilm Cymru Film Fund
- Have done lots in the Welsh language by working with S4C.
- Support – have a large skills agenda to provide skills support for screen, digital content, music, cross sector and partnership funding.
- **R&D** is critical. CW funded Media Cymru. There is another round of funding coming out soon. If north Wales comes together as a collective, CW believe they can get funding from the UK gov to support this. Media Cymru is a £50m programme and needs to be an opportunity for north Wales.
- **Policy:** CW have a MOU with public service broadcasters. Keen to help and continue supporting Gogledd Creadigol and help to develop the network in north Wales.

### ➤ Owain Llyr (Gweledigaeth)

- Speaker begins by discussing how he reached where they are today

- Explains that he used to have a job in radio in Wrexham but long travels meant that the job was unsustainable
- Explains that he went freelance to give him a work-life balance, but also that he had fears there would be nowhere close to home for him to work in the industry he wished work in
- Discusses the first piece he produced as a freelancer, which was a sketch with his son about traffic issues in the Bontnewydd area, and how tis sparked is passion for having the freedom to work on what he wanted to
- Explains that freelancing has given him the opportunity to work with bigger brands while also maintain a level of autonomy
- It's also given him the opportunity to experiment in many different sectors of the creative industry
- He sites one particular example of doing the Welsh language voiceovers for Arriva Wales and another as introducing 'Bingo Bocnyrs' in north Wales
- Speaker then moves on to discuss the importance of branding and marketing. Explains firstly that when he visits public events that the will wear clothes similar to that of his logo, as well as purchasing a red van to match
- He also explains how he supports local teams, such as Caernarfon Town FC, not only to gain more customers, but also to support the local economy.
- Rhun thanks Owain for his contribution and welcomes Catrin to the front

#### ➤ Catrin Owen (Tropic)

- Carin begins by stating that she's originally from Ynys Mon, but that she moved away from university in search of more opportunities
- Explained hoe she began her career in the industry working with big brands and a close team in Brighton
- She explains she very much enjoyed the fast paced nature of the job and the city, but that the pandemic made here feel a sense of 'hiraeth' for home
- She expressed concerns, however, that there would b no work available for her in the industry back in north Wales
- She moved back home to north Wales and worked remotely for an agency
- Soon she realised it wasn't what she wanted to be doing anymore and dived into the world of freelancing
- She believed there was a gap in the market and a role she could play in bridging the gap between business and creativity, which led to he creation of Tropic – a creative studio.
- She worked closely with M-SParc and collaborated on many projects with them, such as the website
- She also says how she's worked with companies such as: Cwmni Da, Park Glynllifon, Gogledd Cymru Actif in developing their digital platforms
- By now, Tropic ae a team of 5, made up mostly by women.
- Speaker explains how she believes it's important to her to empower women to work in the industry
- She ends by stating that there's a lot of excellent work going on in north Wales, and that there's a need for Wesh Government to support that for it strengthen further.

#### ➤ An Opportunity for Questions

- Chair opens the discussion to floor and asks the first question, directed to Catrin, on the difference in working in the city compared to a more rural setting
- Catrin explains that she's found working professionally in the Welsh language was a challenge initially as she received most of her education in this sector specifically through the English-medium
- Question comes in regarding the sustainability of the nightclub sector.
- Gerwyn agrees that people don't currently go into the nightclub/music venue sector to make big money, as it's awfully difficult to do, but that there is also hope we could see them turning a corner soon
- Follow up question, specifically on music venues, asks if a hybrid model could work
- Gerwyn explains how this has already been used, but that it's clear that people favour an in-person experience where possible.
- Gerwyn does explain, however, that more work needs to be done on potential alternative models that would allow the industry to thrive
- Owain weighs in by explaining that this is why sponsoring local businesses is so important to him
- Member of the audience makes statement regarding the importance of using small businesses for project. He reveals that he's used Catrin's services in the past and was delighted with the service, but that it's important that others do the same, even if it does come at a slightly greater cost
- Owain goes back to the point he made in his presentation about sponsoring local sports teams. He can see not only the value of getting brand recognition, but also ensuing that other sectors are supported within the area he works
- Catrin also explains how freelancers are more likely to put greater effort in to the work they do
- Final question comes in regarding the music industry in Wales, specifically the Welsh-language, industry and how we support it.
- Gerwyn explains that it's a case of listening to the industry and meeting demand
- Owain explains that he goes around schools in north Wales and that children's knowledge of Welsh language music is weak. He points to local radio networks such as MonFM who he says do great works but aren't supported sufficiently financially.
- He also says that this requires a change in method and vision more generally
- Chair thanks everyone for their questions and the speakers for their answer, before inviting next guest to speak

### ➤ Aled Parry (TinInt)

- Speaker shares some of his background of being born in north Wales and working in the design industry
- Explains the conception of TinInt and the hard work that's gone into it, and that Tinopolis are the parent company
- He explains how the digital world is always evolving and the challenge that faces all corporations, businesses, broadcasters etc to continue to reach the audience and get their attention
- Speaker goes on to cite example he's been working closely with S4C on – Cwis Bob Dydd.
- Speaker explains how the App, which has been remarkably popular, was the product of an 18 month process

- Their market research found that what people enjoyed about the app was the general knowledge element. It means that it was far more inclusive and something everyone could get involved in
- Speaker then looks ahead to their future plans. Firstly, to develop a circular economy within the app that allows smaller businesses the promotion opportunities
- Secondly, he looks at how the format itself could be expanded and re-branded into other areas, such as on Tv as a quiz show.
- Chair some to front of audience to thank speaker for his contribution and invite final speaker forward

### ➤ John Jackson (E-sports Cymru)

- Speaker begins by giving overview of the work of E-Sports Cymru and explain exactly what E-sports entails
- He explains how e-sports is seen as incredibly high level, and to some degree that's true
- Speaker makes the comparison of the role they play to that of the role of Sports Wales in the sporting sector
- However, speaker is eager to emphasise the importance of also building up from the grassroots to get more people involved and to improve the overall standard of Welsh E-sports in the long term
- Speaker explains the trajectory of the sector, with both the number of streams and prize pools for live gaming events are still increasing, and are surpassing that of well-known mainstream sports such as Golf.
- He speaks of Wales' acceptance into the e-sports federation in Paris last year as full members
- He also explains how e-sports is evolving into a branch for bigger corporations
- He explains how businesses, such as football/rugby teams, are developing their own teams, and cites Dragons Rugby as a perfect example
- Speaker goes on to explain how this is most popular among younger generations, but that they also have older players, the oldest professional player being in his 60s.
- However, the target demographic are those in their teens, which is why the development of teams in colleges and universities, along with the introduction of e-sports related modules is so heartening
- He concludes by stating that we need to look at this more broadly than just a career in professional gaming, and rather consider the whole spectrum of allied professions, such as broadcasting, gaming development etc that all have a part to play in this sector
- His final comments surround the need for continued networking, support for the sector and developing a talent directory

### ➤ Opportunity for questions

- Question comes in regarding the most effective way of getting teens involved.
- John answers by saying that much of that hard work is done naturally in the fact that, worldwide, gaming is so popular. He does, however, state the need to get more involved in the creative side, as well as have a change in mindset on how we perceive e-sports more generally.

### ➤ Rhun ap Iorwerth MS Closes Meeting

- Chair opens the floor up for final contributions and takeaways
- Secretariat points to Catin's contribution and the need to have greater diversity in the sector
- Guest points to a clear need for more specialist and financial support for Creative Wales from Welsh Government
- Chair ends meeting by thanking everyone for their hard work in putting the event together, and to secretariats, M-SParc, for continuing to be the spark in the digital sector in north Wales.