



Delyth Jewell MS
Chair
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee
Welsh Parliament
CF99 1SN

17 September 2024

An update from the interim Chair and Chief Executive of S4C

Annwyl Delyth,

At the beginning of a new Senedd term, and following your work during the last term, we wish to update the Committee on matters of interest to you which relate to S4C.

Media Act 2024

In March this year, your Committee published a '*State of play*' report on public service broadcasting in Wales, which emphasised the significance of the UK Government's Media Bill. As you can imagine, we at S4C were very pleased to see the Bill being passed in May with broad cross-party support. The new Media Act is an important milestone and provides S4C with the footing required to continue evolving in an ever-changing media ecosystem.

We look forward to working with DCMS, Ofcom, and other stakeholders over the coming months to ensure the effective implementation of the Act's provisions. That work will also reinforce Ofcom's five-year review of public service media, as well as the BBC Royal Charter review process, which is on the horizon.

S4C Board Appointments

Prior to the General Election, UK Government officials had commenced a public appointments process for the next Chair of S4C. As you will know, this process was subsequently postponed.

We understand that this process will shortly resume or recommence. We expect the UK's Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to provide an opportunity for select committee scrutiny of her preferred candidate for the next S4C Chair in due course.

Furthermore, we expect the process to appoint the S4C Chair to be complemented with a process to appoint new non-executive members of the S4C Board. Currently, the S4C Board has five non-executive members, out of a possible nine; three members' terms are due to end before 1 April 2025. Alongside the statutory certainty provided by the Media Act 2024 with regard to S4C's governance arrangements, we believe that certainty about the future non-executive membership of the Board will be beneficial for S4C.

Independent Report into S4C's Working Environment and Subsequent Action Plan

It is fair to say that 2022 and 2023 represented a difficult period for many people associated with S4C. In May 2023, the non-executive members of the S4C Board commissioned Capital Law to undertake an independent fact-finding exercise into the culture and work environment at S4C in response to concerns raised by the BECTU trade union. This led to a published report and the dismissal of the Chief Executive.

For further context and for the benefit of your Committee's newest members, an outline of this process is appended to this letter.

We are committed to ensuring that S4C is a workplace where colleagues feel respected, supported and motivated to perform at their best. Since assuming our respective interim roles in April, one of our main priorities has been delivering on an agreed Action Plan to address remaining issues within the organisation.

We are pleased with the progress that has been made in recent months against this internal programme of work. A progress report is published [on our website](#) following each meeting of the S4C Board. As you may recall, this Action Plan was developed in consultation with key stakeholders, and comprises four themes: leadership, culture, HR policies and procedures, and governance.

We are clear that leadership built on integrity, accountability, cooperation and open communication is key to building a positive future and restoring trust amongst our staff. The S4C Board is pleased to have opened the recruitment process for a new, permanent Chief Executive as of Monday, 2 September. We anticipate a strong field of candidates, who ought to feel confident about S4C's organisational culture and values, and equipped to take S4C boldly into its next chapter.

With regard to internal culture, S4C has commissioned Sycol, a bilingual company specialising in psychology-led consulting, to facilitate a programme of cultural strengthening and organisational development. Over the coming weeks and months, Sycol will continue with workshops for management and staff, and will implement a learning organisation framework to embed positive changes to the culture at S4C.

As we have stated previously, a positive organisational culture and effective HR procedures must go hand-in-hand. The S4C Board has recently reviewed and approved amendments to some of S4C's HR policies and the Code of Practice for Board members. We have renamed the HR department to focus on 'People and Culture' and, moreover, a review of HR best-practice will be conducted in the coming weeks.

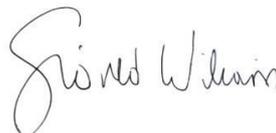
As part of our efforts to ensure that our governance arrangements also conform with best practice, an external review of S4C's governance effectiveness was recently completed, with a particular focus on internal governance arrangements. Its recommendations will be considered by our Board in the first instance, and are expected to result in amendments to our Standing Orders in due course.

We reiterate that S4C appreciates the Committee's interest and support of public service broadcasting in Wales. Should you have any queries relating to the above matters, or indeed any other aspect of S4C's work, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



Guto Bebb
Interim Chair, S4C



Sioned Wiliam
Interim Chief Executive, S4C

Appendix: The Independent Fact-Finding Process and Report on S4C’s Working Environment – an Outline of Events

02 December 2022	The BECTU trade union writes to the S4C Chief Executive and the Director of Human Resources to request a meeting to discuss “serious complaints about the recent culture at S4C”.
08 December 2022	A scheduled S4C Board meeting is held at the Caernarfon office where the Chief Executive advises that, as part of its response to BECTU, the Management Team are initiating a two-day listening exercise with all S4C staff.
21 December 2022	The Chief Executive and the Director of Human Resources meet with BECTU to discuss their correspondence dated 02 December.
22 December 2022	The Chief Executive writes to the S4C Board Chair, the Chair of the People and Remuneration Committee, and Board Secretary, to report on the meeting with BECTU and advises that BECTU was reassured with the prompt response to their correspondence.
19 January 2023	A scheduled S4C Board meeting is held where the Chief Executive provides assurances that recent dialogue with BECTU officials had been positive, and that the Management Team are preparing a programme of work in response to the key themes raised during the two-day staff listening exercise.
09 February 2023	A copy of the plan developed by the Management Team is presented to the S4C Board’s People and Remuneration Committee. Committee members are advised that the plan had already been shared with S4C staff during a meeting held in late January 2023.
28 April 2023	<p>BECTU writes to the S4C Board Secretary, copied to the S4C Chair and the other five non-executive members of the Board. BECTU’s letter raises serious concerns about the culture within S4C, which it states union members feel is regressing following the staff listening exercise held by the Management Team.</p> <p>In the letter, BECTU requests that a mechanism be put in place to allow staff to discuss their concerns confidentially with an independent investigator.</p> <p>In a meeting of the non-executive members of the S4C Board it is agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the S4C Chair, and the chairs of the Board’s Audit and Risk, and People and Remuneration committees arrange a meeting with BECTU officials; and • That an external law firm is to be engaged to undertake a fact-finding exercise on behalf of the non-executive directors. <p>The S4C Chair advises the Chief Executive of the BECTU letter, and the response agreed by the non-executive directors. The Chair also advises DCMS of the letter, and the steps the non-executive members of the Board intend to take.</p>
02 May 2023	<p>The S4C Chair and the chairs of the Board’s Audit and Risk, and People and Remuneration committees meet with BECTU officials and agree to put a process in place to allow staff to share their concerns confidentially with an independent investigator.</p> <p>Following an initial review of options, Capital Law is engaged to undertake the fact-finding exercise and to advise on related legal considerations. The services of Capital Law are procured in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the company is selected based on their expertise, Welsh-language capabilities, capacity to begin promptly, and their independence of S4C.</p>

	To help safeguard the independence and impartiality of the process, it is agreed that the fact-finding exercise is to be undertaken by one team within Capital Law, whilst the provision of legal advice is undertaken by a separate team within the firm.
12 May 2023	The Terms of Reference for the fact-finding process are agreed by the S4C non-executive directors, and a copy is shared with the Management Team for information.
June - July 2023	The Capital Law fact-finding team conduct interviews with 92 staff members, former staff, and suppliers in the production sector who had initiated contact with Capital Law, and expressed a desire to be interviewed. These interviews are conducted online and in-person across Wales.
August - September 2023	The Capital Law fact-finding team analyse the evidence gathered – both from interview transcripts and written documentation submitted – to identify prominent themes.
16 October 2023	As per the Terms of Reference, the fact-finding team at Capital Law presents its evidence report to the S4C Chair and Board Secretary. The process to consider the findings and obtain appropriate legal advice on next steps commences.
03 November 2023	A comprehensive report – summarising the evidence supported by extensive quotations from interview transcripts, alongside legal advice – is considered by all non-executive members of the S4C Board. Their consideration of the evidence continues through further exchanges and meetings over three weeks.
24 November 2023	The Chief Executive is dismissed following a unanimous decision by the non-executive members of the S4C Board.
06 December 2023	S4C publishes <i>Capital Law's Report Into the Working Environment and Atmosphere at S4C</i> , which summarises prominent themes from the fact-finding process.
29 February 2024	The S4C Board publishes an Action Plan to deal with remaining issues, and Sioned Wiliam is announced as S4C's interim Chief Executive.