

The Rt Hon Ian Murray MP

Minister of State (Minister for Creative Industries, Media and Arts)

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

4 March 2026

Dear Minister,

BBC Royal Charter Review and Green Paper consultation

We would be grateful if you would please consider the following letter as the Committee's response to the consultation on the BBC Royal Charter Review and Green Paper.

Funding

The BBC and S4C remain as vital to civic life in Wales as they ever have been. But despite the proliferation of digital video and audio services, Welsh life remains under-represented in broadcast media. Publicly funded broadcasting remains the cornerstone of provision about Wales – from news content about devolved politics to telling Welsh stories in drama, documentary and comedy. It is crucial that during the next Charter period the BBC and S4C should receive at least current funding amounts increased by CPI.

S4C needs to be guaranteed adequate funding. This should represent an increase on current levels, following significant long-term cuts to the broadcaster's funding and the increased costs of serving audiences across multiple digital platforms.

Evidence we have taken has shown that the licence fee is an increasingly contested funding mechanism. What is crucial is that the funding mechanism is universal (with exceptions for those who cannot pay). Universal provision is central to the BBC and S4C. Advertising and subscription models create incentives for broadcasters – such as maximising viewers at all costs and catering to subscribers – which are incompatible with the concept of universal provision. We therefore recommend the following:

Recommendation 1: During the next Charter period, the BBC and S4C should receive at least current funding amounts increased by CPI.

Recommendation 2: S4C needs to be guaranteed adequate funding. This should represent an increase on current levels, following significant long-term cuts to the broadcaster's funding and the increased costs of serving audiences across multiple digital platforms.

Recommendation 3: The BBC and S4C should be funded by a universal mechanism (with exceptions for those unable to pay).

The BBC's remit

As outlined above, universality should remain the cornerstone of BBC and S4C provision. Addressing market failure – such as Welsh language provision and local content about Wales – is crucial to the BBC in Wales and S4C, but so is popular content that brings audiences together. For example, we have supported efforts by public service broadcasters to ensure that national sporting fixtures, such as the Six Nations Rugby Championship, remain free-to-air.

Accuracy when it comes to news and current affairs should be considered as being as important as impartiality. Too often, the BBC still broadcasts as though it were broadcasting to audiences in England alone: that is, too often we see the broadcaster explaining that a certain UK Government policy applies only in England, without having the curiosity to explore what is happening in other UK nations. Reflecting the devolved nature of the UK is not simply a case of adding “in England” to a news bulletin, but of re-thinking how political news is presented to reflect the reality of how the UK is governed. Audiences in Wales and beyond need news and current affairs to better reflect the devolved nature of the UK. The BBC has made progress in this regard, which needs to be accelerated under the next Charter period.

There remains a shortfall in the representation of Welsh life on the BBC. We note that the BBC currently spends twice as much on television content for local audiences in Scotland as it does on local content in Wales. The need to reflect the nations of the UK – in both accurate reporting of devolution and non-news content – should be foregrounded in the next Charter. We therefore recommend the following:

Recommendation 4: Universal provision should remain the cornerstone of BBC and S4C provision.

Recommendation 5: Accuracy regarding news and current affairs should be regarded as being as important as impartiality. To this end, the BBC should continue to drive improvements in its reporting of devolved policy issues.

Recommendation 6: The need to reflect the nations of the UK – in both accurate reporting of devolution and non-news content – should be foregrounded in the next Charter.

Supporting the creative industries

The BBC's network spend in Wales has been central to developing the screen industries in Cardiff and beyond. S4C was described by its CEO, Geraint Evans, as an "economic catalyst for Wales", supporting the production sector across the nation. Both broadcasters have created employment for a skilled workforce, which has attracted further activity to the production sector.

The BBC's role as an economic catalyst in Wales should be maintained in the next Charter period. Current population-share based quotas for network spend and hours in the UK nations should be maintained.

S4C's valuable role stimulating economic activity across Wales underlines the importance of providing adequate funding for the broadcaster. We therefore recommend the following:

Recommendation 7: The BBC's role as an economic catalyst in Wales should be maintained in the next Charter period. Current population-share based quotas for network spend and hours in the UK nations should be maintained.

Recommendation 8: The valuable contribution S4C makes to stimulating economic activity across Wales should be recognised, and the broadcaster should be provided with adequate funding to sustain this.

Institutional structures and engagement with Wales

Too often, the BBC has been subjected to political influence by the UK Government, or indeed important decisions about its funding and remit have been made contrary to the wishes of devolved governments across the UK.

Justin Lewis, who is Professor of Communication and Creative Industries at the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Culture, told us that:

"What we will really need to see, and this is absolutely crucial, is a set of structures created that puts the decision making about both funding and governance of the BBC at much more of an arm's length from the Westminster Government than it currently is. Other countries across Europe do that. I think we should learn from those and follow suit, because it seems to me ridiculous that every 10 years, the BBC's existential existence is up for grabs."

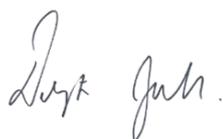
In its 2021 report, [Exploring the devolution of broadcasting](#), our predecessor Committee called for an "an independent funding commission established with distinct Welsh representation." We support this recommendation, which we believe would help insulate the BBC from political interference and better reflect the devolved nature of the UK.

We are disappointed that neither you, nor indeed a colleague was able to attend a meeting of our Committee to discuss these matters. Whilst we acknowledge that broadcasting is currently a reserved power, it has significant implications for devolved areas, and Welsh civic life. It is appropriate that the UK Government discusses these matters with the national parliament of Wales. It is crucial that engagement with the Senedd is improved as the Charter renewal process develops. We therefore recommend the following:

Recommendation 9: The UK Government should establish an independent commission to determine the funding and remits of the BBC and S4C, with distinct Welsh representation. Decisions made by such a body should seek consent from representatives of all UK nations. Welsh appointees to this Committee should be made by the Welsh Government and subject to a pre-appointment hearing of the appropriate Senedd committee.

Recommendation 10: A UK Government Minister should attend a Committee of the next Senedd to discuss the BBC Royal Charter Review.

Yours sincerely,



Delyth Jewell MS

Chair

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

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.