

BCR 10

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol  
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Ymchwiliad i'r Adolygiad o Siarter y BBC

Inquiry into the BBC Charter Review

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru

Response from: Arts Council of Wales



# National Assembly for Wales: Inquiry into BBC Charter Review

Communities, Equalities and Local Government Committee

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Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru  
Arts Council of Wales



Noddir gan  
Lywodraeth Cymru  
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*Front cover:*

BBC National Orchestra of Wales at BBC Hoddinott Hall  
Dim Sŵn, Kizzy Crawford, Gorwelion/Horizons

## Imagine...

1. Imagine Wales. And when you've done that – pictured it, heard it, enjoyed it, read about it, celebrated it – try to think of our country without song, the spoken word on stage and screen, without poetry and novels, and dance and sculptures and ceramics and paintings and images, and all of the living traditions that are making our contemporary culture so potentially dynamic. In raw fact, as well as in our imagination, there's no human Wales without art and culture, just as there's no heritage to pass on generation by generation without creativity.
2. If the duty of public broadcasting is to reflect the lives of people, we must expect it reflect the culture of Wales and the creativity of its people. The Arts Council of Wales 2014 Omnibus Survey of the Welsh public tells us that 4 in 5 adults and 3 in 4 young people attend arts events. And over a third of adults and 8 in 10 young people participate in the arts. Arts and culture matter to Wales.

## Arts Council of Wales

3. The Arts Council of Wales is the country's funding and development agency for the arts. We are a Welsh Government Sponsored Body and a charitably constituted organisation. We also have a relationship with the UK Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport because we distribute funding from the National Lottery.
4. In our *Inspire* strategy we outline three areas of focus. *Make* - supporting the creation of great art, *Reach* - reaching new audiences in new ways and *Sustain* - ensuring resilience of, and through, the arts. We believe that broadcasting in Wales has an important role in all three of these areas. Broadcasters can work with the arts sector to support the creation of work and the creators, use their platforms to connect with the people of Wales, and co-invest with partners to make best use of public money to achieve greater impact.

## The Arts and the BBC Charter

5. Like the BBC, the Arts Council of Wales is a Royal Charter organisation. This reflects our public benefit remit. We strongly believe that the BBC should reflect, support and advocate for the arts and the people who make it.

6. The BBC has had a long-standing reputation for the quality and range of its arts broadcasting. From drama to documentary, much of the BBC's arts programming has become synonymous with the cultural expression of the time and the BBC's reputation as an enlightened patron of the arts can be seen in its support for the BBC Promenade Concerts and the BBC performing ensembles.
7. If the BBC's core mission is still to "inform, education and entertain", then it must reflect cultural life in all its manifestations. Culture and the arts underpin public life. From arts and health to cultural tourism, public art to town centre re-generation, the arts bring meaning, authenticity and enjoyment to our everyday lives. They create and sustain jobs, enrich education services, bring people together, improve our quality of life. It is the universality of arts and culture that makes them so special and it is the role of the BBC to respect that universality.
8. It is for this reason that we would disagree with the assertion contained in the Government Green Paper that the BBC is too large and too "diffuse". Whilst "committed to both the future of the BBC and its underlying Reithian mission" the underlying assumption is that the scope of the BBC's output should be reduced. In our view this is not in the interests of audiences who continue to be best served by a universal and inclusive BBC. We believe that arts should be available across the BBC's output, not just pigeonholed as specialised, niche output. It should be present in all its forms across all the BBC platforms reaching all of its audiences - from Cbeebies to Radio 3.
9. Additionally in Wales the licence fee supports our Welsh language broadcaster, S4C. S4C's remit is to serve Welsh speaking Wales of all demographics and ages – as universal a challenge as that faced by BBC. It is culturally vital and unique in its focus.
10. We are also concerned with wider cultural issues – creativity, identity and diversity – fertile territory within which the BBC and S4C operates. By engaging collaboratively with the cultural sector, we believe that broadcasters could begin to make serious inroads into these areas as the cultural dimension of wider societal issues is widely acknowledged. Part of a public service remit as opposed to a market driven service in a 21<sup>st</sup> century democracy is to provide the platform for diversity and cultural voices.

## **Arts Council of Wales in partnership with broadcasters**

11. Our relationships with the BBC Cymru Wales and S4C have many facets:
  - as a distributor of public funds in Wales our activities are often the focus of media scrutiny
  - as a campaigning charity we try to persuade the media to do more to promote the profile of the arts in Wales - and from Wales
  - as an investor of funds into the cultural and creative sector we are contributing to the development of the wider creative economy in Wales (of which the media are a key part)
  - as a partner we work together to promote, and invest in, the arts and culture of Wales in both languages
  
12. Arts Council of Wales, BBC Cymru Wales and S4C recognise that they are the largest investors in publicly funded creativity in Wales. We share a strong commitment to deepening and widening audiences for the arts and creative sector. We're also passionate about developing and supporting the best creative talent. Through our joint endeavours we work to make Wales more vibrant, inclusive and economically dynamic.
  
13. In May 2013 Arts Council of Wales and BBC Cymru signed a public value partnership (PVP) agreement committing to exploring closer collaboration over three years. This demonstrates our joint determination to seek opportunities to work together to do more, better and maximise public funding.
  
14. The PVP has been a strong foundation for working together in Wales. Successes include our flagship music talent development project *Horizons/Gorwelion*; making communication more open to earlier spot and take better advantage of opportunities such as the WOMEX coverage and BBC Folk Awards in Cardiff and working on 'big moments' such as the projects across to mark the centenary of Wales' greatest author, Dylan Thomas 100.
  
15. Separately from the PVP, both bodies also fund BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales. This unique arrangement enables Wales to have a truly national orchestra of outstanding quality as well as enable the orchestra to participate in exciting and important initiatives such as *Ten Pieces*. We must ensure that we retain a balance here – in terms of partnership funding and also the role of the Orchestra in reaching the people of Wales and its recording and broadcast duties.
  
16. Our partnership with BBC Cymru Wales is greatly valued. It is something we want to strengthen and build on to benefit arts and audiences in Wales. Ways in



which we'd like to do this are:

- For BBC Cymru Wales - and the BBC more generally - to have a more collaborative attitude to working with arts organisations. This means not just looking to see how they can *help*, but how they can work as equal partners with the arts. Whilst we have seen some development in this area – such as working with National Theatre Wales on *Under Milk Wood* – it too often feels that the arts are the lesser partner. We believe that creative partnerships between artists/arts organisations and the BBC could produce wonderful outcomes if given time and resources with which to take root and flourish. The BBC needs to encourage processes that make such outcomes easier to achieve
  - By renewing our formal partnership with BBC Cymru Wales at the end of the current term. This second agreement will reflect what we have learnt in working together. It will outline priority areas of work.
  - To look again at how we can improve communications. In particular, how UK-wide strands of work such as BBC Music and BBC Arts involve and communicate with the nations. We all too often find out about initiatives after the launch when we and our BBC Cymru colleagues should have been engaged at inception. Wales misses out. How do we remedy this?
  - Continue to focus and act on areas of mutual priority. Digital skills (through a revaluated and refocussed *The Space*, and working on training and collaboration opportunities such as using Connected Studio model) encouraging participation in the arts (through *Get Creative* and profiling arts activity) and creating 'big moments' to grab the imagination through a variety of experiences, content and events (such as Dylan Thomas100 and forthcoming year of Roald Dahl)
  - Better network the arts sector in Wales and BBC Cymru Wales and strands like BBC Arts and BBC Music. To facilitate understanding on both sides and making it more likely to spot an opportunity to collaborate earlier.
17. Similarly, in 2013 Arts Council of Wales established a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with S4C. This has provided a platform for the two organisations to identify and co-invest in creative talent that work in the medium of Welsh as well as find new ways for artistic events and projects to find new audiences.

18. The arts sector in Wales works closely with S4C in many ways and we value how our MoU can facilitate this better by facilitating communication and information sharing. Initiatives like *Labordy* - an intensive development programme for Welsh language writers for stage and screen is a good example of us co-investing in this creative ecosystem. S4C have frequently broadcast arts events of adaptations of to their audience with notable examples including the WOMEX opening concert and *Tir* – an offshoot of Theatr Genedlaethol original *Tir Sir Gâr* production. We also welcome S4C's investment much earlier in the creative process – such as with the Patagonia project *150* and their collaborations with Fflim Cymru Wales (the organisation that we delegate responsibility for film to) which have produced the recent Oscar longlist nominated *Dan Y Wenallt*. There are numerous examples of S4C working with the arts for the benefit of both the creators and audience's.
19. Looking to the future, we want to build on our work to date, in particular focussing on our shared priorities around:
- Language. Working together to create opportunities to participate in the arts through Welsh language and building audiences. For example, in north east and south east areas of Wales where there is less provision for Welsh speakers.
  - Communities. Using arts and creativity to make our Welsh language communities vibrant and sustainable. Using our network of arts venues to do this.
  - Festivals and events. We both invest in creating unique cultural events in Wales. How can we do this even better and share content more widely?
  - Talent. Developing talent for mutual benefit. We have long done this around technical skills and increasingly through creative talent, but might there be other areas such as our education work?

## **Arts Council of Wales and BBC Charter renewal in Wales**

20. Arts Council of Wales has submitted a response to the UK Government Charter renewal consultation. That document details our thought on the general purpose is of the BBC. In this document we raise many of the same points but respond to the given terms of reference, below. It is written from the viewpoint of the arts in a devolved Wales in 2015. It draws on our experience working



with BBC Cymru Wales, S4C the BBC nationally and our successes, frustrations and aspirations for the arts in Wales. Where we do not feel it appropriate to comment, we have not.

## **The BBC's current and future funding, governance and accountability arrangements as they relate to Wales**

Devolution in the UK means that the BBC has to respond to the differing needs and aspirations of the nations. Up until now the BBC has appeared slow to delegate responsibility and power from London to its own 'nations'. We understand that broadcasting isn't a devolved area and it is not for us to comment on this. However, in Wales many of the other areas of everyday life are devolved responsibilities and the BBC needs to be able to appropriately flex its structure, finances and decision-making processes to adapt to this change.

The resources for programme-making and origination need to be appropriately distributed through the UK. This would ensure diversity of voices, a spread of economic benefit and the nations and regions reflected better - both within and beyond those nations and regions.

We must consider the realities of devolution within the remit of *representing the UK, its Nations, Regions and Communities*. It is not just a case of the BBC making work that represents Wales or Wales 'warehousing' network productions. The BBC should be committed to work being made *by* Wales, *in* Wales and *for* Wales and beyond.

The BBC consultation document indicates that they would wish to protect the level of funding in the nations. We very much support this. It will enable the BBC to create work in Wales, with Wales, that reflects Wales. This, of course, includes work in the medium of Welsh. Wales is a bi-lingual nation, there is the need for content to reflect this and that should be taken into consideration when setting the funding levels.

A general point of principle is that we believe that the budgets for arts content across the BBC channels and platforms should be protected. As we have stated, the BBC is a unique provider of such content and platforms.

We also have concerns around the competitive element of production within the BBC which, if unregulated and unmanaged, could lead to production being concentrated once again in and around London.

Although it is not for us to recommend how the licence fee should be paid for, it is clear that there need to be modernisation. However this is done - the licence must remain universal as free at the point of delivery is predicated on this principle.

## **The future provision of the BBC's services in Wales in both the English And Welsh languages**

It is essential that there is proper visibility of Wales nationally, and that the portrayal and representation of Wales is one that we would recognise. As well as our unique needs as a bilingual nation, there is a particular need for English-language, non-news and cultural production in Wales, for Wales. The resources available at the moment to the BBC in Wales impede its ability to draw on talent and to produce, for the people of Wales, cultural product produced in Wales.

In recent years we have seen a decline in capability of BBC Cymru Wales to deliver a cultural offer to Wales. Whereas funding of news and sport has been protected to some extent, Welsh arts, culture and drama - particularly on television - is barely existent. In the last year BBC Cymru Wales created 90 minutes of English language television drama (*Hinterland* – a co-production with S4C). In their 2014/15 annual report, Audiences Council Wales raised concern at the very limited portrayal of Wales through drama and comedy.

In his address from Cardiff's Pierhead building last year, BBC director general Tony Hall remarked that: *"English language programming from and for Wales has been in decline for almost a decade."* He went on to say: *"It means, inevitably, that there are some aspects of national life in Wales that are not sufficiently captured by the BBC's own television services in Wales, and I would include comedy, entertainment and culture in those categories."*

Similarly coverage of the arts in Wales has been neglected. Quality magazine programmes such as *The Slate* are no longer being made. There is no 'arts show' in BBC Cymru Wales' television output and only a weekly half hour show on Radio

Wales.

No other broadcaster is better placed to create quality creative content from Wales, to Wales, yet BBC Cymru Wales are not doing this. BBC Cymru Wales output does not reflect the creative Wales that it should.

The vitality and originality of the arts in Wales depends on the fresh flow of new ideas – new thinking that's conceived, developed and shared through the medium of Welsh. This makes it essential that we have strong, confident Welsh language broadcasters (in TV and Radio), publishers and film makers who are able to reflect the full diversity of contemporary Welsh society. To this end, it is important that S4C (which currently is funded by licence fee and BBC) and BBC services such as Radio Cymru are appropriately financed.

Wales is a bi-lingual nation – legally, socially, culturally, and as individuals and communities. Nothing makes Wales more distinctive than the Welsh Language. The language provides the means to understand and enjoy an extraordinarily rich literature and culture. Creativity thrives on this and is a key component in continuing the Welsh language's vital role at the heart of Welsh life.

BBC Cymru Wales and S4C must defend and promote vigorously the right of people to explore their own culture, their own creativity through the language of their choice. In an increasingly globalised world, we must see the Welsh language, alongside English, as a basic civic attribute as well as an inherited culture. If it's to flourish and grow, the Welsh language and culture will themselves have to offer the same levels of experimentation and responsiveness to global trends as is more widely seen through English language media. The BBC and S4C have played an enormously important role in Welsh language culture to date and it must continue to do so.

Again, the BBC should position itself alongside other organisations with a vested interest in developing the Welsh language and play a key role as a major collaborator, particularly now as it is vested with budgetary responsibilities for S4C. Regardless of its financial arrangements, S4C is self-evidently in a unique position, as a public service broadcaster, to promote Welsh language culture and the use of Welsh language in new media. Budget cuts to S4C could hobble the capacity of the media in Wales to reflect fully its culture and identity in an equal and accessible way (regardless of the language of choice).

The mandate for enshrining a commitment to the language and cultures of Wales should not be lost sight of in Charter Renewal.

It is not for us to comment on the details of the model of governance and regulation of the BBC but we do believe wholeheartedly that the BBC should retain its independence. We do, however, believe that there would be merit in ensuring that Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales are represented properly at Ofcom.

In our response to the UK Government consultation we highlighted the importance of the BBC to be able to innovate to remain relevant to new audiences. We noted the responsibility of the BBC to work with sectors such as the arts to assist with their development too. This is an area we feel strongly about seeing acted on in Wales.

### **S4C's future, including its funding, operating and governance arrangements, and the services it provides**

We also recognise that, aside from the BBC, the licence fee pays a contribution for S4C. In a bi-lingual Wales it is vital to have the distinctive editorial 'voice' of S4C. S4C is in a unique position, as a public service broadcaster, to promote Welsh language culture and the use of Welsh language in new media.

Alongside the BBC, S4C are a substantial investor in creativity in Wales. In addition, the commissioning model adopted by S4C has allowed the development of several creative industry clusters in Wales such as Caernarfon which has helped to sustain the economy of rural Welsh communities. Reductions in funding will have serious repercussions and unintended consequences.

We have noted that BBC and S4C have found ways to work collaboratively and to co-invest in projects without compromising their editorial independence. We welcome this way of working.

We also believe that the budgets for arts content by S4C should be protected. S4C is a unique provider of such content and platforms for Welsh speaking audiences. S4C have maintained commitment to creative and cultural content which we welcome. Collaboration is key here. We would encourage continued partnership with the arts

sector – examples of which we have detailed earlier - in the creation and broadcast of work.

As with the BBC, to deliver a truly public service, S4C must ensure that it provides content across digital platforms. This is often with the additional consideration of making platforms being available in Welsh.

## How Wales's interests are being represented during the renewal process

We welcome the National Assembly inquiry in to how the BBC Charter renewal will impact on Wales and for the opportunity to respond. We noted that the UK Government consultation terms of reference did not reflect much on the particular needs of the Nations – such as Welsh language provision.

As we have highlighted throughout this document, although broadcasting is not devolved it is important that the unique needs of Wales are adequately reflected in the process. Additionally, it is important that Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales are represented properly at Ofcom and well as there being ample opportunity for the public – the licence payers – to input.

Finally, the BBC and S4C need to evaluate how they can continue to develop engagement with stakeholders, including the arts sector in Wales, during this process and beyond.

## Concluding comments

The main points that we would like make regarding the BBC Charter renewal in Wales, is that BBC and S4C should:

- **support the arts** – They can help us to understand and appreciate new dimensions of expression or experience, enriching our quality of life. The BBC and S4C should invest in the arts in Wales.
- **widen access and develop new audiences** – Universal in access. Both BBC and S4C need to adapt to new platforms and the arts and creativity should be

present across all these platforms. Public funding provides the security to innovate and take risks – new challenges, new opportunities. It is vital that the BBC and S4C are allowed to continue to do this in order to be fit for purpose. It also has a responsibility to support others - including the arts – to innovate with them.

- **reflect Wales as it is today and its future ambitions** – Wales is bilingual, post-devolution, creative, international in outlook and diverse in its people. This should be reflected in the content broadcast, how it is made, who makes it and how it can be accessed.
- **be genuinely collaborative** – We don't need a paternal BBC or S4C, but an open and equal partner willing to collaborate with creative producers in the widest sense.

Public service broadcasting should:

- **be structured to reflect the needs of the devolved nations** – Wales has unique needs. This should be reflected in governance and funding.

And that we, Arts Council of Wales:

- **value our partnerships with BBC Cymru Wales and S4C** – We want to continue working closely together through a partnership agreement and acknowledge their crucial role in sustaining the creative economy all over Wales. The arts in Wales are vastly richer because of them.