

Elin Jones AM
Llywydd
National Assembly for Wales
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay CF99 1NA

01 November 2016

Dear Llywydd

Laying of S4C's Annual Report and Accounts

In the fourth Assembly, the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee carried out an inquiry into the BBC Charter Review. Among the Committee's recommendations was that the BBC should lay before the Assembly annual reports and audited statements of accounts.

This recommendation was given effect through NDM6009, which was debated and approved in plenary on 16 March 2016. By virtue of this resolution, the BBC is now able to lay its annual report and accounts as recommended by the Committee. This in turn facilitates annual scrutiny of BBC Wales by the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee.

The Committee took evidence from S4C on 6 October and asked whether it would also, for similar reasons to the BBC, be prepared to lay its annual report and accounts before the Assembly. I attach a letter from the Chair of the S4C authority where he indicates the willingness in principle of the authority to do so.

The Committee intends to report on its work on broadcasting issues in the New Year. If the Committee agrees to recommend, as I think likely, that S4C should lay annual reports and accounts in future, I would be grateful for your guidance as to whether a similar resolution to NDM6009 would allow those documents to be laid under Standing Order 15.1(v)?

Yours sincerely



Bethan Jenkins AM
Chair





Bethan Jenkins AM
Chair
Culture, Welsh Language and Communication Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay

24 October 2016

Annwyl Bethan

I'd like to thank you and your committee for the opportunity to meet with you on 6 October. Ian and I appreciated the opportunity to discuss matters relating to the future of S4C with you.

I note below our answers to the supplementary questions we received on 19 October. I hope these are of assistance to you. If you do have any further questions, we'd be pleased to discuss them with you.

S4C - BBC Relationship – Creative Cooperation

We are very proud of the strong creative and collaborative relationship that has developed between S4C and the BBC in recent years – between the Authority and the Trust and also between officials at S4C and BBC Cymru Wales.

I can assure you that it is S4C's wish that this relationship should continue during the period of the BBC's new Charter. There is no link between the discussions relating to structures for financial accountability for the next period and the desire of both S4C and the BBC to cooperate on creative and collaborative projects.

The continuation of the relationship will enable us to continue to develop exciting projects for our audiences and to enjoy the shared benefit of the BBC's expertise – in areas such as the iPlayer (which has been a very important development for S4C), and in matters relating to cooperation to deliver financial efficiencies, such as the plan to co-locate S4C and the BBC's technical activities in the BBC's new broadcast centre in Central Square Cardiff. We have already seen meaningful cooperation in relation to content, with regular discussions regarding opportunities to co-produce series and individual programmes likely to be of interest to viewers in both languages and on both services. We are keen for this work to continue.

S4C's relationship with the National Assembly

Since the establishment of the National Assembly, we have undertaken to present evidence to the Assembly's committees and to relevant consultations, and I'm pleased that we continue to do so.

The question of accountability structures and responsibilities is one where S4C, as a public service broadcaster, must avoid expressing opinions on matters of public policy and the responsibilities of elected representatives. We have expanded on these complexities previously in our evidence to the Silk Commission.

Nevertheless, we are keen for S4C to operate, and be seen to be operating, in an accountable, responsible and transparent manner, respecting the democratically elected structures created to represent the people of Wales. Developing and maintaining a constructive relationship with the Assembly and its committees is part of this.

Your question relates specifically to the presentation of S4C's Annual Report and Statement of Accounts before the Assembly, reflecting the proposed arrangements for the BBC in the next Charter period.

Shortly after I was appointed Chairman of the S4C Authority, we assured the Presiding Officer of the last Assembly of our willingness to present S4C's Annual Report and Statement of Accounts in an appropriate manner before the Assembly. For practical reasons relating to the Assembly's own business timetable, it did not prove possible to put this into practice, but S4C's offer still stands.

We would be most willing, within the statutory context which applies to S4C, to re-engage in such discussions to create a process for the presentation of our Annual Report and Statement of Accounts before the National Assembly.

Thank you once again for your interest in S4C's work. I look forward to continuing our discussions.

Yn gywir

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huw Jones', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Huw Jones
Chairman, S4C Authority

CC: Alun Davies, Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language, Welsh Government
Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director Wales, BBC
Ian Jones, Chief Executive S4C