

MEW 26

Gwneud i'r economi weithio i'r rheini sydd ag incwm isel

Making the economy work for people on low incomes

Ymateb gan: Tinopolis Cymru

Response from: Tinopolis Cymru

Background:

Tinopolis is one of the largest independent television companies in Europe and the United States. We work across all areas – factual, entertainment, sports, drama and the digital media. Our programmes are broadcast across the world and we have an important presence in the worldwide media market. In the USA we produce television programmes for all the main networks.

The Tinopolis group includes some of the most prestigious names in the television sector. Mentorn Media is the UK's most experienced factual producer. Sunset+Vine are one of the most notable independent sports producers. Daybreak has won a host of awards for drama and Pioneer Productions enjoys an excellent reputation across the world for specialist innovative factual programmes. In the USA A. Smith and Co. are at the forefront of factual entertainment and Magical Elves is responsible for factual and factual entertainment programmes that break new ground in the field.

We also offer multi-platform programme support as well as digital resources for the corporate and education sectors.

Tinopolis in Llanelli

Tinopolis television centre is located in the centre of Llanelli town, and a wide range of television programmes are produced from the centre including live programmes, sports, and high-quality documentaries. Some have won several Bafta awards. From the studio whose window looks out on the town's high street we broadcast S4C's daily programmes. *Heno* at 7pm every evening is now the backbone of the channel's evening schedule, a programme that has enjoyed 26 years of success. The afternoon magazine programme, *Prynhawn Da*, is broadcast daily at 2pm. This centre also hosts the popular rally programmes, *Ralio*, highlights of the Tour de France and the popular music series, *Stiwdio Gefn*.

The company's roots are extremely important to us. Tinopolis Cymru is Britain's largest regional independent television company. The word Tinopolis is synonymous with Llanelli and it is important for us that this unique identity together with the company's Welsh language ethic are promoted along with the name across the world. The Welsh language is clearly seen on the company's business cards and correspondence and makes us stand out.

The contribution of Tinopolis to the area's economy is extremely important as it offers important opportunities in the creative industries field. This means that there are opportunities for ambitious young people who wish to work in television.

Over a hundred and thirty people are employed in Llanelli and Caernarfon. The television industry was non-existent Llanelli before we moved there but now the jobs

and training that are offered are unique to this area. We are now a natural part of the community. With the exception of the Local Authority, we are the biggest provider of Welsh speaking jobs which are also good quality jobs. Over the years the support of S4C has been essential to the creative and technical development of dozens of the area's young people. As a result of S4C's investment in the West, they have been able to learn new skills in an industry that offers good salaries while being able to stay in their home area to bring up families and contribute further to their local community.

Before Tinopolis moved to its new headquarters in the centre of Llanelli, the building was in a state of disrepair. It used to house the town's Tesco before the supermarket relocated to Parc Trostre on the edges of town. Following a significant investment from Tinopolis and the vision and ambition to create an important company in Llanelli, the old store was restored to a modern and attractive centre. This led to the development of the eastern side of Llanelli, which is now an extremely important area and the exciting regeneration led to a new theatre and arts centre, Y Ffwrnes, adjacent to Tinopolis. The County Council saw an opportunity to link Tinopolis to the new centre and as it was being built, cables were installed between the two buildings in order that the theatre could be used for broadcasting. S4C can also take advantage of this partnership. The link between Y Ffwrnes and Tinopolis will reach its high point in 2018 when one of the main media festivals, the Celtic Media Festival, comes to Llanelli.

At present there is further regeneration of the high street as the council has taken possession of some of the old buildings and created high quality flats on the first floor. There is a substantial effort to bring more life to a town that was once one of the most prosperous in Carmarthenshire.

There is no doubt that good jobs such as those offered by Tinopolis are scarce and are valued in a deprived town. According to research on the town in 2010 by the National Assembly, the level of those receiving unemployment benefit in Llanelli was already higher than the national average (Llanelli 4.7%, national 4.6%); and 3 of the town's council wards (Tyisha, Glanymor and Llwynhendy) are amongst the poorest in the whole of Wales. The seriousness of the economic situation was exacerbated by cuts in the Tata steelworks in Trostre.

In such a climate, Tinopolis's policy of creating an international company with its headquarters in Llanelli is key to economic development. In addition to this element, the company's intention of remaining faithful to West Wales is a means of raising confidence in the community around it. It also reinforces the feeling of Welsh identity that is crucial to economic development. Welsh is deliberately the main language of the workplace. This has the effect of normalising the Welsh language for young people who would otherwise – to be quite honest – turn to English.

Tinopolis in Caernarfon

Before Tinopolis moved to its present offices in Galeri Caernarfon the company's offices were on the Faenol estate. But when Cwmni Tref Caernarfon invested in a new purpose-built building to promote the arts and create a new centre that would be at the heart of the local community, we also decided that we wanted to show our support to the town and this new ambitious venture by renting office space there.

This means that Tinopolis, with its input into daily programmes, is an important part of the community in Caernarfon, and an important part of its economy. Similar to Llanelli, work for Welsh speakers is scarce. We now employ two full crews and two reporters there as well as an engineer who is responsible for the SNG resource. Being a company that has a national investment is important in the production of daily programmes, meaning that the programmes are relevant to the whole of Wales, north and south.

The importance of the work and the local economy to the Welsh language

- Tinopolis has made a point of ensuring that Welsh is the language of the workplace – the work brings great economic benefits in a deprived area but is also of great economic benefit to Welsh speakers
- Young people can therefore stay in their home areas as they find work through the medium of Welsh, and speaking Welsh in the workplace is a means of normalising the language outside work as well
- The Government should ensure that deprived areas in rural Wales where the language is declining are given a better opportunity of winning procurement contracts
- Economic planning should go hand in hand with the language
- The language should not be seen as a barrier to developing as an international company – being able to understand the needs of bilingualism and different cultures can be a powerful marketing tool all over the world
- Financial help should be given to businesses to secure bilingual signage and so on so that the language is always visible – this could add to the economic value of the tourism industry in Wales as well as adding to the normalisation of the language
- Bilingualism in Wales should define society and community. The Welsh language should not be perceived as an obstacle to a company's prosperity but instead as a tool for success.

There is a tendency in Wales to think that it is public companies that require the use of Welsh but we can show that the language is very valuable for a substantial private company too. Tinopolis is a Welsh company and this is part of our brand across the world. This helps us to be different, to stand out.

The question must be raised about the deficiencies of the public sector in Wales by not looking at ways of normalising Welsh. Is there too much emphasis on the need to translate procurement documents or requirements from English to Welsh as a tick box exercise rather than to ensure that Welsh is a core necessity, especially in the old strongholds of the language that have now lost industry and employment? Economic development here could increase the use of Welsh as well.

In Wales we have been too guilty of considering English as the important language and Welsh as a minority regional language. But other countries have long been used

to bilingualism and the need to be sensitive to different cultures. We have seen that this is especially true in the United States and Asia – although English is also the dominant language there too – the ability to show that we as people understand the needs of minorities is part of our selling point. This identity is a crucial part of marketing the company and the company's increasing success.

Good practice with regard to employing Welsh speaking workers

Normalising the language in the workplace definitely leads to normalising the language in the lives of staff outside the company too. It is a conscious policy for us to promote the use of Welsh by making it the language of day to day work. There is no doubt that a number of the young staff would choose to speak English to each other if they didn't work for a company that has a Welsh language policy. This means that those young people see a personal economic gain in being able to speak the language. They have good jobs, and one of the requirements is being able to speak Welsh. We have noticed that the language then becomes a way of life for them outside the workplace too – the language they speak with their partners, or as they decide to transfer the language to their children, because there is an economic value to the language.

Not everybody can speak Welsh when they come to Tinopolis. But as Welsh is the language of our business, especially as we produce programmes for S4C, Welsh is the language of work. As a company, we invest in Welsh lessons for staff who do not speak Welsh, and pay for lessons to improve the workplace language for the less confident. The non-Welsh speaking staff are always encouraged to speak Welsh and they very quickly gain the confidence to speak Welsh with guests arriving to the studio and so on.

The result of this is that we can give a new skill to individuals, which means that if they leave to work for another company or become freelance, they have an additional skill that offers them more opportunities.

It is public money that pays for S4C. As we work in this way for the Welsh language, the value that S4C brings to Carmarthenshire, not only economically, but also linguistically, pays great dividends.

Suggestions for facilitating the work of promoting economic development and the Welsh language together

Undoubtedly one of the most important steps would be for the Government and Councils to view economic and language development side by side. Not by providing dusty documents but by making the language a condition. Procurement agreements have the right to insist that economic, geographic and sociological considerations are important. Giving importance to the language as well would give small companies a better chance – and surely Wales has a proud entrepreneurial tradition of small companies? These are the ones that are at risk of being obstructed by procurement

requirements that work against the Welsh people and in favour of big international companies.

It is pleasing to see that the largest private superstores in Wales have seen the commercial sense of having Welsh signs and this, as well as normalising the language, is a means of strengthening it. A company such as John Lewis – and it is important to bear in mind in this context that John Lewis is one of the most successful department stores – has embraced the language. They have shown respect by using correct and intelligent Welsh on the shop floor as well as in their offices. They ensure that they have Welsh speaking staff (again providing economic gain for individuals in Wales) and they have shown an enthusiasm for Welsh events e.g. partnering with Literature Wales to hold events in the shop. This is part of their deliberate strategy to become part of the community – and it has benefitted them economically.

Grants should be made available for every company in Wales to have bilingual signs and to give Welsh lessons to staff with economic benefit a clear rationale behind the grants – as well as the benefit of normalising Welsh. In addition, prominent use of Welsh would be a marketing tool for the tourism industry – making Wales an attractive and different country from other countries.

But without a doubt, the biggest contribution that the Government can make is economic development hand in hand with the language in the old strongholds – a scheme that would safeguard rural Wales as well as helping to keep the language alive. Wales is too small a country to have her jobs and economic privileges centred in Cardiff. Rural Wales desperately needs an economic life. It is careful economic planning that will keep young people and young families in their native communities. This is what would keep schools open and work for teachers. It would create new micro economies to supply facilities for these, e.g. small shops and businesses. It would be easier for people to become entrepreneurs. It would mean a serious attempt to prevent the language from dwindling further by placing the language and the economy side by side. Above all it would make Wales a fairer country for everyone. With working from home now a regular practice, ensuring an effective internet service is essential.

Tinopolis Working for the Community

We try to be as generous as possible when we offer sponsorship – either through a financial contribution or by offering resources or facilities free of charge.

We also encourage our staff to be good citizens. They are encouraged to participate in their local communities. Our presenters are not arm's length presenters but they are supported by Tinopolis to visit communities the length and breadth of Wales and to give talks to societies free of charge. Our visible presence in North Wales through working in our offices in Galeri Caernarfon adds to the feeling that we are a broadcasting company that serves the whole of Wales.

In conclusion

As heavy industry disappears and with it the traditional economies, there is an increasing need for the Government to invest in partnership with business to provide opportunities for people to train and re-train in sectors where there is a demand. Of course, in rural areas, the obstacles that are still present in terms of infrastructure must be overcome. The key to moving forward is an effective road network. Wales is still suffering from a lack of transport links, adequate broadband availability but also the support of services across the spectrum. We feel that the business model of Tinopolis in Wales over the years is an excellent example of what is possible with the right support.