

Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM

Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport

14 January 2019

Dear Dafydd,

National Broadcast Archive for Wales

Thank you for attending the meeting of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee on 10 January 2019 to discuss the National Broadcast Archive.

I am sure you will agree that establishing a National Broadcast Archive ('the Archive') in Wales will give the people of Wales a unique opportunity to access their social history.

The bid for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to enable this project to go ahead is one which we support and Members of the Committee are very keen to see a successful resolution to the outstanding issues on the Business Case which were discussed at the meeting.

It would help our understanding if you could set out the nature of the difficulties with the Business Case which have yet to be resolved. Your officials mentioned that they still had fundamental concerns, which suggests the situation is more serious than the picture we were given at our meeting with the President and National Librarian on 6 December 2018.

You also mentioned that you felt the BBC should provide more than their promised £20,000 plus approximately £40,000 of in-kind support, for the Archive. This is on the basis that the BBC Archive in Perivale received £9 million of funding, and Wales should receive a contribution which is proportionate to that investment. As was discussed with Members during the meeting, this concern was not raised in correspondence with the National Library to date or mentioned in your response to Dai Lloyd AM in Plenary on 28 November.

Please can you tell us when you first raised the issue of the BBC's funding contribution with the BBC, and, specifically, if you cautioned that the bid for the project was at risk if a proportionate share of funding is not forthcoming?

What correspondence have you had with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on the issue of a proportionate share of BBC funding being allocated to the Archive in Wales?

We understand that any investment of public money can only be made on the basis of a robust Business Case and you told the Committee you are still not convinced that the scheme is financially viable. However, Members would like to know what is your principal concern regarding this project. Is it the size of the contribution from the BBC, or the long-term financial viability of the proposal?

Please can you clarify the Welsh Government's commitment of £1 million to support the bid? During the meeting you said that the money is currently dependent on resolving the Welsh Government's concerns with the Business Case. Does this mean that, in the event the bid to HLF is not accepted this financial year, the £1 million will be available in the next financial year?

It is clear that your officials have been working with the National Library to progress this project to ensure that Wales benefits from £5 million of Lottery Funding and secures a valuable resource for the Library. The Committee supports this effort. We understand the importance of financial due diligence when investing public money but there is a real danger that Wales could lose this opportunity to secure this investment and some of the issues which you raised at our meeting have not arisen until recently.

To progress our work on this issue, I would be grateful if you could respond to my questions by 25 January 2019,

Yours sincerely,



Bethan Sayed

Chair of the Committee



Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-P-DET-0206-19

Bethan Sayed AM
Chair,
Culture Welsh Language & Communications Committee
National Assembly for Wales

29 January 2019

Dear Bethan

Thank you for your letter of 14 January, and for the opportunity to provide the Committee members with an update on the progress of the National Broadcast Archive (NBA) project.

Since I attended the Committee meeting on 10 January, I have met with BBC Cymru Wales to discuss the NBA and, following this meeting, my officials convened a meeting with BBC Cymru Wales and the National Library on 18 January. This was a positive and constructive meeting, and discussions with both the BBC and the Library are continuing.

My principal concern has always been the long term sustainability of the NBA and the impact it could have on the financial position of the National Library, and on the unique functions and activities of the Library. On the advice of my officials, in an effort to address these very real concerns, over the summer I asked the National Library to review the project design with the aim of ensuring that the on-going costs will be manageable, and to demonstrate that a realistic plan for sustaining the NBA from 2024 had been considered. As part of this, the National Library was requested to discuss the level of contribution from BBC Cymru Wales. My officials have also raised this issue directly with the BBC. I did not raise the matter with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

As you are aware, by November of last year I did not feel the concerns regarding sustainability had been addressed sufficiently to enable me to lend Welsh Government support to the project. However, I am pleased to report that at the meeting which took place on 18 January both the National Library and the BBC were clearly committed to achieving an acceptable solution to ensure the delivery and sustainability of the NBA. While these discussions are still underway, including internal discussions at the National Library and the BBC, I hope you will appreciate that it would not be appropriate for me to go into detail.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I expect these discussions to progress quickly now, and for my officials soon to be in a position to provide me with the advice to enable me to take a decision on Welsh Government support for the NBA. This will include the issue of the £1m contribution from the Welsh Government.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Elis-Thomas'.

Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AC/AM

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Diwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism