

Eleanor Marks

Ofcom

8 July 2019

Dear Eleanor,

**BBC request to remove the requirement for 100% speech content during the breakfast radio time slot**

As Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee of the National Assembly for Wales, I am concerned at the proposals in the BBC Annual Plan 2019–20 to make a request to Ofcom to amend the Operating Licence for radio stations in the Nations and Regions. The proposal to vary the quota for speech content in the chapter on ‘Potential changes to the BBC’s public services’ says:

‘we will be asking Ofcom to amend the Operating Licence to remove the 100% speech quota at breakfast time, whilst retaining the overall 60% quota for speech content between 06:00–19:00 on weekdays.’

I have written to Ken MacQuarrie, Director of Nations and Regions, Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director BBC Cymru Wales and the Deputy Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport at the Welsh Government with my concerns.

I feel that any move away from the requirement for 100% speech content on the radio between 07.30 and 08.30 on weekdays would reduce the opportunity for Welsh listeners to hear discussion of political and current events which shape their lives.

Listeners in Wales tune into the BBC stations in a greater proportion than other UK nations. Maintaining the breakfast slot discussion hour provides an opportunity for information and interviews which aid understanding of political decision-making specific to Wales.

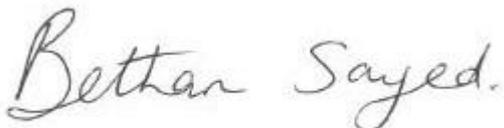
In order to understand how this request will be dealt with by Ofcom, please can you set out the criteria which will be used to consider the request from the BBC? It would be useful to know the basis on which Ofcom will be judging the request, in particular, what consideration will be given to the BBC's Mission and Public Purposes. I am concerned that the request will undermine their public purpose to 'To provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them'. This public purpose includes the requirement to:

'offer a range and depth of analysis and content not widely available from other United Kingdom news providers... so that all audiences can engage fully with major local, regional, national, United Kingdom and global issues and participate in the democratic process, at all levels, as active and informed citizens.'

An indication of the different factors which will be taken into account in assessing the BBC's proposal would be useful for us and our stakeholders to know in advance of their formal request being submitted to you.

I would be grateful if you could respond to me before 31 July so that I can inform our Members before the Summer Recess, with apologies for the short notice,

Yours sincerely,



Bethan Sayed

**Chair of the Committee**