

Owen Evans
S4C Chief Executive
S4C Centre
Yr Egin
Carmarthen SA31 3EQ

Wednesday 25 September 2019

Dear Owen,

RE: Decision not to broadcast 'Newyddion 9' on Tuesday 24 September 2019

I am writing to you following the decision not to broadcast 'Newyddion 9' last night (Tuesday 24 September 2019), and the decision to broadcast '*Chwilio am Seren Junior Eurovision 2019*' in its place.

This decision was one that raised fundamental concerns for me. I understand, of course, that every broadcaster sometimes has to change the time at which the news is broadcast due to other programmes. However, the decision not to broadcast the news at all clearly means that there was no Welsh-language news on television last night, apart from a bulletin at 18.00.

That is especially worrying in light of everything that happened yesterday. As you know, it was a politically significant day, with the Supreme Court ruling that the Prime Minister's attempt to prorogue the UK Parliament was unlawful and void.

The decision not to broadcast the news at all, with the exception of the earlier bulletin, on such a historic evening, meant that S4C viewers were not able to receive any facts, commentary, analysis, or opinion on an issue of fundamental importance for the constitution and for the debate on Brexit. That, of course, is in addition to all the other news that happened yesterday.

In fact, I would have expected or hoped for an extended programme last night, given everything that happened yesterday and the need for commentary on these events.

Of course, last night's decision came in the wake of the decision earlier this year to change S4C's schedule. I have to say that I am not filled with confidence that there

is a significant commitment to news from S4C, as you stated in your letter to me dated 22 May this year, if a decision to dispense with the news on such a significant day in order to broadcast a *Eurovision* programme was made so easily.

In response, I would like you to address these five questions:

1. On what basis was the decision not to broadcast Newyddion 9 last night made?
2. What discussions were conducted in advance between S4C and the BBC regarding the broadcasting of Newyddion 9 in light of what happened yesterday?
3. What consideration was given to proceeding with Newyddion 9 in light of the significant legal and political developments of the day?
4. In the absence of Newyddion 9, how were facts, commentary, analysis and opinions made available through the medium of Welsh last night?
5. What are S4C's guidelines or standards regarding whether or not to broadcast the news in the light of significant events relating to public affairs?

With thanks in advance for your prompt attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



Bethan Sayed AM
Chair, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee



27.09.2019

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The schedule on Tuesday 24 September 2019

Dear Bethan

Thank you for your letter regarding our news coverage. I accept your comments and, in retrospect, I acknowledge that our schedule should have included a routine peak-hours news programme last Tuesday evening in light of historic events. I take this issue seriously, as I know you do. As a public broadcaster, it is vital that S4C delivers a service to inform people of the news and analyse current affairs.

You will be aware that our schedule on that evening included a live broadcast, 'Chwilio am Seren'. When it became apparent on Tuesday morning that the Supreme Court had reached such a striking verdict, we did our best to respond under the constraints of the planned schedule.

There was an extended BBC news programme at 18.00, and ITV was asked to adapt the episode of 'O'r Byd yn ei Le' that was due to be broadcast at 21.30 to include an extended analysis of the judgment.

We should certainly have also included a routine news programme, but we were unable to reschedule on the day. Therefore, on the rare occasions when news programmes need to be moved in future, we will ensure that an appropriate peak-hours news programme is also included. For example, next month, when the Welsh football team

plays Slovakia, the day's main news programme will be broadcast before the game at 19:00.

Looking ahead, you are already aware of our plans to move the main news programme to a new regular slot at 19.30. One of the reasons for doing this is to give the programme a permanent home, as there will be less demand to move it due to live events.

I can assure you that the news service is important to me and a key aspect of the channel. We are also in discussions with the BBC to develop the digital side to provide a more comprehensive service that moves with the times. It may be useful for us to arrange a meeting soon, so that I and S4C's News and Current Affairs Commissioner can meet with you to share our vision for the service.

By the way, I also heard that you have some exciting news to share – congratulations to you. Yours sincerely,

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

Owen Evans

Chief Executive