



## Equity Wales Inquiry into Devolution of Broadcasting

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Equity represents more than 46,000 performers and creative practitioners working across the UK's creative industries. Our members include actors, singers, dancers, variety artists, directors, designers, stage managers and stunt performers who work across various sectors including theatre, light entertainment, television, film, video games and the music industry. Over 1,600 Equity members live in Wales.

When Equity responded to this committee's 'Short Inquiry into S4C' in October 2018 it made the following submission about our policy and viewpoint on the question of devolution of broadcasting. <http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s77599/Paper%201.pdf> In the last twelve months that position is unchanged and in fact Equity policy has been for some time that it does not believe in devolution of broadcasting and also does not currently see any sense in just devolving responsibility for S4C in isolation. However, they have always been open to the opportunity for a much wider discussion between stakeholders should the opportunity present itself. There are, as you will know and appreciate, wide-ranging opinions about what devolution of broadcasting would look like and how it would be funded and regulated and there isn't, unfortunately, one common strand apart from the declaration or belief that broadcasting must be devolved. Equity applauds this committee for its continued work and leadership in the area of broadcasting and, of course, always welcomes the opportunity to contribute to any relevant inquiry launched by the committee. However, we firmly believe that the Welsh Government, perhaps through the long-awaited *Creative Wales*, should be developing policy in this area and leading the discussion and decision process about what it is that Devolution of Broadcasting will actually look like and how it will benefit the creative industries in Wales.

As the committee is aware discussions around devolution have been ongoing for some time. In 2012 the Task and Finish Group on the future outlook for the media in Wales (<http://senedd.assembly.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=1787>) recommended that '*The Welsh Government should establish an independent forum to advise on policy in relation to the media in Wales. The forum should draw on expertise from across the media sectors. Its purpose should be to look to the future and to advise on matters across all sections of the media.*' Of the remaining recommendations, there are two which are pertinent to the current discussions taking place 7 years later:-

- **Recommendation 5.** As part of its role, the independent forum should keep under review the issue of the devolution of broadcasting in Wales and advise the Welsh Government as appropriate.
- **Recommendation 6.** The Welsh Government should develop a protocol with the UK Government for dealing with broadcasting issues which are not devolved.

When the Welsh Government responded it rejected the recommendation regarding the formation of an independent forum to advise on policy:-

*Although we do not accept this recommendation the Welsh Government agrees that these issues should be kept under review. We feel that this is a reasonable request and not altogether unexpected, as the coming period will see extensive changes in our media landscape, changes caused*

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Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / Culture, Welsh Language and Communications  
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*by market forces, technological change, user behaviour and UK Government intervention. In response, the First Minister has already asked the Chair of the Creative Industries Sector Panel to chair a Task and Finish Group – the Broadcasting Advisory Panel (BAP) – to review matters in relation to broadcasting. We feel that this will be a crucial first step in addressing the Committee's concerns.* (<http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s9208/%20%20Response%20from%20the%20Welsh%20Government%20to%20the%20Future%20Outlook%20of%20Media%20in%20Wales%20report%20-%20July%202012.pdf>)

Equity has expressed its disappointment on many occasions, in responses to Welsh Government, this Committee, National Assembly of Wales inquiries and directly to the previous First Minister, that the Broadcasting Advisory Panel had never reported; that there was no record of how many meetings have taken place and, crucially, that the makeup of the panel did not incorporate representatives from stakeholders within the Creative Industries – excluding, specifically, the voice of the workforce in the form of the trade unions. The role of this panel was also to implement the 22 recommendations of the report. Whilst outside of this particular inquiry Equity questions again why these recommendations have seemingly not been carried out. (<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s60658/FS4C04%20Equity.pdf>)

Whilst Equity does not believe there is an appetite from the Welsh Government for devolution of broadcasting this does not remove the need to have the most informed discussion and consideration of alternatives. Every alternative should be explored to make sure the future, especially of S4C, is secured and, more importantly, financial security is guaranteed going forward. Equity's priority would be to support the most appropriate option with all the avenues explored.

Equity would again suggest that the Inquiry recommend the setting up of an Independent Forum to advise the Welsh Government on policy in relation to the media in Wales and to keep the matter of devolution under constant review. This forum should consider the inclusion of representatives from recognised trade unions to promote social partnership and greater accountability within the industry.

Equity is, of course, aware that this is not solely about funding levels and that there are questions about national identity and the language which are equally if not more important to our members and therefore to the union, but as a trade union looking to protect its members rights and ability to live and work in Wales the long term health of the creative industries and their access to work is vital.

In conclusion Equity's priority would be to actively engage in a wide-ranging debate amongst stakeholders, led by Welsh Government, and to support the most appropriate options for our members once all the avenues have been debated, investigated and fully costed.

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