

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / Culture, Welsh Language and Communications
Committee
Datganoli Darlledu / Devolution of Broadcasting
CWLC DoB21
Ymateb gan Unigolyn / Response from an Individual

In Wales we have two public service broadcasters. The BBC which is headquartered in London has a regional presence in Wales with their operations in Wales run from Cardiff with satellite offices across Wales. Their lack of influence at a national UK level is clear and obvious. There are two representatives from Wales on the BBC's new unitary board, on salaries of over £30,000 per annum. It is unclear what input, if any, they have in relation to Wales, on the board. These two facts alone makes the case for devolving broadcasting clear.

S4C are headquartered in Carmarthen with offices in Caernarfon and Cardiff. Their technical operations are colocated with the BBC in Cardiff with staff transferred from their employment with S4C to the BBC. This has weakened S4C's position in relation to remaining independent from the BBC especially as 90% of S4C's funding now comes from the licence fee. S4C is now primarily a commissioning body, this element could easily be absorbed by the BBC. However under the current London control of the BBC the absorbing of S4C would be a disaster.

The recent general election and the consideration given to Wales particularly in relation to devolved matters made it clear that the current system is broken.

Devolving broadcasting would allow for a new negotiation of the BBC's charter in relation to Wales and open the door for the creation of a new Welsh national broadcaster along similar lines to the Basque national broadcaster EITB. Commissioning and distributing Audiovisual and Audio content in both Welsh and English for TV, radio and digital platforms Including Facebook, YouTube, Twitch, Twitter and Instagram as well as any new and emerging platforms. As well as creating a Netflix style platform ensuring all content is available internationally on smart TV'S and mobile devices.

This would create new opportunities for the established traditional production sector in Wales but more importantly enable Wales to develop as a new centre for the creation of digital content.

Reducing the democratic deficit in Wales is essential, by devolving responsibility for broadcasting to Wales we can ensure that the people of Wales make informed decisions in relation to their lives, today and in the future.

Cost savings & Funding. Creating a new entity that commissions and distributes content in both languages for multiple platforms could provide substantial cost savings, whilst at the same time create new commercial opportunities and revenue streams. Wales contributes it's share towards the BBC, but are we receiving value for money? Could a new national Welsh broadcaster develop a new funding model? One based on a contribution from the license fee, commercial revenues and government subsidy? The Welsh government already has a mechanism in place to fund content in the guise of the books council. Repurposing the books council as a content council could accelerate the process of developing the digital content industry in Wales whilst allowing the Welsh Government to create the framework for the creation of a Welsh National Broadcaster.

Devolving responsibility for broadcasting whilst tinkering with the current structures would prove futile. The act of devolving broadcasting offers a real opportunity for change, for audiences and industry.

Huw Marshall is the former head of digital at S4C and now works as an independent media strategist

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