



YR EGLWYS
YNG NGHYMRU



THE CHURCH
IN WALES

ARCHESGOB CYMRU AC ESGOB LLANDAF, Y PARCHEDICAF DDR BARRY MORGAN
ARCHBISHOP OF WALES AND BISHOP OF LLANDAFF, THE MOST REVEREND DR BARRY MORGAN

Response to the OFCOM consultation

S4C

- I welcome the positive acknowledgement of OFCOM of the contribution made to Welsh language public service broadcasting by S4C in the period since it began operating in 1982. It can point to many successes during the subsequent period, not least the development of its profile in animation and its four Oscar nominations. However, the key success of S4C has been to develop and stay true to its own core remit as a broadcaster of Welsh language programming during the peak viewing times. It is no accident that S4C is now widely considered a beacon across the world in the sphere of indigenous language broadcasting
- With the advent of the digital age, S4C clearly faces new challenges, in the same way as most other broadcasters. However, it appears to have risen to that challenge in a remarkably cost-effective way and seems to be bucking the trend in terms of viewing figures with its peak-time viewing figures for the first quarter of 2005 showing a year on year increase of 10%. Nevertheless, it is clear that funding is a vital issue for S4C – and OFCOM and indeed the DCMS needs to be mindful of this matter. This is particularly the case when consideration is given to the expansion of S4C's provision to platforms other than television and in formats other than linear broadcasting – something that is already very evident in the provision of other public service broadcasters such as the BBC.
- It now appears self-evident that the relationship between the BBC and S4C in terms of provision and control of programming needs renegotiating and I am concerned that the DCMS commissioned Laughton report published in July 2004 identified that the proportion of BBC funding given to its Welsh language provision has not kept pace with the financial provision for its English language programming in Wales. While being supportive and appreciative of the BBC's evident commitment to Wales, I would commend the conclusion reached by Laughton that the BBC and S4C should move towards a new formula for the provision of appropriately funded programmes and services to S4C, consistent with the public service broadcasting needs of twenty-first century Wales. I would suggest also that this relationship should be on a basis of greater

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transparency and consideration might also be given as to whether the BBC provision should be on the basis of programmes or in financial terms. As suggested above, the other key question relating to the BBC-S4C relationship is where decisions for programmes should lie. It would seem evident that this should be a cause for some discussion since the present situation would appear to impact unfavourably on S4C's ability to properly plan strategic programme schedules. However, one can also understand the scepticism the BBC might have for handing over editorial control for individual programmes to S4C.

- I welcome OFCOM's emphasis on accountability and would suggest that the principle of an independent authority for S4C is an important one which should be retained – not least because of its key role in safeguarding the central function of S4C as the provider of Welsh language broadcast provision during the peak viewing times. However, a greater distance between the S4C authority and the S4C senior management team might be something that would be considered desirable with a view to developing further the Authority's scrutiny function.
- I remain to be convinced however about the practicality of OFCOM's present suggestion of a not for profit Public Service Publisher in Wales, but look forward to further details in due course if this course of action is to be explored further.
- I am also sceptical of the suggestion that S4C should be wholly incorporated into the BBC and welcome the comments of BBC Wales controller, Menna Richards, who has emphasised that this is not on the BBC's agenda. My scepticism with this scenario is largely based on the danger of transferring responsibility for Welsh language broadcasting outside Wales, though of course the equally important matter of plurality must also be a key consideration.

ITV1Wales

- I welcome OFCOM's assurances that they are not seeking a dilution of the English language provision produced in Wales and broadcast within Wales in terms of the Channel 3 output. Whilst I recognise OFCOM's point that we need to move on rather than hold on to a disintegrating model, and look for a new model based on technological reality as well as viewer choices, it is still the case that the Channel 3 output must acknowledge the distinct nature of Wales in both its news and non-news output.
- I welcome also OFCOM's assurances that its commitment to the provision of national Welsh news on the Channel 3 output in Wales to be assured. This is clearly important, not least on the issue of plurality. With both the *Daily Post* and *Western Mail* daily newspapers

now part of the same Trinity Mirror group, there does seem to be grounds for the concern expressed by some within Welsh civil society that we are moving towards a very limited number of news perspectives in Wales.

I am glad to have been able to contribute to this consultation process but more importantly, to have been made aware also of the Welsh broadcasting community's engagement with OFCOM on these important issues. They are of course of vital importance to the civil society of Wales. I trust that OFCOM will continue to involve itself in this engagement mindful of the distinct cultural, religious, political and historical background of Wales.

Most Rev Dr Barry Morgan, Archbishop of Wales.

Cover sheet for response to an Ofcom consultation

BASIC DETAILS

Consultation title: OFCOM review of public service broadcasting – phase 3

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Name Most Rev Dr Barry Morgan,

Signed (if hard copy)

