

BCR 02

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol  
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Ymchwiliad i'r Adolygiad o Siarter y BBC

Inquiry into the BBC Charter Review

Ymateb gan: Ffilm Cymru wales

Response from: Ffilm Cymru Wales

## Response to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committees' Inquiry into the BBC Charter Review

**Please find below Ffilm Cymru Wales' response to the Welsh Assembly Communities, Equality and Local Government Committees' Inquiry into the BBC Charter Review (October 2015)**

If you need to contact us regarding this response, please contact: Pauline Burt, CEO of Ffilm Cymru Wales c/o [angharad@ffilmcymruwales.com](mailto:angharad@ffilmcymruwales.com)

### **Background information**

Ffilm Cymru Wales is a lottery delegate of the Arts Council of Wales and the BFI, committed to the strategic development of the film sector in Wales and developing the social, cultural, educational and economic benefits of film for the people of Wales.

Ffilm Cymru Wales' work spans across our banners of Make, See and Learn and includes commitments to:

- Developing a more inclusive film sector and film culture in Wales;
- Continuing to develop an agile, adaptive, and audience-centric approach that improves access to independent film across Wales for all and places evidence-based audience planning at the centre of production decisions;
- Identifying the potential value around a film proposition early in the process. And supporting the development of complementary intellectual property, education assets and audience development strategies in tandem with film production, where appropriate;
- Encouraging excellence and the growth of sustainable Welsh companies

You can find more details about us here: [www.ffilmcymruwales.com](http://www.ffilmcymruwales.com)

### **Context of our response**

Our response is focused on aspects of BBC's Charter Review that relate to its role in developing and sustaining the training, talent, employment opportunities that underpin the creative industries across the UK and in particular relation to those functions in Wales. Together with the vital importance of the BBC in developing and supporting a diverse and inclusive sector that appeals to broad and varied audiences.

### **Responding to the Welsh Assembly review questions**

## **The future provision of the BBC's services in Wales, in both the English and Welsh languages:**

The BBC is a firmly established bedrock of the creative industries across the UK with a reputation for its high quality services.

In Wales there has been a productive and collaboration relationship between BBC Wales and S4C, and we would encourage the further development of co-commissioning of content to ensure that a breadth of quality Welsh language content across film, television and digital interactive content is sustained and developed.

Of particular note has been the role of BBC Wales in growing the local crew, facilities and services infrastructure, particularly following the BBC's commitment to redistribute its activities across the UK, including significant relocation of network drama content to Cardiff, providing a foundation for its drama village and the ripple effect that has supported the evolution of Swansea's creative industries infrastructure. This is of benefit across the creative industries, with crew, facilities and services often working across sub-sectors, particularly in relation to film and in the development of content in both Welsh and English.

Whilst the BBC has undoubtedly significantly contributed to growing the crew and facilities infrastructure, increasing Wales' capacity to service local and inward investment film and television production, in contrast there has been very limited engagement in developing film content originated from Wales and Welsh talent (writers, directors and production companies). This in turn restricts opportunities to develop the future talent base and sustainability of the local content originators, making Wales more susceptible to fluctuations in the market where portable content will film in the most competitive locations. In 9 years, BBC Wales has only commissioned one feature film – *Third Star*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch, which was the closing film of the 2010 Edinburgh Film Festival. This is insufficient activity to meaningfully contribute to Wales' film sector.

Additionally, there appears to be little or no engagement, co-ordination or collaboration between BBC Wales and BBC Films, with its more significant film budgets and specific remit to develop filmed content. We would speculate that this lack of internal co-ordination directly contributes to the complete lack of BBC Films' engagement in Welsh language content; and the extremely limited engagement of BBC Films in supporting features originated from Welsh talent. Ffilm Cymru Wales has had some success in this area – including co-developing the current feature proposition, *Denmark*, with Cardiff based company Severn Screen (with director Marc Evans and to star Rhys Ifans), but our comparatively modest budgets (circa £1m per annum across development and production) cannot compete with the potential impact of the BBC having more joined up working practice and advocacy across the nations.

In the future, we would stress the importance of the BBC developing a more inclusive workforce, including supporting the development of content originators (writers, directors and

producers) of film, television and interactive content (including educational content) – and including a specific commitment to this inclusive approach across the nations. This implies a more diverse workforce operating both within the BBC and the independent production sector, who could provide new ideas and be encouraged to take measured risks. A more inclusive workforce, generating jobs across socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, gender and all protected characteristics, should in turn feed into a breadth of content to appeal to the full breadth of audiences, maintaining the BBC's vital relevance across the UK.

Investment in training remains a vital area for the BBC to sustain and grow if Wales and the UK are going to remain competitive in the global market and able to respond to the opportunities that enhanced tax credits (across film, high-end television, childrens' programming, animation and games) provide. These fiscal circumstances, combined with a long-established reputation for quality have contributed to an unprecedented demand for new entrants to meet the needs of the sector now, as well as for the future. Inevitably, when budgets are cut, there is a danger of moving towards short-termism, and we would strongly advocate the importance of maintaining and indeed growing the training capacity of the BBC to the benefit of the wider creative economy.

### **The BBC's current and future funding, governance and accountability arrangements as they relate to Wales:**

Ffilm Cymru Wales understands that in times of austerity all areas outside of protected departments will have cuts to bear, and the sheer scale of the BBC might present particular opportunities to develop further efficiency savings. However, we would stress the fundamental importance of protecting and enhancing the film and television original content budgets, with a particular emphasis on the importance of this content reflecting both the audiences and the creative workforce of all 4 nations of the UK.

As noted above, there are already notable shortcomings in the BBC's commissioning of film from across the UK (with only 1 Welsh language project (as part of Ffilm Cymru Wales' Cinematic programme) and 3 English language features actively progressing from Wales in a decade, which is a significant concern. This points to a need for BBC Films to be more integrated with their colleagues across the UK, including BBC Wales to co-ordinate the development and commissioning of talent and original film content across the nations.

To-date the BBC has supported emerging talent programmes, via BBC Films, from short films to low-budget schemes such as Microwave (with Film London), i-Features (with Creative England) and Cinematic (with Ffilm Cymru Wales), the later of which supported the production of 3 feature films from Welsh writers, directors and producers – 2 in English and 1 in Welsh from Euros Lyn (Happy Valley, Sherlock) in partnership with S4C and the BFI. These have been highly cost efficient ways for BBC Films to support the emergence of talent across the UK – with their contribution to Cinematic's 3 features being just £200k in total, for example. However, it is extremely worrying that we have been advised that BBC Films intends to withdrawal from all such future emerging talent schemes. This support of the next generation of content creators should surely be at the heart of their public service ethos – in contrast to the increased emphasis on commercially established directors.

Whether the BBC continues with a Trust or some other form of governance structure, it is crucially important that the BBC remains accountable in terms of its relevance to all audiences across the UK, and their role in developing the inclusivity of the sector's workforce

and content creators across all 4 nations. We would endorse the inclusion of specific representatives from each of Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England (with an out of London focus) – incorporating a breadth of skillsets and experience – in recognition of the specificity of circumstances across the nations.

**S4C’s future, including its funding, operating and governance arrangements, and the services it provides:**

As Wales is officially a bi-lingual nation, with the equality of its language enshrined in law, it is crucial that this is reflected fully in the cultural output of the BBC with its UK wide remit *and* through its sustained commitment to supporting S4C’s output.

This commitment should be full encompassing to ensure the longer term sustainability of film, television, interactive and educational content across both broadcasters, including the development and commissioning of local content creators, training of existing and new entrants to the sector and protecting and enhancing the content provided to audiences, ensuring relevance.

Governance, operating and funding structures would benefit from a holistic approach that fully recognises the interconnected impact or the broadcast and wider creative industries ecology.

**How Wales’s interests are being represented during the renewal process:**

We welcome the UK Government’s stated commitment to the three Devolved Administrations having clear, agreed and equal roles in developing the new BBC Charter, and we would hope that this joined up approach continues beyond the renewal process.

These powers should ensure that the BBC has governance, management and funding structures which reflect the needs of Wales and better support the development, production and delivery of content from the nations and regions. A key aspect of this partnership is to:

*“push the BBC to take a more representative approach to commissioning, talent development and production from and for all the nations and region”.*

We fully support this proposition and look forward to collaborating with both government, the BBC and S4C to take this forward.