



**Meeting of the BBC Wales Committee
BBC Wales, Central Square, Cardiff
MINUTES**

21st February 2024

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Introduction and minutes of previous Wales Committee
2. Director, BBC Wales Report
3. Audiences
4. Radio
5. Director, BBC Nations Report
6. Finance
7. AOB and close

ATTENDANCE

Members:

- Elan Closs Stephens, Acting Chair of the BBC (Chair)
- Michael Smyth, Non-executive Director
- Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director, Nations
- Rhuanedd Richards, Director, BBC Wales
- Rhys Evans, Head of Corporate Affairs and Public Policy, BBC Wales

With:

- Gareth Davies, Senior Head of Marketing (for items 3 and 4)
- Mark Grinnell, Executive Lead (secretary)
- Dafydd Meredydd, Senior Head of Content Production, Radio Cymru (for items 3 and 4)
- Nia Morgan, Senior Finance Business Partner (for item 6)
- Kate Phillips, Commissioning Director Unscripted
- Samantha Sing, Finance Director, Nations (observer)
- Neil Sloan, Managing Editor, Radio Wales (for items 3 and 4)

BBC WALES COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday 21st February 2024

1. Introduction and minutes of previous Wales Committee

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to her final meeting as member for Wales and as acting Chair of the BBC Board and expressed gratitude for her time with the BBC.
- 1.2 The Chair noted the membership of the Nations Committees in the future would be a matter for the incoming Chair of the BBC Board.
- 1.3 The minutes of the last Committee meeting (4th October 2023) were approved with no new conflicts arising.
- 1.4 The Chair welcomed the Finance Director, Nations to observe the meeting as part of her BBC induction.
- 1.5 The Chair welcomed the Commissioning Director, attending the Committee as a guest from the BBC Content Division.
- 1.6 The Director, Wales gave an update on developments in the leadership team at S4C.
- 1.7 Interviews for the appointment of a new Non-Executive Director, Member for Wales have taken place and an announcement is expected. Michael Smyth, member for Northern Ire-land, would represent Wales in the interim.

2. Director, BBC Wales, Report

- 2.1 The Committee heard that total viewing requests for BBC Wales content on iPlayer during 2023 increased by 50% year on year and is equal with the record viewing figure of 2021.
- 2.2 The Director noted joined up working between local commissioning and colleagues in network.
- 2.3 The Director noted programme highlights including *Wolf* and *Steeltown Murders* in Scripted content and the performance of shows such as *Paranormal*, *Crash Detectives* and *Dark Land* in Unscripted.
- 2.4 Total listening requests on Sounds for BBC Wales content during 2023 increased by 49% with content including *Crossbow Killer* and *Death of a Codebreaker* as notable highlights. This growth was also helped by the addition of smart speaker listening from April in both English and Welsh language content.
- 2.5 The BBC Wales content offer for Christmas 2023 included *Men Up* which was the most watched BBC Wales content over the festive period.
- 2.6 The next big drama project for BBC Wales would be *Lost Boys and Fairies* which is due to air in the spring of 2024.
- 2.7 The Committee heard that viewing figures for *Six Nations* rugby matches are strong, with 71% of the Wales population watching TV at the time. The *Six Nations* broadcast rights would be going to market this year.
- 2.8 Welsh Labour Leadership election programme preparations are underway for the televised debate between the candidates who are running to be the next Welsh Labour leader.

- 2.9 There is a under-recovery of income due to a decline in demand in production and post-production operations.
- 2.10 Work would be undertaken to enhance audience delivery and evaluate resources in linear and digital sport output.
- 2.11 BBC Wales Talk Disability year concluded and has met objectives, including the launch of disability traineeships and Extend scheme job opportunities.
- 2.12 BBC Radio Cymru 2 would launch as a full service in March 2024 after BBC Board approval and the conclusion of a Public Interest Test with the regulator Ofcom.
- 2.13 The Director noted ongoing challenges for the Welsh Orchestra with a reduction in external funding and the closure of St David's Hall in Cardiff. Notable future concerts include a performance at The Brangwyn in Swansea for St David's Day.

3. Audiences

- 3.1 The Committee discussed the latest audience figures, including the internal scores on impartiality, universality of appeal and chosen often metrics.
- 3.2 Audience consumption for watching, listening and BBC Wales news is above the UK average with stable performance on iPlayer and Sounds
- 3.3 Audiences who use iPlayer are now routinely offered other content which may be relevant.
- 3.4 The Committee reviewed the top twenty BBC Wales titles on network including Steel-town Murders, Wolf and Crash Detectives.

4. Radio

- 4.1 The latest RAJAR audience research shows commercial radio listening in Wales has overtaken BBC consumption for two listening quarters in succession.
- 4.2 Radio Wales and Radio Cymru combined listening will hit the expected BBC targets in 2024.
- 4.3 In 2023, there was a significant lineup change on BBC Radio Wales and a refresh of the news agenda on the radio station with more sharing of content onto Wales television news.
- 4.4 Reach for the relaunched breakfast show on BBC Radio Wales has increased while the amount of hours spent listening has declined slightly.
- 4.5 The music content on Radio Wales has been developed to better address the average listening age of the radio station along with changes to the production elements including sequencing and presentation coaching.
- 4.6 Radio Cymru listening reach is down on the quarter and year, but remains the most consumed radio output amongst fluent Welsh speakers.
- 4.7 While digital listening doesn't make up for the loss in linear listening, there is still an increase in consumption to listening online.
- 4.8 Radio Cymru 2 would increase to a full service station from March 4th when extended hours will launch.

5. Director, BBC Nations report

- 5.1 The Executive Committee of the BBC would continue to commission developments and innovate Product. This will work to unify and personalize the BBC's brand.
- 5.2 The Committee heard work is progressing to develop news prominence on the app and enhancement to iPlayer.
- 5.3 The Executive Committee would continue to review the financial forecast for the BBC's content plans.

6. Finance

- 6.1 The Committee heard the latest financial forecast and noted key items including investment in the expansion of the Radio Cymru 2.
- 6.2 The Actual number of persons employed by BBC Cymru Wales has reduced following the transfer of Technology, Archive and Marketing roles to Technology Group and the Chief Customer Officer Group on 1st April 2023; however, these roles continue to directly support the service provided in Wales and would be fully defined in the Annual Report and Accounts.

7. AOB

- 7.1 The Chair thanked the Committee members and everyone who had contributed to the meeting.
- 7.2 The Director Nations and Director Wales thanked the Chair for her oversight, support, kindness and challenge in her position as Chair of the Wales Committee and Acting Chair of the BBC.
- 7.3 The next meeting would be held in Cardiff on June 4th 2024.

Meeting closed.