



House of Commons
Welsh Affairs Committee

Pre-appointment hearing with the Government's preferred candidate for the Chair of S4C

First Report of Session 2019–21

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 17 March 2020*

Welsh Affairs Committee

The Welsh Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales (including relations with the National Assembly for Wales).

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Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Mems Ayinla (Second Clerk), Dr Adam Evans (Clerk), Louise Glen (Senior Committee Assistant), Simon Horswell (Committee Specialist), Kelly Tunnicliffe (Committee Assistant), Tim West (Media Officer) and Rhianon Williams (Committee Specialist).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Welsh Affairs Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 6957; the Committee's email address is welshcom@parliament.uk.

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Summary

On 17 March 2020 the Welsh Affairs Committee held a pre-appointment hearing with the Government's preferred candidate for the Chair of S4C, Rhodri Williams. On the basis of the evidence he gave to the Committee, we have concluded that he is a suitable candidate for the post.

1 Appointment of the Chair of S4C

Introduction: Pre-appointment hearings

1. In its July 2007 Green Paper, [The Governance of Britain](#), the then UK Government proposed the introduction of pre-appointment hearings for key public appointments for which Parliament has a particularly strong interest. The list of posts which the Government considers suitable for pre-appointment hearings is set out in Annex A to the Cabinet Office publication, [Guidance on pre-appointment scrutiny by House of Commons Select Committees](#). The outcome of pre-appointment hearings is not binding on the Government, although the report of the Committee holding the hearing should inform Ministers' decision making on whether to proceed.¹

2. On 20 January 2020, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport announced that Rhodri Williams was the Government's preferred candidate to be the Chair of S4C.² The previous Chair, Huw Jones left the organisation on 30 September 2019 and Hugh Hesketh Evans, a board member of S4C, is currently the interim Chair. We held our pre-appointment hearing with Mr Williams on 17 March 2020.

S4C

3. S4C (Sianel Pedwar Cymru – Channel Four Wales) was established in 1982 under the Broadcasting Act 1981 and is now regulated by the Broadcasting Act 1990 and Communications Act 2003.³

4. Initially, S4C produced 22 hours of Welsh language programmes every week alongside English programmes from Channel 4. Today, S4C is a wholly Welsh language channel broadcasting over 115 hours of programmes each week. Independent producers from across Wales are commissioned to make the majority of its programmes. ITV Cymru Wales produces some of S4C's programmes and BBC Cymru Wales provides around 10 hours of content per week.⁴

5. The [Public Bodies Act 2011](#) places a statutory duty on the Secretary of State to secure that S4C is paid an amount that he or she considers sufficient to enable S4C to cover the cost of providing its public services.⁵ S4C is currently funded through a mixture of grant in aid, funding from the Television Licence Fee through the BBC and advertising and commercial revenue. The Licence Fee contributes £74.5m annually to S4C (from 2017/18 to 2021/22). Following the [independent review of S4C by Eyrn Ogwen Williams](#), published in March 2018, the amount DCMS paid to the broadcaster in 2018/19 remained at £6.762m. S4C also generates commercial revenues through activities including advertising sales and programme sponsorship. Its commercial activities contribute an average of approximately £2m per year to S4C's public service fund.⁶

1 Liaison Committee, Pre-Appointment Hearings, Third Report of Session 2017–19, 19 June 2019 [HC 2307]

2 HM Government, [Preferred candidate selected for S4C Chair](#), 20 January 2020

3 S4C, [Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 2018–19](#)

4 S4C, [Introducing S4C](#) (accessed 10 March 2020)

5 Public Bodies Act 2011, s.31

6 S4C, [Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 2018–19](#), p119

6. From 2022/23, all public money for S4C will come from the licence fee and will be decided in the licence fee settlement. This was one of the recommendations made in the review.⁷

The governance of S4C and the role of the Chair

7. Following the review of S4C, its governance is now based on a Unitary Board model (in place of the previous non-exec Authority Board). Until primary legislation is introduced to facilitate a number of elements of the proposed structure, the Board shall operate as a Shadow Unitary Board in accordance with the Board's new Standing Orders. The appointed Chair is expected to continue into the role of Chair of the statutory board when it is constituted.

8. It is the duty of S4C's Board to ensure that S4C's television and online services represent a public service for the dissemination of information, education and entertainment. The Board is responsible for ensuring that effective corporate governance and management arrangements, including financial management, are in place for S4C's public and commercial services. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that the independence of S4C is safeguarded.

9. The S4C Board must have a detailed understanding of online and broadcasting developments and of devolved government in Wales and take into account cultural and other initiatives when determining its strategy.

10. The Chair shares the responsibilities of the Board and is expected to:

- Work closely on a non-executive basis with the Chief Executive and Secretary; supporting the Chief Executive in his role as accounting officer and providing guidance advice and support to him and the Management Team;
- Ensure high standards of corporate governance are put in place and are operational within the Board, its committees and across all of S4C's activities;
- Lead the development of the partnership relationship with the BBC at a strategic and Board level, working closely with the Chief Executive and Secretary to implement the relationship;
- Work closely with DCMS and other stakeholders including the Welsh Assembly Government and the independent sector;
- Represent S4C in its dealings with Ministers both within the UK government and the Welsh Government;
- Undertake a wide range of public relations duties on behalf of S4C as the public face of S4C, including chairing public meetings across Wales, responding to the press and attending frequent public functions;
- Promote S4C in the public arena within Wales and beyond;

- Ensure a thorough understanding of the work of S4C as a public service broadcaster and media provider and of the television and digital sectors in Wales, in the UK and in an international context;
- Develop and lead the Board's annual work plan, including all associated arrangements for meetings of the Board and its committees and attending meetings as required;
- Monitor board members' performance and provide advice to the Secretary of State on the appointment and reappointment of members.⁸

11. In the information sent to candidates, the Government stated that the successful candidate would need to demonstrate the following essential criteria:

- an understanding of, and commitment to, S4C's objectives;
- an understanding of, and a commitment to the challenges and opportunities facing the development of the Welsh language;
- excellent leadership skills and ability to chair effectively at senior board level;
- the ability to lead and develop strategy and decision making across the range of the Board's responsibilities;
- excellent communication skills and the ability to represent S4C with confidence to the public, Government and a wide range of stakeholder groups;
- a commitment to effective financial stewardship and ability to ensure value for money is achieved;
- an understanding of the key challenges facing S4C, public service broadcasting and the wider media sector in Wales;
- a commitment to equal opportunities and diversity; and
- as the Board conducts most of its business in Welsh, applicants will need to be a fluent Welsh speaker.⁹

The appointment will be for an initial term of four years. After that period, the appointment may be extended, subject to review. The job requires a time commitment equivalent to two days per week and carries a salary of £40,000 per annum.

Recruitment process

12. Mr Williams was selected from an open recruitment exercise. The advisory assessment panel for the campaign was chaired by Robert Specterman-Green, Director, Creative and Media Industries, DCMS; Hugh Hesketh Evans, S4C Board Member; Libby Watkins, the senior independent panel member; Ashok Ahir, representing the Wales Office; and Hywel Owen, the Welsh Government's representative. According to the information supplied by

⁸ Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, S4C Chair Final Role Specification, April 2019

⁹ Ibid.

DCMS, five applications were received for the role (two female and three male candidates), of which three were shortlisted for interview (two male and one female candidate). Interviews were held on 18 September 2019.

Rhodri Williams, the Government's preferred candidate

The candidate's background

13. Rhodri Williams has been a member of S4C's Authority Board and Shadow Unitary Board since July 2018. Previously, he was Ofcom's first director in Wales responsible for establishing the organisation's presence in Wales and its relationship with all stakeholders, including the National Assembly for Wales, the Welsh Government and the Wales Office. He has also been Chair of the Welsh Language Board and co-founded Agenda Television, one of Wales' largest independent production companies. He currently holds a number of non-executive appointments which include: Visiting Professor, University of South Wales; Chair of Gwent Independent Film Trust; Member of Welsh Government Next Generation Broadband Wales Programme Board; and Member of Welsh Government Public Sector Broadband Aggregation Project Board.¹⁰

Our evidence

14. In line with the guidance produced by the Liaison Committee on the conduct of pre-appointment hearings, our questioning was intended to test the professional competence and personal independence of the candidate. In particular, we questioned Rhodri Williams about the following specific matters:

- a) His motivations for the role, past experience and priorities;
- b) The recruitment process and his personal independence;
- c) The review of S4C, including the funding of S4C;
- d) His ability to deal and negotiate with ministers;
- e) Experience of scrutinising commercial investment decisions;
- f) Challenges and opportunities;

The Committee's view on the suitability of the candidate

15. Rhodri Williams has held a number of relevant senior posts in his career, including as Wales Director at Ofcom and he is currently a non-executive member of S4C's Shadow Unitary Board. Given the previous Committee's work on the review of S4C, we were keen to ensure that the candidate has the necessary attributes to guide S4C through the challenges and opportunities it presents. The Committee notes that the position of Chair of S4C requires a time commitment equivalent to two days per week. We are confident that Mr Williams recognises the time commitment required for this post and will ensure that the demands of his other interests do not conflict with his role as S4C Chair. Mr Williams was able to reassure us that he understands the current issues facing

the broadcaster and has a clear vision for the future. We welcome his commitment to introducing new talent, fresh perspectives and increasing diversity on the board as well as recognising the importance of culture. He is committed to furthering the interests of the Welsh language, forging and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders, and we welcome Mr Williams' commitments to achieving his priorities.

16. We are satisfied that Rhodri Williams has demonstrated the high degree of professional competence and personal independence required for the post. We recommend that the Government proceed with the appointment. We wish Mr Williams well in his new post and we look forward to working with him in the future.

Appendix 1: CV: Rhodri Williams

A dynamic and passionate leader with extensive experience in the private and public sectors and an understanding of Wales, its people and politics which is second to none. A successful track record in public administration, business, and regulation with a wealth of experience in addressing sensitive and contentious issues under the full scrutiny of elected representatives, stakeholders, the media and the public.

- Ofcom's first Director in Wales responsible for establishing the organisation's presence in Wales and its relationship with all stakeholders, including the National Assembly for Wales, the Welsh Government and the Wales Office.
- Chair of the Welsh Language Board responsible for leading the Board's strategy and for developing the first strategic national language action plan.
- Co-founder of Agenda Television (now Tinopolis) which grew quickly to become Wales' largest independent production company.

Employment History

S4C

July 2018 – Non-executive member Authority Board and Shadow Unitary Board

Member of Content and Audit & Risk Committees

Ofcom

January 2004 – March 2018: Director, Wales

January 2012 – December 2012: Director of Government & Parliamentary Business (secondment)

Ofcom's senior official in Wales responsible for relations between the regulator and the public, licensees, industry stakeholders, the media, government and elected representatives in Wales.

- Established Ofcom's presence in Wales and leading on all main work streams. These have included improvements in broadband and mobile availability, the design of the BBC's Operating Licence, the creation of a stand-alone channel three licence for Wales, digital television switchover, out of London production quotas for Channel 4, the coverage obligations included in the 4G spectrum auction, appointments to Ofcom's Advisory Committees in the UK and the Content Board and Communications Consumer Panel in Wales and the preparations for the recruitment of a member of the Ofcom Board by Welsh Ministers.
- Spoke on behalf of Ofcom in meetings with UK and Welsh Government ministers, House of Commons Select Committees, National Assembly committees, and all relevant stakeholders and with elected representatives in Cardiff, Westminster and local authorities across Wales ensuring that stakeholders in Wales were made aware of relevant policy developments.

- Represented the interests of Welsh consumers within Ofcom when strategic, high-level decisions that affect Wales are made. Ensuring that the issues facing citizens and consumers in Wales were thoroughly understood by all involved in Ofcom's decision-making and governance processes.
- Spoke on behalf of Ofcom in public meetings and conferences, on the radio and television and with members of the public in a variety of less formal settings.

Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg / Welsh Language Board

March 1999 – August 2004 : Chair

December 1997 – March 1999 : Member

Chaired Board meetings ensuring that all voices were given the opportunity to contribute to decision making. Following the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales, initiated a comprehensive review of the Board's strategy which led to the publication of *Iaith Pawb*, the Welsh Government's national action plan for a bilingual Wales, the most significant development in language policy which laid the foundations for more ambitious Government strategy.

- Represented the Board in meetings with Welsh Government ministers and officials.
- Gave evidence on several occasions to relevant National Assembly and scrutiny committees ensuring effective transparency and accountability to elected representatives.
- Led the engagement with key stakeholders to negotiate implementation of statutory Welsh Language Schemes and grant-funded activities.
- Worked with a wide variety of organisations including voluntary and community groups to secure effective promotion the use of the Welsh language.
- Initiated and led the restructuring of the Board's internal organisation and developed a marketing and communications strategy for the Board.

Avanti Television

September 2002 – December 2003 : Consultant

Provided strategic advice to the company's directors on the development of the business' television and new media activities.

- Developed new business opportunities for the company and advised the company's owners on its future strategy.
- Managed the company's relations with elected representatives, members of the public and other businesses.
- Assisted the Auditor General for Wales during an inquiry into a project funded by Education and Learning Wales (ELWA).

RMR plc

September 2000 – September 2002 : Commercial Director

Following the sale of a private company to RMR plc, joined the company's management to develop its electronic education business.

- Developed output for the corporate market.
- Led business development with new clients.
- Managed the implementation of electronic education systems with clients.

Agenda Television (now named Tinopolis)

July 1988 – May 2000 : Co-founder and Director

One of two directors who set up the company which soon became Wales' largest independent production company establishing production facilities in West Wales for the first time.

- Identified and recruited new talent and managed a team of 110 production staff.
- Designed new working practices that delivered improved efficiency and greater career opportunities for employees.
- Edited and managed the £3m per annum budget of the nightly magazine programme Heno.
- Led the development of a new electronic education subsidiary which included designing and implementing bespoke learning materials for clients such as UBS, Deloitte & Touche and London Business School.

HTV plc

July 1982 – July 1988 Journalist, Producer and Editor

Joined the current affairs department as a journalist for the series Y Byd ar Bedwar. Researched, presented, produced and edited several series of programmes on various aspects of life in Wales establishing the series' reputation for investigative and compelling journalism.

Current non-executive appointments:

- Visiting Professor, University of South Wales
- Chair of Gwent Independent Film Trust
- Member of Welsh Government Next Generation Broadband Wales Programme Board
- Member of Welsh Government Public Sector Broadband Aggregation Project Board

Previous non-executive appointments:

- Member of the West Glamorgan Drugs Prevention Project
- Member of the Governing Body of Ysgol Gyfun y Cymer, Porth, Rhondda (local authority appointment)
- Member of the Board of Visitors, Her Majesty's Prison Cardiff (Home Secretary's appointment)
- Member of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Public Sector Delivery (Welsh Government appointment)

Formal minutes

Tuesday 17 March 2020

Members present:

Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP, in the Chair

Ben Lake	Dr Jamie Wallis
Robin Millar	Beth Winter
Rob Roberts	

Draft Report (*Pre-appointment hearing with the Government's preferred candidate for the Chair of S4C*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 16 agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Appendix agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till 23 April 2020]

Witness

The following witness gave evidence. The transcript can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 17 March 2020

Rhodri Williams, Government's preferred candidate for Chair of S4C