

Written evidence submitted by ITV Cymru Wales

Overview

ITV Cymru Wales is the biggest commercial television channel in Wales, with a weekly reach of 1.4m. It provides the only commercially funded national broadcast news service to audiences in Wales, offering plurality at every level and reaching different audiences to the BBC. We schedule much of our Wales-focussed news and current affairs in prime time to secure the greatest possible audience for news and current affairs programming.

We are in the eighth year of our 10 year Channel 3 licence for Wales, delivering on the obligations set by Ofcom. As a part of our licence commitment we produce and broadcast 4 hours of news and 1.5 hours of current affairs and factual programmes each week. Outside of our licence we also produce digital news plus current affairs and factual programming for various broadcasters including S4C, ITV Network and BBC. *Wales at Six* broadcasts Monday to Friday, for thirty minutes from 6pm, covering national news stories, features, sport, weather. It has a nightly audience that would regularly fill the Principality Stadium twice over. At the same time, we are growing digital audiences for Welsh news and current affairs, with the number of page views on our website and news app increasing by 50% in the past year to 1.5m a month.

Together with the ITV Studios company Boom Cymru, we are a significant employer with some 400 staff operating from various locations right across Wales. In total we produce around 800 hours of television a year (500 hours from our ITV Studios Boom Group). Boom has an impressive track-record of producing award-winning factual, factual-entertainment, entertainment, drama and children's content and its showreel includes shows such as S4C crime thriller *35 Diwrnod* and kids show *Project Z* for CITV.

In an ever growing digital world, we, along with other broadcasters, are working hard to evolve and adapt in order to meet the pressing challenges facing commercial public service media. We were the first of the Welsh broadcasters to move to a new purpose built headquarters, investing heavily in digital technologies and new ways of working and increasingly creating news and current affairs content specifically for digital audiences. Indeed, the latest survey by OFCOM Wales shows that for audiences in Wales digital news from broadcasters is now just as important to them as newspapers.

Our news website itv.com/wales is delivering significant growth for trusted, impartial news about Wales that can be accessed by audiences anywhere, anytime on mobile devices. In 2020, page views doubled to 20 million, and in June 2022 we achieved 1.74 million page views on our website.

The drive for greater quality and quantity of public service content online has found substantial audiences. In 2021, we had more than 3 million minutes of Facebook video views, and nearly 2 million video views on Twitter.

This substantial contribution to public service media in Wales should not be taken for granted in future. Reform of the PSB system is needed urgently if the PSB system is to continue to thrive. We hope that the Committee will therefore support many of the important provisions proposed in the UK Government's broadcasting White Paper, published earlier this year. In particular, reform of the rules around prominence, inclusion and fair value are vital, given the increasing role of global online platforms in determining what Welsh audiences discover and view on TV.

Welsh Language Provision

We are very proud of our commercial partnership with S4C to produce current affairs programming and innovative digital content in the Welsh language for S4C's platforms. ITV Cymru Wales provides over 30 hours of current affairs and factual content per year in Welsh for S4C, ranging from long running series to short form reactive digital content.

We supply S4C with many of its most popular and most talked-about programmes. These include the political series *Y Byd yn ei Le*; the award-winning current affairs series *Y Byd Ar Bedwar* and the ever popular *Cefn Gwlad*.

At the same time, Boom Group, part of ITV Studios, includes production divisions Boom, Boom Cymru, Boom Kids and Boom Social, and is one of Wales' largest production companies, responsible for over 500 hours of programming annually for BBC, ITV, Channel 5 & S4C with a slate that includes S4C's children's service *Cyw* and the tense crime thriller *35 Diwrnod*.

For the past four years we have partnered with S4C in a Journalist Traineeship Scheme to help two young journalists develop a career through the medium of Welsh. The trainees create bespoke digital current affairs content for *Hansh* under the *Dim Sbin* brand - mainly on twitter and instagram, and now tiktok. This traineeship has been a huge success, with some of the recruits developing careers within ITV and the content has filled a huge gap in the public service remit for the youth of Wales.

In April 2021, we also became a partner of S4C's news app and website and we help to provide vital plurality to their service. The team share and package ITV Cymru Wales news content daily in Welsh for S4C's digital service - further proof of our growth in digital content and production and how we can collaborate and utilise the wider team's skills whilst showcasing our original journalism on other platforms to reach new audiences.

Network Production

Together with our programming for S4C, ITV Cymru Wales also produces productions outside of our licence commitments for the ITV Network and BBC Wales.

We have been working closely with ITV's commissioning team and in the last few years we have had a number of co-commissions between ITV Cymru Wales and the ITV Network. These have included, *The Wonders of the Coast Path*, *A Year in the Beacons* and *Wonders of the Border*.

A Year in the Beacons was a co-commission between ITV Cymru Wales and ITV Network and chronicles life over the changing seasons in Wales' beautiful Brecon Beacons National Park.

Filmed between Autumn 2019 and Summer 2020, the series celebrates the breath-taking landscape and the people of the Beacons as they faced a year like no other including the devastating floods caused by Storm Dennis and the unprecedented changes of the Covid-19 pandemic. The series showcased Brecon Beacons' iconic landscapes and reaffirms ITV Cymru Wales' commitment in highlighting all parts of Wales in its productions. The network series was watched by a total audience of 5.4 million over a period of 4 weeks.

ITV's three-part true crime mini-series *Pembrokeshire Murders*, broadcast in early 2021 proved a ratings success. The launch episode was watched by 11.2 million people in the first week of broadcast – the biggest new ITV drama launch since *Lewis* in 2006. With a consolidated 37.4% share for the premiere, it was double ITV's Monday 9pm slot average (18.7%). The drama was based on a book co-authored by ITV Cymru Wales journalist and presenter Jonathan Hill, and this led to the commissioning of the network drama. It was made by World Productions, part of ITV Studios, in association with Cardiff-based Severn Screen. The drama, distributed internationally by ITV Studios, has, at the last count, been bought by almost 30 territories worldwide. The inside story of the investigation was told through a network documentary produced by ITV Wales, *Pembrokeshire Murders: Catching the Gameshow Killer*. It told a uniquely Welsh story for a UK audience and brought in a consolidated audience of 5.7 million viewers, the biggest crime factual audience since 2013.

I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here - from Gwrych Castle near Abergele broke the record for the number of viewers for the 2020 series launch with 14.3 million watching. We were delighted to see the series returning to Abergele in 2021, and playing a key role in raising the profile of the wider North Wales region and the Welsh creative sector as a whole.

ITV Cymru Wales are growing a reputation for producing high quality "crime" based documentaries, and in 2021 we were commissioned to make two crime series for ITV - *Cold Case Detectives* and *Cold Case Forensics: the Murders that Changed Britain*. With such sensitive material, these series are based on trust and access and ITV journalism is at the heart of their success.

In a first for ITV Cymru Wales, we were commissioned by BBC Wales to produce a six part series with Dyfed Powys Police called *Rookie Cops* in 2021, looking at the work of the new recruits once they have finished their training. We were also commissioned by BBC3 in 2021 to produce a five part commission called *Ruck Stars* looking at the work of the rugby academies at The Ospreys and The Scarlets.

New Arts Programme

In June 2022, ITV Cymru Wales launched a brand new arts programme showcasing the best of talent from all around Wales. Hosted from our vibrant studio in Cardiff Bay, *Backstage* is presented by one of our Welsh language journalists, Nest Jenkins.

The new series features extended interviews with some of Wales' biggest and best up-and-coming artists; exclusive musical performances; and studio discussions with the people responsible for shaping the arts industry in Wales today.

As the only dedicated arts programme in Wales, this is yet another example of ITV Cymru Wales' commitment to delivering high quality and varied content for our viewers as part of our role as a Public Service Broadcaster.

The second series of Backstage will be broadcast in Autumn 2022.

Bringing the nation together

We are proud to bring the nation together around important national events such as the Royal Welsh Show, National Eisteddfod and of course the upcoming FIFA World Cup 2022. ITV will be showing live the first of Wales group games against the USA and will complement it's live coverage with dedicated news coverage and special programming throughout the tournament. Of course, ITV has a proud history of also covering live and exclusive every game of the Rugby World Cup and will be doing so again in France in 2023.

Political Coverage

We relaunched our political series *Sharp End* in Autumn 2020 with a new look and presenter in Rob Osborne, whilst also reintroducing *Face to Face* with Adrian Masters, which features in depth interviews with people who are prominent in Welsh life and has welcomed the likes of former MS David Melding, former First Minister Carwyn Jones and the academic Professor Laura McAllister.

Our extensive coverage of the 2021 Senedd Election dominated our news output and Wales programming schedule in April and early May - much of it under the banner *Wales Decides*. Adrian Masters, our Political Editor fronted *Wales Decides: The ITV Debate*, an hour long live, prime time special broadcast along with four prime time programmes profiling the party leaders. Other highlights include three special *Wales Decides* constituency profiles, presented by Rob Osborne and five episodes of *Y Byd yn ei Le* with Guto Harri on S4C. Election results were carried live from many of the key constituencies and counts right across Wales in four hours of special broadcasts during the day on Friday 7th May.

As part of our vision and strategy to target younger audiences and the involvement of 16 to 18 year olds who were voting for the first time, our dedicated team worked hard to offer coverage on different platforms over the election period. This included a special edition of *Wales at Six* looking at the election through the lens of younger voters. We also commissioned an IGTV series with guides on how to follow the election which concluded on results day itself, a special vodcast between Andrea and Adrian rounding up the week's coverage and we brought back our online series *The Crunch* with the aim of giving a voice to younger and under-represented communities. And in another first, the results day service was also carried live on the ITV News network YouTube Channel.

Diversity and Inclusion

As a significant employer and broadcaster in Wales, we have a crucial role to play to use our platform to reflect the diversity of modern Wales. This is essential if we are to remain relevant to our audiences, attract the best possible talent and creative ideas and maintain our role at the heart of popular culture. We monitor the diversity of our on-screen portrayal and feed findings to

the news and current affairs teams so that colleagues are aware of where we need to make improvements.

As a part of our Social Purpose Strategy ITV Cymru Wales is proud to be involved in several initiatives to increase diversity both on screen and behind the scenes. We have a vibrant Diversity Panel that brings together a wide range of stakeholders in Wales to inform our content strategy and commissioning decisions. We are an award winning employer of apprentices working in partnership with **Sgil Cymru**, with most of our recruits coming from an under-represented background and going on to either secure permanent roles within ITV or other media companies in Wales.

This year, we are focussing our acclaimed News Trainee Scheme for people with a disability and along with Creative Wales and other broadcasters, ITV has financially contributed to the founding of a pilot project to increase diversity in tv and film in Wales. The **Culture Connect Wales** initiative aims to create a bespoke network for those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, as well as engaging with partners to provide practical advice and opportunities and widening the knowledge of the sector and the opportunities it provides.

We are a proud Media Partner to **Chwarae Teg** for their Womenspire Awards and to **Pride Cymru**, Wales' largest annual celebration of diversity. We have also offered 'media familiarisation' sessions to a variety of groups ranging from the **Ethnic Youth Support Team** to the **Women's Equality Network**.

This year, we are particularly pleased to have launched a brand new partnership with **Mencap Cymru** with the aim of helping to remove barriers to disabled people seeking to work in the TV and Broadcasting industry. By working together, we want to raise better awareness amongst employers to ensure that people with a learning disability have greater access to employment opportunities.

As part of the new partnership, ITV Cymru Wales hosted Media Training Days for people supported by Mencap Cymru and their local groups, all of whom have a learning disability. The Media Training days provided a behind the scenes experience of what goes on in the ITV Cymru Wales newsroom, and offered practical experience in presenting weather and news bulletins to camera.

Public Service Broadcasters including ITV continue to bring significant benefits to society in a number of ways, and this new partnership affirms ITV's commitment in creating opportunities and improving diversity and career progression in TV and Broadcasting.

Securing PSB for the long term

There is an enduring value in public service broadcasting. It promotes and develops our shared values, our national resilience, furthers the Creative Industries, and nurtures Britain's soft power abroad. Ofcom's recent review of PSB illustrated the enduring importance of free-to-air, mass reach television from the existing PSB institutions in bringing people together right across the UK, regardless of ability to pay, supporting our culture, democracy and creative economy. Ofcom concluded that "*Public service programming remains highly valued by UK audiences*" and noted that:

"Public service broadcasters are also central to the UK creative economy, particularly across the nations and regions. They remain the largest commissioners of content from

across the UK. Every year they spend around £3bn on new programmes in a broad range of genres.”

Following the publication of Ofcom’s report, the Senedd’s Culture Committee held a one-day inquiry into the future of public service media in December 2021. In its concluding report, the Committee highlighted the important role that PSBs play in providing UK-wide, impartial coverage:

“...which has been evident from the increased reliance on news information from PSBs during the pandemic.

The Senedd Committee also added that:

“the ability to provide accurate, trusted information to all parts of the UK, and Wales in particular, is at risk if PSBs are squeezed out of the market by international global streaming services.”

It therefore recommended that:

“the UK Government should respond positively to the Ofcom recommendations that streaming platforms should be required to include, and give appropriate prominence to, public service broadcasters’ content and to negotiate with PSBs.”

In the UK Government’s subsequent White Paper, *Up Next*, it found that:

“The UK’s creative economy is a global success story. Our production sector is booming, UK-created content is in demand, and our mixed broadcasting ecology is admired internationally. This thriving and diverse ecosystem has built a virtuous circle. It makes the UK a very attractive place in which to invest, and allows UK creatives to produce high quality and original content that audiences love.”

The UK Government concluded that:

“...public service broadcasters are key to that success. Sitting at the centre of this landscape, they develop skills and talent, drive growth right across the creative industries, and deliver distinctive yet instantly recognisable British content.”

But it also cautioned that this significant contribution of PSB - both across the UK as a whole, and in Wales specifically - should not be taken for granted in future, saying:

“...rapid changes in technology, viewing habits and the entrance of global players have introduced new challenges for British broadcasters.”

The White Paper found that:

“PSBs are finding it increasingly difficult to secure their presence on global platforms, maintain their prominence on those platforms, and secure fair value for the services they provide.”

This echoed the conclusions of the DCMS Select Committee Report - “The future of public service broadcasting” in March 2021:

“New primary legislation is urgently needed to replace the Communications Act 2003. In particular, the new legislation needs to update the rules around prominence to ensure

that the PSB compact is sustainable within the new, increasingly internet-based audio-visual landscape.”

The UK Government therefore concluded that

“...we need to take action to support British broadcasters in meeting the most pressing of those challenges, to protect our mixed ecology, and ensure public service broadcasters remain at the heart of our plans.”

This followed Ofcom concluding that

“[r]apid change in the industry – driven by global commercial trends and a transformation in viewing habits – is making it harder for public service broadcasters to compete for audiences and maintain their current offer” and so to repeat its “...urgent call for legislation to secure prominence for live and on-demand public service content across all major TV services and platforms.”

It also mirrored the findings of the DCMS Select Committee, which in March 2021 concluded that:

“For public service broadcasting to prosper in the future the Government will need to act—changes that require ministerial authority are needed in order to ensure that the public service broadcasting system remains sustainable in the context of today’s greatly expanded and increasingly global media market.”

ITV is supportive of many of the proposals in the White Paper. Most importantly, the UK Government is proposing reform of prominence, inclusion and fair value rules which will ensure that PSB content and services are available on all the major connected TV platforms that audiences expect to find them, that PSB content and services are easy to find on those platforms, and that they are included on fair commercial terms that reflect PSB investment in the new UK content that audiences love.

ITV is also supportive of the reforms proposed to the Listed Events regime, to make access to the rights for listed events a specific PSB benefit as well as considering whether the scope of the regime should be extended to cover digital rights.

Translating these priorities into legislation which is sustainable for the future is crucial. We’re urging the UK Government and Parliament to ensure that the legal regime is watertight so it can sustain any future legal challenges it may face.

The Media Bill needs to be brought forward as a matter of urgency. ITV, STV and Channel 5 are now well into the statutory process for the review and renewal of our PSB licences (including the ITV Cymru licence) and need to decide by April 2023 whether to apply for new PSB licences. To make an informed decision on that, we need some certainty over what future PSB commitments may look like and how they would be funded.

Our commitment to being a PSB cannot be at any cost given that most of our rivals for viewing, revenue and investment are global platforms and streamers - such as Sky, Netflix, Discovery and so on - which have no PSB obligations at all. We have to be able to explain to our shareholders why it makes sense to hold PSB licences given the obligations that come with them. That is why these reforms are critical.

We hope that the Committee can see the huge value that ITV brings to Wales as a PSB - and the economies of scale and benefits to the Welsh economy that come from ITV Cymru being part of a larger group - and so would be supportive of the reforms proposed in the UK

Government's White Paper that will help ensure ITV can play its vital role in the Welsh media landscape for years to come.

15 August 2022