

Lord Grade of Yarmouth
Chair
Ofcom

Via Email

12 October 2023

Public Service Broadcasting in Wales

Dear Michael

Thank you for appearing at the Committee's meeting on Wednesday, 4 October 2023, to give evidence for our scrutiny of Public Service Broadcasting in Wales. We would also like to extend our thanks to Kate Biggs and Eleanor Marks who accompanied you for the session. During the meeting, we agreed to contact you with further questions, and these are set out below.

Impact of the Draft Media Bill on broadcasting in Wales

In June 2023, the UK Government published the [Draft Media Bill](#) to update broadcasting legislation for the digital age. During our committee session, Eleanor Marks noted:

We like to see them broadcasting in the Welsh language. As it stands at the moment, if the format has included Welsh language, we can regulate that. That may well change with the Bill.

We would be grateful if you could please outline what these proposed provisions would be.

We also welcome Ofcom's recognition of the importance of the Welsh language. Given this, we'd be grateful if you could tell us what other steps Ofcom can take to encourage commercial radio licence holders, who may want to relax existing requirements, to increase or maintain their Welsh language output.

Consideration of the rights to the broadcasting of sports

The [Broadcasting Act 1996](#) gives the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport the power to draw up a list of sporting events of "national interest". As you will know, this means the

broadcast rights to these events must be offered to the main free-to-air terrestrial broadcasters on “fair and reasonable terms”. We would like to know:

- What assessment Ofcom have made of the relative importance of certain sports (such as rugby) to audiences in Wales.
- How the ability of public service broadcasters to buy sports rights has changed since the current sports rights listing regime was established.

Channel 3 licensing and expenditure

The role of the Channel 3 licence in ensuring that there are a range of media outlets covering current affairs in Wales is vitally important. In the Fifth Senedd, our predecessor Committee noted in a [report on devolution of broadcasting](#) that there “should be a requirement for the Channel 3 licence in Wales to produce a greater proportion of network content in Wales”. We would welcome your views on:

- How Ofcom made the determination regarding the current requirements of the Welsh licence for four hours of news and 90 minutes of non-news programming.
- How the current requirements of the Welsh licence compares with other channel 3 licences across the UK.
- Whether you have made any assessment of the sustainability of this level of programming for the Welsh channel 3 licence.

Moreover, [Ofcom’s Media Nations Wales 2023](#) report shows that in 2022, ITV’s UK network spend in Wales had plummeted to close to 0 per cent of their qualifying UK spend. In recent years, during the pandemic, this figure was above five per cent. We would welcome the following information:

- How you determine what qualifies as a qualifying spend and what this is for Wales.
- Whether you could explain the change that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic period, as well as outline why this spend has been so low in the years preceding the pandemic.

Ofcom capacity in Wales

During the meeting, we also discussed the capacity of Ofcom’s office in Wales. We noted the significant disparity in staffing numbers based in Wales compared with other Ofcom offices based outside of London. You told us about Ofcom’s intention for 30 per cent of its staff to be based outside of London by 2030. Given this goal, we would like to know what role you see the Welsh office having as you work towards this goal, and how many staff you expect to be based in Wales by 2030.

We look forward to your response in due course and would be happy to receive any additional information you may wish to share of relevance to our scrutiny.

Yours sincerely,



Delyth Jewell MS

Committee Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.