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BBC to increase investment in programming for Wales by 50%

- £8.5m p.a. of new funding by 2019/20
- Biggest TV expansion for BBC Wales in a generation
- BBC DG Tony Hall: 'this is a real statement of intent about our ambition to serve all audiences in Wales'

The BBC is to increase its investment in English Language programming for Wales by 50% in the biggest expansion of BBC Wales television output in a generation.

The BBC said today that an additional £8.5m p.a. of new funding would help deliver a 'step-change' in programming for Wales across a wide range of genres - including comedy, entertainment, drama, factual and culture – and enable BBC Wales to reach out to younger audiences and develop its online and mobile news services.

Under the plans, total investment in English language TV services is expected to reach almost £30m p.a. by 2019/20. And a new BBC Wales iPlayer 'channel' will be launched to increase the visibility and prominence of content for audiences in Wales.

BBC Director General Tony Hall said: "I'm delighted to announce this major increase in television funding for Wales. BBC Wales has a remarkable creative track record and I know they'll seize this new opportunity with real relish.

"I believe this investment will be transformational. In areas such as drama, comedy and entertainment, we expect to more than double investment. In news and current affairs, it will help us move faster online and reach out to younger audiences, and provide greater specialist reporting across our output.

"It's so important that the BBC captures the real diversity of life and experience in Wales, and this investment is a real statement of intent about our ambition to serve all audiences in Wales."

The new funding is expected to:

- Deliver more than 130 hours of additional programming each year across BBC One Wales, BBC Two Wales and BBC iPlayer
- Generate at least a further £5m of on-screen investment through co-production agreements with other broadcasters and producers

- Provide a full mix of programming to inform, educate and entertain – including additional comedy, drama and entertainment
- Support a new BBC Wales iPlayer channel – providing a new home for Welsh programming available across all devices and in all parts of the UK
- Boost portrayal and coverage of Wales on the BBC’s network channel – with the aim that at least half the additional programming should also be broadcast on the BBC’s UK network channels
- Provide a major financial boost to the Welsh production sector with all new television funding open to full competition.

BBC Wales Director Rhodri Talfan Davies: “This new investment is tremendously welcome. Wales is blessed with superb storytellers, and this investment will give them a fitting national stage. By the time we move to our new home in Central Square in less than three years’ time, I believe the difference on screen will be clear to audiences the length and breadth of our nation.”

“The new investment package will also allow us to attract greater co-production investment, using the collaborative models we’ve developed with S4C and others to fund series like *Hinterland*.”

News of the investment follows a personal commitment by the Director-General to improve the breadth of television programming provided by BBC Wales, following widespread concerns about declining investment over the last ten years. The new funding is expected to make an immediate impact, with two major new dramas set to be announced in the coming days.

The investment will also boost news services for Wales, with plans to increase specialist coverage and an expansion of online and mobile services. Details of these plans will be published later in the Spring.

Rhodri Talfan Davies said: “The challenges facing news provision in Wales have been well-documented, and this new investment will enable us to extend the reach of our news services among younger audiences and improve our analysis of the big stories that are shaping Wales today.”

The BBC has also confirmed today it’s taking a number of significant additional steps – over and above the £8.5m investment - to improve the portrayal of Wales across the BBC’s network channels. These include:

- The appointment of a television drama commissioner for Wales
- The introduction of a BBC Writersroom team in Wales to support the development of drama and comedy writers
- The introduction of a £2m portrayal fund to support the development of factual, drama and comedy programming that better reflects the devolved nations

- The introduction of on-screen portrayal objectives across all major network production teams, including drama, factual and comedy
- The continued commitment to produce at least 5% of network programming from Wales - a target that has been consistently exceeded over the last eight years due to the success of BBC Wales and indie network productions. In 2015/16, this investment was worth £61.7m.
- A commitment to work in partnership with the Welsh Government's proposed Creative Wales body to support the development of the creative industries across Wales.

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