

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
Cynyrchiadau Ffilm a Theledu Mawr yng Nghymru / Film and Major TV Production in Wales
CWLC(5) FILMTV27
Ymateb gan BBC / Evidence from BBC

1. Introduction

The BBC welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry.

Over the past ten years, the film and television sector in Wales has been grown substantially. A number of interweaving initiatives – some creative, some borne out of economic policy – have contributed to the rich landscape of production we see today.

From the BBC's perspective, the strategic decision to spend more of its production revenues outside of London and to help create a centre of excellence for drama in Wales has helped catalyse this change. This strategic commitment has seen both the BBC and a range of independent companies produce some of the corporation's most iconic and popular TV programmes in Wales.

These have included the global hit series, *Doctor Who*; the cornerstone of BBC One's Saturday night schedule, *Casualty* and Hartswood's award-winning reworking of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's classic, *Sherlock*. This creative and economic story is set to continue with Bad Wolf due to start filming the adaptation of Philip Pullman's trilogy, *His Dark Materials*, shortly.

More recently, the success of series such as *Hinterland/Y Gwyll*, *Keeping Faith/Un Bore Mercher*, *Hidden/Craith* (co-commissions by the BBC and S4C) have enabled us to ensure that Wales' creative success in production also helps portray the nation both to itself and the wider world.

We also recognise our responsibility as a public broadcaster to support the development of a skilled workforce. Many of the BBC's development initiatives are aimed at attracting new talent to the industry as well as strengthening the skills required to work for the BBC and other broadcasters.

2. BBC production outside London – Network Supply Strategy

The Network Supply Review (NSR) was a flagship strategy of the last BBC Charter period which led to a step change in network production outside of London. This saw BBC network investment in TV productions outside the M25 rise from just over 30% to more than 50% in 2016. Across the three devolved nations, the share of production spend rose from 7% to 17% by 2016. It is notable that, in recent weeks, Channel 4 has committed to mirror the strategy.

In Wales, this commitment by the BBC is reflected in a regulatory requirement to ensure a minimum of 5% of network production spend is invested in Wales. This is now captured in the BBC's Operating Licence – along with the new requirement that 5% of originated network hours, as well as spend, should be produced in Wales.

Over the last seven years, the BBC has consistently exceeded the 5% minimum spend target in Wales. In 2016/17, BBC network television programming spend in Wales – as a percentage of overall eligible spend – was 5.8% of revenues,¹ equating to £54.8m in expenditure.²

The BBC's network supply policy (NSR) sought to develop clear specialisms in different areas of UK, to ensure there was sufficient critical mass of production in a location to enable sustainable levels of business to support talent and skills development over a period of time. Where possible these choices were informed by local commissioning and supply ecologies, existing talent strengths, and availability of existing facilities, but not limited by them.

In Wales, the BBC worked in partnership with local funding and skills development agencies, as well as Welsh Government, to identify skills or infrastructure shortages and shape solutions where possible.

Of course, the broadcasting landscape has shifted dramatically during the NSR period. The BBC is facing significant competition for audience time and we need to do more to improve our performance with younger audiences in particular. The challenge to create programmes that will appeal to audiences across the UK including stories which reflect diverse audiences back to the wider UK is greater than ever.

¹ *BBC Annual Report and Accounts (2016-7)*, p.37

² *ibid*, p. 93

The BBC is also facing significant competition for talent, rights and ideas, leading to price inflation which means that we need to maximise value for money in everything we do. In the case of our highest cost drama, comedy and landmark factual productions this means giving the content the biggest platform to reach as many people as possible.

3. BBC Studios production in Wales

3.1 About BBC Studios

Until April 2017, BBC in-house television production was guaranteed to produce 50% of qualifying network television content. This guarantee has been removed under the current Charter – opening up the BBC to full, open competition. To accompany this change, all in-house television production – beyond news, sport and current affairs – became part of a wholly-owned commercial subsidiary, BBC Studios, able to produce content for broadcasters globally but no longer protected by the in-house guarantees.

BBC Studios is now the BBC's principal production arm. It was launched with a mission to produce high-quality content for audiences in the UK and around the world.

BBC Studios brings together expert programme makers with vast experience in the craft of television production and are driven to deliver some of the best, most creative content in the UK. It produces much-loved returning series for the BBC as well as developing and pitching new ideas to win business from the BBC and other broadcasters.

BBC Studios has seven national and regional bases, including a major site in Cardiff. Studios' commitment to maintaining production activity around the Nations and Regions of the UK is central to its identity and ability to win business.

3.2 BBC Studios' production in Wales

BBC Studios produces both network and non-network content from its base in Wales. Cardiff is the principal hub for drama production outside London, with two

major network series produced by BBC Studios from Roath Lock: *Casualty* and *Doctor Who*.

BBC Studios also produces factual and music content from Wales, including the daytime series *Bargain Hunt*, *Crimewatch Roadshow* and coverage of the *National Eisteddfod* and *BBC Cardiff Singer of the World*.

Non-network content produced by BBC Studios includes *Pobol y Cwm* for S4C and *X-Ray* for BBC Wales.

3.3 Strategic Priorities

In a highly competitive market, BBC Studios provides a stable and large-scale source of IP for the BBC, generating value for audiences and returns for licence fee payers. The BBC recently announced its plan to merge BBC Studios with BBC Worldwide, the BBC subsidiary responsible for selling BBC content around the world. This will create a single, joined up company that can be an even bigger driver of British creativity.

BBC Studios' out-of-London production bases are integral to its strategy and its base in Wales will remain central to the success of its drama production in particular. The new BBC Studios will continue to build on the great strength of its production expertise in Wales to develop new, globally valuable IP through commissions from the BBC as well as other public service and commercial broadcasters.

3.4 BBC Roath Lock Studios

BBC Studios' primary base in Wales is now at Roath Lock Studios in Cardiff Bay. When the first drama productions moved into Roath Lock in September 2011, they fulfilled a BBC commitment to create a centre of excellence for drama in Cardiff.

Located in Porth Teigr, Cardiff Bay, the 170,000 square foot facility, including nine studios and equivalent in length to three football pitches, is now the permanent, purpose-built home of three flagship BBC dramas – *Casualty*, *Pobol y Cwm* and *Doctor Who* – as well as new productions in the future.

The studios aim to be a hub for creative sustainability, bringing talent together and allowing knowledge and expertise to be shared and flow across all of the productions based there. As well as its three long-running series, Roath Lock has also hosted productions such as Russell T Davies' adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Upstairs Downstairs* and BBC Three's *Class*.

Currently, the thirteenth *Doctor Who*, Jodie Whittaker – along with co-stars Bradley Walsh, Tosin Cole and Mandip Gill – are filming the new series of the global TV hit which is due to be broadcast on BBC One in the autumn.

Now in its forty-fourth year, *Pobol y Cwm* is the BBC's longest running soap opera. Set in the fictional village of Cwmderi, it is broadcast five nights a week on S4C. From discussions on the initial storylines to writing the final scripts ready for filming, the writing process takes between seven to nine months, with filming around six weeks prior to transmission.

Approximately 250 episodes of *Pobol y Cwm* are filmed every year, as opposed to approximately 30 episodes in the 1970s and 1980s. The cast and crew shoot approximately 16–18 scenes per day in studio, which is about 20 minutes of action and equivalent to approximately 80 pages of script per day, much higher than any other UK soap.

Casualty – a cornerstone of BBC One's Saturday night schedule – celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2016. Since relocating from Bristol to Cardiff in 2011, it has filmed over 300 episodes in Roath Lock. The set was built to ensure the medical drama could film the 360 degree views that give the audience the full fly-on-the wall experience. With medical advisors on set to advise and instruct *Casualty* cast members how to accurately use medical equipment and to read the scripts to ensure they're correct and as true to life as possible, *Casualty* cast members even shadow real doctors and nurses in A&E to prepare for their roles

4. Independent television production in Wales for the BBC

The independent sector in Wales has been a significant supplier both to BBC network television and BBC Wales over many years. Key productions include *Sherlock* (Hartswood), *Hinterland* (Fiction Factory), *The Hour* (Avanti), *Aberfan: The Green Hollow* (Vox Pictures) and *Rhod Gilbert's Work Experience* (Zipline).

Other factual series from the independent sector in Wales include *Sue Perkins Ganges* from Folk films, *Only Connect* from Parasol Media and regular *One Show* inserts from Alfresco.

Building on Wales' reputation for great drama, the BBC will broadcast three new independently-produced drama series in 2018 – all set and filmed in Wales.

Requiem – shown on BBC One UK-wide in January this year – was set in the fictional village of Penllyneth and filmed in and around Dolgellau, Newport and Caerphilly. Starring Lydia Wilson, Tara Fitzgerald and Richard Harrington it's a six psychological thriller. Made by independent company, New Pictures for BBC One and Netflix, it was created and written by Kris Mrksa and directed by Mahalia Belo.

More recently, *Keeping Faith* – starring Eve Myles – was shown on BBC One Wales. Co-commissioned by S4C and BBC Wales, the eight-part series was produced by Vox Pictures. The series has proved very popular with viewers in Wales – as well as with a wider audience on BBC iPlayer. The series is already the BBC's most successful non-network drama – with the highest audiences in almost 25 years. To date, there have also been over 8m requests to view the series on BBC iPlayer

In May this year, the new drama *Hidden* – shown on S4C earlier this year under the title *Craith* – will broadcast on BBC One Wales and BBC Four, produced by Severn Films.

5. A workforce for the future

The creative industry sector has grown dramatically in Wales over the past decade and BBC Wales is proud to have played a significant part in this. This commitment is reflected in a wide range of talent development programmes that are developed in partnership with the wider sector.

BBC Wales is also proud of its track record of attracting new talent into the business to equip a new generation to make their mark in the industry and plug gaps in the skills market.

5.1 Apprenticeships

Currently, BBC Wales offers more than twenty-five apprenticeships each year across a wide range of production and technical areas.

These range from training opportunities in production and journalism to broadcast operations and digital content-making. Our apprenticeships allow individuals to gain unique experiences and to work with some of the biggest names in the industry. Once the apprentices have finished their course, we offer entry-level roles that they are able to apply for with their new skills and qualifications

Launched in 2012 many of the apprentices who have finished their placements continue to work in the industry, either at the BBC or in the local market as freelancers or for independent companies.

Next year, the BBC will take another major strategic step in its commitment to Wales with the opening of its new broadcast centre at Central Square in Cardiff. This will complete a major programme of reinvestment and modernisation across Wales, delivering some of the most advanced broadcast and production facilities anywhere in Europe.

As part of our plans, we have committed to providing new training opportunities to over 250 people over the next two years, including an additional 20 full time, paid trainee and apprenticeship placements with the organisation. Working with Cardiff and Vale College, these new openings are focused on providing opportunities to individuals from communities and backgrounds that have traditionally felt locked out of the creative industries.

5.2 Uprising

In recent years, the Uprising charity has been working to provide leadership training and skills development for young people from ethnic minority and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Its mission is to equip young people with the knowledge, networks, skills and confidence to fulfil their leadership potential, find new opportunities and transform the world around them through social action. A number of organisations in Cardiff, including BBC Wales has partnered with

Uprising providing mentoring and development opportunities for young leaders. Applications are now open for the 2018 leadership scheme.

5.3 It's My Shout

The *It's My Shout* development programme provides practical opportunities in television and film production targeting individuals and groups that would not normally have access to such opportunities. BBC Wales is a partner and sponsor of the scheme (along with S4C) – providing mentoring and training both in front of and behind the camera for the participants. Every summer, *It's My Shout* produces short 30 minutes films in Welsh and English, six of which are broadcast on BBC Two Wales and are subsequently available on BBC iPlayer. Side-by-side there is also a scheme for emerging talent looking for documentary ideas. These are also broadcast on BBC Two Wales under the title, New Voices from Wales.

5.4 Ffilm Cymru Wales – Beacons

BBC Wales announced its partnership with Ffilm Cymru in 2017. The Beacons project aims shines a light on outstanding film talent from Wales, drawing attention to writers, directors and producers, helping them establish their credentials for feature production. This year, between six and ten short films of up to 30 minutes in length and in English or Welsh will be made will be made.