S4C Board

Meeting 484
10:00, 21 May 2026
Yr Egin, Carmarthen

SUMMARY OF MINUTES

Members in attendance:

- Delyth Evans [DE], Chair of the Board
- Geraint Evans [GE], Chief Executive
- Dyfrig Davies [DD], Non-Executive Member
- Suzy Davies [SuD], Non-Executive Member – virtually
- Wyn Innes [WI], Non-Executive Member
- Llion Iwan [LlI], Chief Content Officer
- Elin Morris [HM], Chief Operating Officer
- Denise Lewis Poulton [DLP], Non-Executive Member
- Betsan Powys [BP], Non-Executive Member
- Catryn Ramasut [CR], Non-Executive Member

Others in attendance:

- Llinos Priestland [LlP], Executive Officer to Board Secretary
- Geraint Pugh [GP], Board Secretary
- Brad Cole [BC], BSM Project Manager (for item 4)
- Beth Angell [BA], Head of Entertainment and Factual Entertainment (for item 5)

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Gwenllian Lansdown Davies [GLD], Non-Executive Member

1.	**Declarations of interests and apologies** Everyone was welcomed to the meeting. The Chair asked for any members with an interest in the business of the meeting to declare their interest. No interests were declared. Everyone was reminded of S4C's Culture Code at the beginning of the meeting.	
2.	**Update by the Chair, Chief Executive, and other Board Members** An overview of DE's recent activities and meetings with key stakeholders was shared. An update on the appointments of non-executive members was provided to the Board. It was noted that DE and DLP attended the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama's annual dinner. Lauren Morais – who received a scholarship from S4C to study at the College – gave a speech during the event, thanking S4C for its support. It was noted that she had appeared in Ar y Ffin and has since moved on to work on a Marvel production. It was explained that the scholarship is not awarded annually, being	

	dependant on the suitability of applicants, and pride was expressed in S4C` s ability to support Lauren Morais.  A summary of Board members` annual appraisals was presented, with GP explaining the importance of ensuring that there is a clear record that the appraisals are completed. The need to share the positive outcomes with the DCMS as part of the governance and transparency process was also emphasised. The Chief Executive was invited to update the Board on various issues that did not appear in the papers for the meeting: <u>2026 Election</u> GE noted that he was very proud of the content provided around the 2026 Election, emphasising the digital-first approach that had been adopted. He expressed appreciation for the content provided by the BBC as well as the contribution of S4C's digital news team, with the day of the results marking the busiest day ever for S4C's News app and website. The expectation to provide a platform for political party leaders was also discussed. It was noted that the big debate felt different this year, possibly because of the number of leaders who participated. Reference was made to S4C's commitment to supporting the flow of new Welsh-speaking journalists, emphasising the importance of ensuring that political content is tailored for younger audiences, including a reference to initiatives such as Hansh Dim Sbin. <u>BBC's Programme Plan</u> It was noted that live rugby provision will now be outside of the plan, with the intention of going out to tender for an independent production company to provide the content. <u>People and Culture</u> NB and the People and Culture team were congratulated on their success in winning an award at the Wales HR Awards, recognising their impressive work and contribution.	
3.	**Review of content performance during the previous year** GP explained that the papers included a draft Content Policy Review 2025–26, which S4C needed to publish in order to meet Ofcom's requirements. He explained that the reporting format will change following the approval of the Content Policy Statement for 2026, which aligns with Ofcom's latest guidelines. There would be an increased emphasis on how the organisation fulfils its public service broadcasting (PSB) remit, including areas such as children's content, news and player availability. It was confirmed that reporting against this Statement will take place in a year's time, but for this year, S4C would adhere to the previous method of reporting, providing a wider overview of the content by genre. Ll presented data regarding S4C's content performance during 2025–26, which was submitted to the Content Committee on 13 May 2026. BP outlined the main points discussed by the Content Committee at that meeting:	

- Many of the questions raised by the Board – such as what is meant by "digital first" – were also raised by staff.
- A key challenge was highlighted, which is that S4C has a linear timetable to fill, while aiming to operate more like platforms such as Netflix which don't face the same restrictions, and therefore the strategy in this area needs further clarity.
- The need to be clear when commissioning was emphasised so that companies understand the objectives and are accountable for their success.
- It was also noted that programmes for younger audiences often appear at the bottom of performance lists – mainly because they are assessed through a linear lens that doesn't reflect that audience's viewing patterns.
- The importance of recognising failures in our content was highlighted, as well as learning from them in order to improve for the future.
- It was acknowledged that much had been discussed at the first meeting of the Committee, and consequently it was relatively unstructured, but that in the future the Committee will focus on specific elements (such as genre, or audience cohorts).

In the context of the data, Ll highlighted the changes already in place in terms of content production methods, with more collaboration with the independent sector. He also highlighted the growing trend of commissioning several series at the same time, including longer-term contracts (such as three-year contracts) which include relevant breach clauses. It was confirmed that ongoing discussions are taking place between the commissioners and the sector, for example regarding the opening of tendering processes for series that have been linked to the same production company for an extended period.

Ll stated that there needs to be careful consideration of how we measure performance, and what exactly is being measured. It was recognised that linear viewing figures provided only part of the picture. The need to evolve a more comprehensive measurement framework that reflects audience behaviour across platforms was emphasised. The value of learning from the best practices of similar broadcasters was emphasised, and the development of an approach that enables a meaningful comparison of performance over time and across genres, supporting better commissioning decisions in the future.

It was agreed that increasing viewing numbers is the main strategic objective, but it was stressed that audience size is not a complete measure of success. It was discussed whether commissioning funding should be redirected towards genres that show a stronger performance when there is clear evidence of that, while simultaneously recognising the need to continue to invest in certain genres that are key to the public remit – despite relatively lower viewing performance. The possibility of benchmarking the performance of genres against other broadcasters was also raised in order to provide a wider context.

Due to a lack of time, it was agreed to return to a more detailed discussion on the players' strategy later in the year.

Decision: To arrange a Board discussion later in the year on S4C's strategy in relation to our players.

	Decision: To approve the Content Policy Review for 2025–26, for submission to Ofcom.		
4.	[BC joined the meeting] **Presentation on the BSM project** The Chair welcomed BC to the meeting, and he proceeded to present his slides. He explained that BSM is now 25 years old and built on old technology that no longer meets the needs of a modern, multi-platform broadcaster. It was noted that work is underway to introduce a new and up-to-date system, and emphasised that this is a fundamental business change programme, with technology acting as an enabler of the change. The process of putting together the tender took a total of 18 months, starting with a series of workshops across the organisation, along with presentations from potential suppliers. This process was instrumental in helping S4C to identify and define its requirements. "Super users" from across the business were appointed to contribute to the work, reflecting the nature of the programme as being about business change, not just technology. It was also noted that a 14-month implementation timetable has been planned, including an allowance for unforeseen circumstances. It was asked in which language will the software be available. Each supplier deals with this in slightly different ways, but all are aware of our requirement that the system be fully bilingual. As these are global platforms, they are able to provide a quality Welsh language interface, alongside English, without much difficulty. It was asked if a review of staff skills and work processes will be part of the project. It is expected that the new system will lead to greater efficiency and require individuals to reconsider how they perform their day-to-day roles. The intention to decommission the existing system in its entirety was also emphasised, and therefore it is essential that the new system is fully adopted across the organisation and the sector. The role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the development of the platform was discussed, noting the importance of understanding which elements of AI will be offered by the systems that have been offered as part of the tendering process. It was emphasised that there is a need for awareness of the potential opportunities, but also of the governance requirements, particularly in terms of securing approval for any AI elements that will interact with the BBC's systems. BC presented an overview of the main risks associated with the project. During the discussion, the question was raised about the strength of the relationship with the BBC, and the need to ensure that there is adequate support and commitment on their part to deliver the programme successfully. The intention is to establish a project board that would meet fortnightly (once the final provider has been appointed), with representation from the BBC, to ensure strong governance arrangements and ongoing collaboration, as well as ensuring their input at the design stage. SuD reported that the Audit and Risk Committee had discussed the project`s risks at its meeting on 14 May 2026. It was noted that significant assurances had been given following an internal audit of the readiness of the project, and the issue of who is responsible for ensuring contractual commitments are fulfilled was also discussed.	

	GE noted that BC's appointment as Project Manager gives the SLT confidence that the project will be delivered on time and within budget. Appreciation was also expressed for the quality of his presentation, and he was thanked for presenting a clear and comprehensive overview. [BC left the meeting] It was noted that the budget required for BSM has already been set aside, and forms part of the current year's budget as well as for the years to come. The need to ensure that the old BSM is completely decommissioned was also emphasised, in order to avoid any future risks, especially in relation to cyber security. It was noted that individuals could potentially attempt to take advantage of old systems as a means of accessing the network if these systems were not removed appropriately. The decision not to appoint a Chief Technology Officer (CTO) to succeed Steve Cowin last summer was discussed. Consequently, work is underway to develop a new model to ensure suitable leadership on future technology issues. **Decision: That the Board is updated at its next plenary meeting on how the responsibilities of the previous Chief Technical Officer which remain relevant are fulfilled in the future.**	
5.	[BA joined the meeting] **Presentation by a member of staff – Beth Angell, Head of Entertainment and Factual Entertainment** BA was welcomed to the meeting, and shared an overview of the entertainment slate. Reference was made to experiences with productions such as *Amour a Mynydd,* where it was learned that investing in original material for social media from the second series onwards was more effective than relying solely on clips and trailers. It was noted that this has led to an increase in impressions and engagement, and that audience interest continues even after the broadcast has ended. The importance of providing content for social media in advance was also emphasised, in order to build momentum and engagement with the algorithm before launching the broadcast. Following allegations raised regarding the welfare of participants on Channel 4's *Married at First Sight*, S4C's position on the matter was sought. It was noted that an experienced team oversees the wellbeing of the individuals appearing on *Amour*, and confidence was expressed in the arrangements in place. Reference was also made to two incidents on previous series, and these were confirmed to have been handled appropriately and effectively. Consequently, it was noted that there is currently no feeling that the current processes need to be reviewed. It was noted that there has not been a quiz on S4C for a number of years. It was explained how *Y Deis* was developed, including TG4's investment which enabled co-production, ensuring better value for money. The intention to continue developing the format into the future was also outlined, building on the foundation laid in the first series. The importance of upgrading the skills of production companies in Wales was emphasised. The benefit of bringing in specific expertise from outside when the	

	relevant skills are not available locally was discussed, for example the contribution of an expert from the Netherlands to the development of *Y Llais*, as well as appointing a 'task producer' to work on *Amour*. It was noted that this approach enables companies to learn and develop their own skills for the future. At the same time, the need to invest more widely in skills development across the sector (for example by running masterclasses) was emphasised, while also recognising that skills needs vary between different productions. It was noted that success is not measured on the basis of linear figures alone. It was highlighted that *Y Llais* and *Amour a Mynydd* attract more than 50% of their viewers from within younger cohorts, who do not usually engage with traditional television. It was recognised that the majority of S4C viewers continue to watch linearly, and therefore there is a need to continue to provide content that meets their needs, even as the organisation increasingly moves towards digital platforms. In this context, the importance of a clear strategy in terms of what type of content should be offered to different audiences was discussed, noting that traditional audiences tend to watch a wider range of content, while younger audiences are much more selective and engage only with content that specifically appeals to them. The need to regularly commission content for younger audiences was emphasised, in order to foster a habit of turning to S4C when looking for something to watch, building on previous positive experiences. The current challenge that content on social media does not always succeed in driving audiences to the full content was also discussed, with this issue being considered internally. BA was thanked for her contribution and was congratulated by the Board on the work to date. [BA left the meeting]	
6.	**Delivering the corporate strategy dashboard** GE presented the dashboard for Quarter 4 2025–26, explaining the format as well as the associated reporting arrangements. It was noted that reports will be submitted quarterly to the Senior Leadership Team, twice a year to the Board, and that the information will also be shared twice a year with the DCMS. It was highlighted that some elements of the metrics are currently unavailable, including data on diversity and reducing carbon footprint. When considering Objective 1 of the Strategy it was noted that the target is to maintain performance levels. In a context where broadcasters' viewing figures are falling in general, it was emphasised that maintaining S4C's performance is a challenge in itself in the current circumstances. Reach outside Wales was asked about, and it was noted that it was more challenging to measure due to a smaller sample size, leading to more volatile figures. It was explained that S4C does not have access to the same measurement infrastructure (e.g. additional boxes) outside Wales, which limits the accuracy and consistency of the data. The need to continue to tell a clear story to the core audience was emphasised, reinforcing their relationship with the channel. It was suggested that a more integrated	

	approach to communication across all platforms should be considered, in order to consistently convey the message that S4C has something for everyone. In addition, the potential value of promoting the S4C brand more widely rather than focusing solely on marketing specific content, was highlighted. It was explained that the Strategy's Objective 2 targets are gradually increasing each year until 2030, in order to provide clarity on the annual performance expectations. It was also noted that, in terms of social media content, particular attention needs to be paid to the performance of content that is specifically commissioned for digital platforms – such as TikTok – assessing its impact and reach based on appropriate metrics for those channels. It was noted that it is not easy to establish robust metrics for Objective 3, and therefore these limitations need to be accepted to some extent. However, a request was made to consider what additional elements could be included under the Objective in order to strengthen the performance picture. The possibility of including indicators such as GVA was discussed, but it was noted that S4C does not spend to ensure the highest GVA – rather, it follows the principles of the Content Strategy, which emphasises the need to reflect the whole of Wales through the content. It was further noted that S4C has historically avoided regional quotas, with the core principle remaining to commission the best idea, rather than prioritising the geographical location of the production. **Decision: To further consider whether there are any further metrics that could be included in relation to Objective 3.**	
7.	**Reports from the Board's committees** The minutes of the meetings of the following Committees were presented, and the chairs were invited to draw the Board's attention to any relevant matters that had not already been mentioned during this meeting: • Commercial Group Board (29/04/2026) • Content Committee (13/05/2026) • Audit and Risk Committee (14/05/2026) • Case Committee <u>Commercial Group Board</u> It was noted that S4C has now secured permission to show adverts on the live stream on iPlayer, with the change to come into force from next week in order to coincide with the Urdd. It was explained that this will be rolled out gradually, starting with sponsors, and that full adverts will follow shortly thereafter. It was also noted that an expert will be appointed to undertake a review of the Growth Fund, with a view to submitting a report to the Commercial Group Board in the autumn. <u>Audit and Risk Committee</u> SuD drew attention to the main discussions around cyber security, noting the comments of Helen Rabe (Chief Data Protection Officer of the BBC) that she felt S4C was currently on the fringes, and that the organisation should play a more prominent	

	role in the BBC's new forums relating to cyber security and AI. EM reported that she and GT recently had a very worthwhile conversation with the BBC team responsible for cyber security governance, suggesting that opportunities to strengthen the relationship and collaboration were in hand.	
8.	**Reports to be approved / noted without the need for discussion** The following reports were shared with Board members, with a request that members inform the Chair or Secretary in advance if they wished to discuss any of them in detail. If no such request was received, any proposed action was approved in accordance with the recommendation in the report itself. <u>Senior Leadership Team Report</u> The report was noted. <u>Consider the 'Active Company Presumption' aspect (for the 2025–26 Annual Report)</u> **Decision: To note the report, and agree that S4C's accounts should be compiled on the basis of an 'active company presumption'.** <u>Appointment of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee</u> **Decision: Wyn Innes was appointed as Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee from 01 August 2026 onwards.** <u>Minutes of previous meeting</u> The minutes of meeting 483, which took place on 19/03/2026, were approved. <u>Action Points</u> The Action Points were Noted. <u>Work Programme</u> The Work Programme was noted.	