



S4C Board Meeting Minute
23 April 2020 – Skype Meeting

Meeting No. 438

Present:

Non-executive Board Members:

Rhodri Williams	(Chairman)
Anita George	(Member of the Board)
Owen Derbyshire	(Member of the Board)
Siân Lewis	(Member of the Board)
Hugh Hesketh Evans	(Member of the Board)

**Shadow Unitary Board
Executive Members:**

Owen Evans	(Chief Executive)
Amanda Rees	(Director of Content)
Elin Morris	(Chief Operating Officer)

S4C Staff:	Gwyn Williams	(Director of Communications)
	Catrin Hughes Roberts	(Director of Partnerships)
	Catrin Whitmore	(Head of Human Resources)
	Steve Cowin	(Chief Technical Officer)
	Rhys Bevan	(Content Operations Manager)
	Sharon Winogorski	(Chief Finance Officer)
	Owain Lloyd	(Board Secretary)
	Bethan C. Williams	(Assistant to the Board Secretary)

1. **Welcome and Declaration of interest**

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting of the S4C Unitary Board.

He asked any member with an interest in the business of the meeting to declare their interest. SL noted her interest in the discussion about the new arrangements for the Urdd Eisteddfod because of Covid-19. No further declarations were received.

See the Register of Interests under the Board section on the S4C website for general declarations.

2. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 April**

The minutes of meeting 437 held on the 1st April were presented. The minutes were approved by the Board.

3. **Matters Arising**

Support for the Sector - HHE asked about S4C's package of support for the sector and the UK Government's furlough scheme. OE said that the advice from the DCMS was that bodies funded by the Department should not help companies pay the 20% difference.

Production Companies

[Summary: There was a discussion about the position of the companies in the present circumstances.]

4. **Register of Decisions and Action Points**

The register was noted. A number of the action points in relation to Covid-19 and co-location would arise as part of the discussion.

Item 8 – [Summary: RhW asked about the work of considering some contracts. EM indicated that she will report back soon.]

Item 9 – EM noted that discussions were continuing with the BBC regarding the plans for allowing staff to leave.

5. **Chairman's Report**

RhW stated that he had a conversation with the DCMS arranged for the following week. One issue that he would raise was the need to proceed with the recruitment of new Board members. OLI had also been in discussions to seek confirmation of the extensions to the contracts of SL and HHE.

RhW wanted to formally minute the Board's thanks to all S4C staff for maintaining the service during this period. Clearly the short-term challenges of COVID-19 were the focus over the coming weeks and months. However, RhW was also keen to look to the future and begin planning for 2022.

6. **Chief Executive's Report**

S4C's response to COVID-19

OE reported that the COVID-19 team continues to meet every morning at 9 o'clock to discuss major issues.

Staff and the Workplace

It was noted that the decision to keep Parc Tŷ Glas, as well as investing in technology to enable flexible working, had borne fruit during this period. OE had been regularly updating the staff, in writing and in weekly calls - where over 90 have joined over Skype - and had held a specific session about co-location. There were activities such as Yoga and a Quiz. OE encouraged staff to complete the DSE assessment again as so many were now working from home. Specific actions remained in place at Parc Tŷ Glas in terms of cleanliness and the 2-metre rule.

Broadcasting/Technology

OE noted that everything was currently fine at Parc Tŷ Glas with no significant problems. The team were working closely with Arqiva. With regard to Disaster Recovery, a "to-air" test on the morning of 17 April was successful. The archiving had been delayed for the time being for the safety of the essential workers. Only the staff that were necessary were at Parc Tŷ Glas.

The Sector

It was reported that there had been a great deal of communication between S4C, the sector and TAC over the last few weeks. S4C officers had met over Skype with 120 individuals from the sector, to update them on the quick commissions and other measures and a package of support was announced. Officers had also met with individual companies.

Financial Position

It was noted that the year-end work with the NAO and TIAA was ongoing. Officers were in close contact with the DCMS about the financial situation and 'scenario planning' was continuing around the lifting of the lockdown and its impact on content funding.

Co-location Project

OE explained that there had been no progress on the project. Due to the exceptional circumstances resulting from Covid-19 the vast majority of the work had ceased except for fault fixing and a little testing.

Communications/Promotion

GW described the promotional work including a host of television interviews, radio, and press coverage. The aim was to proactively explain what S4C is doing during the crisis. There would be another Facebook Live session with OE and AR tonight. RhW noted that this had proven that there were other ways of engaging with the audience. He was keen for this to continue and for officers to plan new ways of engagement.

OD asked whether there was a plan as to how some elements of the Strategy 22 could be taken forward over the coming months, whilst recognising that the priority was to deal with the current situation? OE agreed noting that OLI was looking at how we can continue with future planning.

In addition, EM was working on a paper looking at the steps that would be needed as lockdown is relaxed, including S4C's main tenet i.e. prioritising the need to protect the broadcasting from Parc Tŷ Glas.

[Summary: AR felt that an evaluation of this period would be important in the future, in order to look at what worked or did not work and the viewing trends during the crisis. Amongst others, there was a need to consider and compare the performance of Friday evenings during the period and the viewing by children across the platforms - and also the balance between the genres, the viewing by non-Welsh speakers, and the appeal to the core viewers. The analysis work would be important in terms of the difficult decisions over the next few years.]

GW explained that there were three elements to the communication resulting from COVID-19. Firstly, it was important to update staff internally through e-mails, staff meetings etc. The second element was to communicate with viewers giving consistent programme information and to explain how the service was adapting during this period. The third element was communication with the sector and key stakeholders.

[Summary: OD asked about the internal staff capacity. OE believed that retaining Parc Tŷ Glas and introducing flexible working arrangements had been very useful in keeping things going in a period of inevitable absence. AR noted that the main

concern at present was staff working long hours. This was not sustainable in the long term and SL added that there was a need to keep an eye on the welfare of staff. CW said that there were currently work pressures in some teams but that there was a consistent link between staff members and management.]

Commercial Update

[Summary: There was a written report in the papers on the commercial situation including Parc Tŷ Glas and its tenants and on Sky and Sarasin.]

Plans were underway to discuss offering free advertisements to charities associated with work on Covid-19 through Sky. There would be an announcement on this next week.

7. Financial Update

An update was presented on the content budget, and the work since the last Board meeting to look at the impact of COVID-19 on the financial situation. Things were changing daily, and the figures were updated on a regular basis.

[Summary: SW reported that the finance team is currently working on the out-turn figures for 2019/20.]

With respect to 2020/21, COVID-19 had already had an impact on the schedule over the coming months, not only in terms of Sports and Events, but also soaps and drama. Officers were looking into the implications of losing content and working on different scenarios when coming out of the lockdown.

The team had decided to commission some new content. AR said that there was a difficult balance between commissioning in order to fill gaps in the timetable from June onwards, but also keeping in mind what could happen in terms of the lockdown and how much of the archive should be used. In addition, preparations for 2022 onwards were an important factor.

It was clear to SL that officers were planning as much as they could and that the Board had confidence in their decisions.

8. S4C Digital News – next steps

GE presented a paper updating the Board on developments with S4C's digital news. He noted that the recent period had showed how much a news and current affairs service was needed.

[Summary: ITN had completed the preparation of a report on the subject and had submitted the report to S4C.

The next steps were outlined, including:

- Qualitative and quantitative audience research,
- Research into the branding and design of the service,
- Further research into the cost of creating a new app and website, and
- Experimenting with the content and platforms that are available.]

The Board agreed to approve the initial research.

9. **S4C's response to the DCMS Select Committee's Inquiry on the Future of Public Service Broadcasting**

A copy of S4C's response was presented. The Board was happy with the response.

10. **S4C's reach in 2019/20**

EJ presented a report on S4C's Reach in 2019/20.

[Summary: The metrics to appear in the Annual Report were discussed. Average peak hours by the new definition (between 7pm and 10pm) are not currently reported. The importance of looking at S4C's performance in comparison with other PSBs over a period of 4-5 years was noted. The Board noted the report and asked EJ to consider what would be appropriate to include in the Annual Report.]

11. **Summary of Beaufort Image Tracking Report**

EJ presented a summary of S4C's image tracking research undertaken by Beaufort.

[Summary: This work feeds into the Annual Report. This year's sample was slightly lower than last year because of COVID-19 but EJ was happy that we are able to use the information.

Members asked for more detail on a few points, therefore it was decided to ask Beaufort to undertake further work, seeking more detail with some of the questions.]

12. **March 2020 performance**

EJ presented an analysis of the service's performance during March.

[Summary: The loss of sport due to COVID-19 had had a greater impact on S4C's Reach, particularly the linear channel, compared to other channels that only occasionally show sport. He believes that the reduction in the hours watched on Clic is for the same reason, compared to the significant increase in viewing S4C on iPlayer.]

13. **Any Other Business**

[Summary: Following the previous day's discussions in the Content Committee and the Audit Committee, it was noted that the Chairmen would be writing to the BBC.]