

S4C Board

Meeting 482

10:00, 15 January 2026

Room 4D, Central Square, Cardiff

SUMMARY OF MINUTES

Members in attendance:

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

Others in attendance:

- Geraint Pugh [GP], Board Secretary
- Llinos Priestland [LIP], Executive Officer to Board Secretary
- Mali Williams [MW], Head of Public Affairs (for items 3 and 4)
- Nadine Beaton [NB], Director of People and Culture (for items 5 and 6)
- Dafydd Franklin [DF], Senior Accountant (for item 5)
- Sara Maredudd [SM], Communications Officer (for item 5) – virtual
- Eleri Griffiths [EG], Communications Officer (for item 6) – virtual
- Natalie Jones [NJ], Education, Diversity and Welsh Language Manager (for item 6)
- Sara Peacock [SP], Head of Social Purpose (for item 6)
- Manon Edwards Ahir [MEA], Director of Communications and Marketing (for item 7) – virtual
- Iestyn Morris [IM], Head of Legal and Business Affairs (for item 7) – virtual

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Guto Bebb [GB], Non-Executive Member
- Suzy Davies [SuD], Non-Executive Member
- Gwenllian Lansdown Davies [GLD], Non-Executive Member
- Betsan Powys [BP], Non-Executive Member

1.	Declarations of interests and apologies The Chair asked for any members with an interest in the business of the meeting to declare their interest. No interest was declared. Everyone's attention was drawn to S4C's Culture Code at the beginning of the meeting. It was noted that this would be GB's last meeting before his term as a non-executive member ends on 28 February 2026.	
2.	Update by the Chair, Chief Executive, and other Board Members The Chair referred to the report outlining the meetings she had held since the last meeting of the Board.	

Attention was specifically drawn to the appearance of DE, GE and DD before the Welsh Affairs Committee in London the previous day. DD was invited to share her own impressions of the session, and it was agreed that it was a success. CR reported that she had been invited to a meeting with the Secretary of State, Lisa Nandy MP, and that she was happy to raise any messages on behalf of S4C.

Decision: To share a list of the three most important things about S4C for CR to raise during her meeting with the Secretary of State next week.

The Chief Executive was invited to update the Board on various issues that did not appear in the papers for the meeting:

iPlayer Announcement

The announcement made the previous day regarding the agreement between S4C and the BBC to ensure better features and increased prominence for S4C's content on the iPlayer from April 2026 was noted. There has been no negative reaction since the announcement.

S4C and AI

It was reported that a consultant on Artificial Intelligence had met with the SLT the previous week. This subject was also raised during the session with the Welsh Affairs Committee the previous day. It was emphasised that AI is not a technology to replace people, but rather to enable and support them in their work.

Some use of AI is already happening in the content production sector, but in a way that is considered ethically appropriate.

It was noted that S4C has an important role to play in leading and contributing to the development of the responsible use of AI in the Welsh language, including working with the Welsh Government in this area.

Appointment of Head of Technical Services

It was noted that Guto Thomas has been appointed Head of Technical Services on secondment from the BBC, to fill the void as Steve Cowin retires as Chief Technical Officer in a few weeks. GE confirmed that it had asked Guto to lead on AI developments at S4C during his time with the organisation. It was also noted that Brad Cole had started in his role as Broadcast Station management (BSM) project manager. The project is expected to take about 18 months to complete. During his presentation to the SLT at the beginning of the month, Brad Cole presented a timetable and governance structure for the project, giving a good level of confidence in the approach.

It was considered when it would be appropriate to conduct a skills audit of the organisation, noting that there is now a clear direction as a result of the new corporate strategy. It was agreed that NB should conduct initial work internally, before bringing any formal findings or proposals to the Board. It was suggested that she might adopt the 'RACI' approach.

It was noted that leaders had already been asked about the jobs and skills needed to deliver the strategy within their departments, with the intention of presenting a

	<p>complete paper to the Board regarding the required structure and capabilities. It was also agreed that this should be placed in the context of the financial request to the DCMS, in order to clarify the resources needed for the future.</p> <p>Decision: To present a report to the Board in July on the structure required to deliver the new corporate strategy, and the outcome of an internal audit of the skills required.</p> <p><u>MOU update by the DCMS</u></p> <p>An update was given on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the DCMS regarding the approval of commercial investments. The revised legislation came into force on 01 January 2026, but negotiations with the DCMS regarding a MOU had not been completed by then. The aim is to complete the arrangements by 01 February, with interim provisions in place in the meantime.</p> <p>It was noted that the main principles have now been agreed, including the criteria for when investments will require the consent of the DCMS. Formal approval will be required for investments more than £500k, unless they fall within the boundaries of 'normal business' activity.</p> <p>A question was asked about expectations that S4C should increase its commercial income, as the issue was raised during the Welsh Affairs Committee yesterday. It was noted that the BBC Studios model was a possible one to consider. It was discussed that S4C could consider establishing 'S4C Studios', but if that were to happen, it would mean creating a profit for S4C's coffers at the expense of protecting and reinforcing the economic benefits of the production sector in Wales.</p> <p>It was asked if there is an intention to create a 'Digital Lab' in order to be able to invest or create a business plan to assess the income potential in the field of digital games. It was noted that the Commercial Board has already considered some investments of this nature, but that the organisation does not currently have the in-house expertise. It was confirmed that the Commercial Board continues to consider the potential opportunities to invest in the digital field. Everyone was also reminded that it has always been challenging to create a significant commercial profit – but that it is important that the Government is aware that we are exploring all possibilities to increase income.</p>	
3.	<p>[MW joined the meeting]</p> <p>S4C's response to the Green Paper on the BBC Charter Review</p> <p>MW presented her discussion paper, and Members noted that the Green Paper gave S4C due and fair attention.</p> <p>The importance of encouraging stakeholders and the sector to respond was discussed, noting that it is easier for them to do so when they understand S4C's current views, being able to reinforce our messages externally. It was suggested that a one-page document should be developed containing the main messages to be shared with partners. One option would be one-to-one meetings with stakeholders, including general briefing conversations and providing a copy of S4C's corporate response to ensure compatibility and consistency in the messages.</p>	

	<p>It was asked if it would be worth holding an event to discuss the corporate strategy more broadly and to share general experiences of how things are going. It was agreed in principle that this would be useful, with the intention of considering holding events in Caernarfon, Cardiff and Carmarthen, as well as considering a virtual element to facilitate participation. It was emphasised that time constraints were a factor, and the most practical method of contacting stakeholders would have to be chosen before the consultation deadline.</p> <p>It was noted that the BBC had carried out an exercise of asking the public about their vision of the BBC in the future, and that S4C could consider a similar approach. However, the need to be careful was emphasised because such public meetings are usually attended by core viewers who watch the content, and therefore it is important to ensure that a wider voice is heard.</p> <p>It was discussed whether a "public conversation" should be held on social media, and what exactly is S4C's civic role. It was noted that the aim is not to get a mass response from the public, but rather to elicit input from the sector and key corporate stakeholders such as our national institutions.</p> <p>It was agreed that the number of responses from Wales was critical, and therefore more voices are needed to respond than just S4C, with an emphasis on ensuring consistent messages about S4C within the DCMS questionnaire. It was accepted that some form of campaign is needed to encourage participation, and GE will consider the most effective method of delivering it.</p> <p>It was emphasised that S4C's response should be clear and disciplined, focusing on issues directly relating to S4C and any possible implications of decisions relating to the BBC, while avoiding expressing opinions on areas that do not affect S4C.</p> <p>Decision: To consider what type of campaign would be appropriate to engage with S4C stakeholders and encourage them to contribute to the consultation on the Green Paper.</p> <p>It was noted that DE had stressed to the Welsh Affairs Committee in London yesterday that it was essential for any new funding framework to safeguard S4C's level of funding, even if the Licence Fee income decreases over time.</p> <p>The continued importance of the Creative Industries Strategy and the Youth Strategy to the DCMS was highlighted, and the need to integrate these into our response by highlighting how S4C can contribute to achieving them. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to have a draft of S4C's response to the consultation from MW in good time, so that the Board could consider it before submitting the formal response. Everyone was invited to send any further comments to MW, so that she could prioritise the one-page briefing, summarising the main messages and securing agreement on them in the first stage.</p> <p>Decision: To draw up a short briefing document outlining the main messages of S4C's response to the consultation, to be approved by Board members via email, before the drafting of the formal response to the DCMS begins.</p>	
4.	<p>Public affairs plan</p> <p>Members welcomed a coherent paper from MW, which outlined the main likely milestones for public affairs activities in 2026.</p>	

	<p>Adding an element of events was suggested in order to bring stakeholders together, facilitating engagement as a group and making the work of S4C's partnerships more visible. It was also noted that there is room for the use of influencers, not only within public affairs but as part of wider communication. Opportunities for DE and GE to contribute throughout the year on thematic topics relevant to S4C, and which highlight our corporate content and messaging, were discussed. Board Members emphasised their willingness to help and support where appropriate, and the need to make effective use of this support. It was also noted that visual content is a critical element, and that there is a need to think creatively about how YouTube and other social platforms can be used to support corporate messaging.</p> <p>It was questioned whether an argument could be developed on the basis that it is the Welsh language itself which signifies that only S4C can meet the specific needs of the audience, for example in terms of securing Welsh language content rights. It was noted that the connection between this argument and the public affairs plan was not entirely clear at this time, and that it was a complex policy area that would need to be considered carefully. It was suggested that linking the discussion to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 could provide an appropriate framework, and it was noted that DE and GE could refer to this when appearing before the Culture Committee of the Welsh Parliament, along with the United Nations Sustainability Targets.</p> <p>The need to target the core audience more effectively was emphasised, and communicate more clearly how much work S4C does for their benefit. It was noted that there is a feeling among some that the organisation tends to react to complaints rather than communicating proactively. It was therefore emphasised the need to show clearly what we do, and involve the audience as the service evolves into the digital world.</p> <p>It was noted that S4C has been relatively quiet in recent years, but that the time has come to adopt a more confident and proactive approach. While MW continues to prioritise the response to the Green Paper in the short term, it was stressed that public affairs work remains critical. It was confirmed that recruitment is underway for a member of staff to support this area. It was also noted that it would be beneficial, in due course, to have a better understanding of how marketing communication, corporate communication and public affairs structures intertwine.</p> <p>[MW left the meeting]</p>	
5.	<p>[NB, DF and SM joined the meeting]</p> <p>Annual meeting of the Board with the Staff Forum</p> <p>SM and DF were welcomed to the meeting as representatives of the Staff Forum, and NB was also welcomed in her role as Director of People and Culture. SM and DF shared a series of slides in order to present the work of the Staff Forum to the new Board Members.</p> <p>The intention to review the Staff Forum's Terms of Reference at the next meeting of the Staff Forum at the end of January 2026 was noted – not to change its core purpose, but to ensure that it operates as effectively as possible.</p>	

	<p>It was noted that the members of the Forum, especially SM and DF as the Chair and Vice-Chair, carry out this role alongside their day-to-day work at S4C. It was discussed whether this reduces their ability to perform normal duties. DF confirmed that he has the flexibility to prioritise within his role, and SM stated the same, especially as she works part-time. The need to ensure an appropriate balance between the responsibilities of the Forum and other duties was emphasised.</p> <p>It was asked if there is enough communication between the SLT and staff. It was noted that members of the Forum feel comfortable in raising concerns, due to the strong relationship that has developed with GE and NB, and this has led to an improvement in communication. It was confirmed that concerns from other departments about communication are very rare, although requests for clarity or updates arise from time to time.</p> <p>It was discussed whether the SLT invites input from the Forum on specific topics, and whether the Forum itself considers strategic as well as operational issues. It was noted that the Forum is, naturally, more operational as these are the types of issues that are raised by staff. However, should a strategic issue arise, it would be raised with the SLT without constraint. It was also confirmed that the SLT from time to time asks the Forum to provide input on draft policies and similar issues.</p> <p>The Forum was asked whether the Forum is still receiving complaints from staff, and how stable the process is for dealing with them. DF noted that there had been a marked improvement. In the past, due to a lack of confidence in the Human Resources Department, staff would raise concerns through the Forum. The situation has changed since the establishment of the People and Culture Department led by NB, and Forum members now encourage staff to raise issues with their relevant Business Partner as a first step. The importance of maintaining the division between the informal and representative role of the Forum and the formal complaint handling process was confirmed. It was noted that the current arrangements work well, and that the nature of the Forum continues to evolve to meet the needs of staff.</p> <p>SM and DF were thanked for their work, noting that the Board greatly appreciates it.</p> <p>[SM and DF left the meeting]</p>	
6.	<p>[SP, NJ and EG (virtual) joined the meeting]</p> <p>Discussion with the Social Purpose Team</p> <p>The Social Purpose Team was welcomed to the meeting, including EG, who is about to join the team on a one-year secondment. NB was also welcomed in his role as the member of the Senior Leadership Team responsible for Social Purpose. It was noted that the Team had provided a report to the Board in December, but that there had been no opportunity to discuss it at that time; So, the discussion took place today.</p> <p>An update was given on the developments since the paper's submission in December. It was noted that the performance of S4C Dysgwyr (S4C Learners) performance has continued to improve throughout 2025, with a significant increase in viewing sessions, engagement, and viewing figures on social platforms. It was also noted that the monitoring of staff diversity has progressed; however, it was confirmed that the current system does not enable the collection of diversity data in the required way, and that</p>	

other solutions will need to be considered to ensure compliance with Ofcom's reporting requirements.

The arrangements for monitoring impact were discussed, confirming that the Social Purpose Team is collecting a range of data that will be essential for reporting progress against the third objective of the 2030 Strategy. It was noted that a progress narrative will be presented to the Board in May, in line with the arrangements agreed in December for the corporate metrics. It was also confirmed that this data will feed into S4C's Annual Report, and support the financial application to the DCMS by demonstrating the wider impact of the organisation.

Arrangements for collecting diversity data across the workforce and content were discussed. It was noted that the Diamond system did not provide sufficiently robust data, partly due to the small size of the organisation and the risk of identifying individuals. It was agreed that there was a need to move towards collecting data through PAC as part of operating the BSM system, with the priority of ensuring appropriate arrangements being in place by the end of March in order to be able to report on a financial year basis. Frustration was expressed that accurate data did not currently exist, and it was emphasised that a lack of reliable data on diversity on screen or regarding production teams is not acceptable in the long term.

The relationship between the Social Purpose Team and the Commissioning Team was discussed, asking who has the main role in ensuring diversity in content. It was confirmed that fortnightly 'green light' meetings provide a formal opportunity for the Social Purpose Team to contribute to commissioning discussions, and the importance of ensuring robust data was emphasised in order to be able to monitor progress and influence the sector more effectively. It was noted that feedback is shared with commissioners on a regular basis, with the intention of sharing this information more widely with the sector in due course, recognising the need to move towards more systematic evidence.

It was reported that questions regarding diversity in the workforce and content had arisen over a number of years, and the importance of including lived experiences in formulating commissioning decisions was emphasised. It was noted that better collaboration between teams was already evident, and a commitment was made to present a more comprehensive report to the Board in May.

Decision: To invite the Social Purpose Team to discuss further with the Board later in 2026 in order to have an update on how the relationship with the Commissioning Team has further improved by then.

Concern was expressed that setting specific targets could encourage the development of content in order to meet targets rather than normalising diversity naturally. The importance of supporting the sector early in the development process was emphasised as a practical way of driving change and creating added value.

The need to clearly define the priorities of the Social Purpose Team, set realistic targets, and ensure that appropriate data collection arrangements are in place was emphasised. It was noted that there was a need to be realistic about the team's capacity, and to agree on clear priorities for the future.

The ongoing work in schools and further education colleges was discussed, as well as the work with the sector and partners such as Creative Wales and other broadcasters.

	<p>It was noted that capacity is limited, but there is a desire to do more, particularly in terms of supporting pathways into the sector, recognising the specific challenges in securing first jobs for apprentices.</p> <p>[NB, SP, NJ and EG left the meeting]</p>	
7.	<p>[MEA and IM joined the meeting]</p> <p>Emergency response arrangements</p> <p>MEA and IM were welcomed to the meeting, with MEA outlining the arrangements developed for emergency response following the recommendations of Darwin Gray's review of S4C's governance.</p> <p>It was explained that the arrangements are a protocol rather than a guideline, with the intention of setting out the key principles rather than creating an overly stringent process. It was asked how this compares to the approach of other broadcasters; and noted that benchmarking work has been done with the BBC's process, but that other broadcasters' processes have not been reviewed at present. It was emphasised, however, that the size of S4C offers the ability to respond quickly in emergency situations.</p> <p>From the Board's viewpoint, the key principle is to ensure that there are no 'surprises', and that it is important that the organisation operates in accordance with those expectations. It was therefore asked when the attention of the Chairman or Board should be drawn to an emergency situation. It was explained that the key principles had already been identified, and that practical practice requires continuous monitoring of how risks develop, as it may be more appropriate to escalate to a higher level later in the process. The challenge of identifying the exact point at which escalation is necessary, and the risk of creating unnecessary bureaucratic processes, were emphasised. It was therefore noted that the expertise and professional opinion of the SLT members will guide the initial decisions regarding response and escalation.</p> <p>The risk that important issues might not be referred to the emergency response arrangements was discussed. It was asked to what extent will commissioners recognise risks and escalate them to more experienced individuals, to ensure that appropriate editorial decisions are made. It was also asked what training is available to enable commissioners to distinguish between being daring and risk-taking, and understanding when a situation might cross the line. It was explained that many of these opinions and decisions are based on practical experience, rather than specific formal training.</p> <p>It was noted that much of this relates to S4C's risk appetite, and the need to ensure that emergency response arrangements align with that appetite. It was emphasised that the channel does not publish non-compliant content, and that the Board is comfortable that the current operational process is working effectively.</p> <p>It was suggested that it would be useful to add a visual element or flowchart to show the sequence of decisions.</p> <p>[MEA and IM left the meeting]</p>	
8.	<p>Statement of Programme Policy 2026 (for Ofcom)</p>	

	<p>GP introduced the Statement of Programme Policy (SOPP), explaining that Ofcom's guidance had changed in the wake of the 2024 Media Act. It was noted that the focus now is on how S4C achieves its remit across the linear service and the Clic on-demand service, rather than on the channel's provision alone.</p> <p>As a result of these changes, the Statement was drafted anew. It was explained that the emphasis is now on the policies and approach that underpins the service, rather than a detailed description of a "content slate". It was noted that the document was specifically structured to comply with Ofcom's requirements, and was likely to remain relatively consistent over the next few years.</p> <p>It was also noted that the reporting year had changed from a fiscal year to a calendar year. Under the new arrangements, a review of the previous year's SOPP will need to be agreed each year, and the final version published by the end of June.</p> <p>S4C intended to submit an application to Ofcom to secure DIPS status for Clic, which would enable the service to be available on the 15 main platforms and provide additional prominence rights in accordance with the prominence code that Ofcom is consulting on in the wake of the Media Act 2024. It was stressed, however, that a DIPS application cannot be submitted without a SOPP that is fully compatible with Ofcom's guidance. It is expected that the window for submitting DIPS applications will open soon.</p> <p>It was asked whether S4C's importance to the Welsh language should be expressed more forcibly, noting that the channel is an essential part of the infrastructure that sustains the language, and asking what would be the state of the Welsh language without it. It was agreed that it should be clearly reflected in the document that S4C contributes to making the Welsh language more viable and sustainable for future generations.</p> <p>It was also asked whether further references should be included in the document, including to the importance of sport to S4C although it is not a formal part of the remit; It was noted that this could be reflected within the policy. It was also asked whether it would be appropriate to refer to the curriculum under the Education section, stressing that the remit encompasses education in its broader sense beyond the context of schools.</p> <p>Consideration was given to whether reference should be made to the Well-being of Future Generations Act, in terms of describing how S4C creates content and operates as a sustainable service for the future. It was noted that further discussion at Board level will be required before deciding on these directions. The importance of ensuring that the document reflects the commitment to reflect Wales in all its diversity was also emphasised.</p> <p>Decision: To amend the draft Statement in accordance with the feedback provided by Board members, and submit it to Ofcom.</p>	
9.	<p>Reports from the Board's committees</p> <p>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:</p>	

	<p><u>Case Committee</u></p> <p>The Committee's deliberations were noted.</p>	
10.	<p>Reports to be approved / noted without the need for discussion</p> <p>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.</p> <p><u>Senior Leadership Team Report</u></p> <p>The report was noted.</p> <p><u>Minutes of previous meeting</u></p> <p>Decision: To approve the minutes of meeting 481, held on 11/12/2025.</p> <p><u>Action Points</u></p> <p>The Action Points were Noted.</p> <p><u>Work Programme</u></p> <p>The Work Programme was noted.</p>	