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**S4C Content Strategy
2009-2013**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Strategy has been devised specifically for the bridging period between the beginning and the end of digital switchover. By the end of this key period, S4C's audience will be digital viewers and S4C will be a stand alone Welsh Channel. These years will present a unique challenge to the Channel since many of S4C's audience are still watching the Channel on analogue television. Our hope is to maintain their loyalty throughout this complicated period of change. We do not underestimate the challenge that is facing the Channel and its partners in the efforts to achieve this.
- 1.2 Our fundamental aim in the digital age is to ensure that S4C offers a varied service of a high standard. The content must be innovative, original and attractive.
- 1.3 S4C recognises that the audience's needs are changing and evolving regularly and like every other broadcaster, we have experienced the convergence of different technologies. Our qualitative and quantitative research provides us with information that allows us to respond to the needs of the audience in the most appropriate way. We believe that television will be the main focus of our activities for some time to come. Providing content on broadband is also a feature of our service and there will be an increasing role for the other platforms in our efforts to extend the impact and reach of our content. But as a public service broadcaster, we recognise that the work of providing our services on any new platform will have to ensure value for money. There is a delicate balance between presenting new services and working within a set budget; it is therefore possible that S4C will not be available on every platform in the future.
- 1.4 S4C communicates through the medium of the Welsh language, but we are seeing substantial linguistic changes in Wales. Statistics suggest that at least 70,000 adults are learning Welsh at different levels annually. Every year in schools, over 10,000 pupils register to sit a second language GCSE. We consider learners to be an important part of the audience. We will work to increase S4C's value and appeal to learners by developing our online services for learners and ensuring that it grows to its full potential. The website uses technology to aid and encourage learners to develop their skills by providing context and extended information regarding S4C's programmes. Through marketing campaigns we will raise awareness of this important resource amongst those learning to speak Welsh and non-Welsh speakers.
- 1.5 It is inevitable that levels of fluency and the use of the Welsh language now vary greatly, and we acknowledge this. We will review our Language Policy in order to ensure that it is sufficiently progressive and suitable to meet these linguistic and social changes. It is not our intention to place less emphasis on Clear Welsh (Cymraeg Clir).
- 1.6 Our access services, coupled with technological advancements, enable us to be more accessible than ever thus providing more people with the opportunity to watch S4C's programmes. Through the medium of the red button we will introduce an English audio track to specific parts of the provision. We emphasise that no developments in this field will be introduced at the expense of the Welsh-language Service.
- 1.7 The Strategic Partnership with the BBC strengthens the provision of S4C's Welsh-language services, both on television and online. The Partnership has been agreed until the next Royal Charter. We will continue to operate under the same structure, by ensuring that the Programme Plan agreed upon with the BBC is consistent with this Strategy.

- 1.8 The 2004 Creative Excellence Strategy has set a firm foundation and has re-defined the Channel. The challenge we face now is to build on our provision in order to offer a comprehensive service of substance which provides best value to the audience. In partnership with our producers, we hope to realise our aspirations to work innovatively and creatively. The peak hours will be the shop window and will consist of definitive and entertaining programming which will demand high production standards and appropriate investment for this part of the schedule. We will invest further in content which demonstrates special and unique creativity by encouraging our producers to make the big even better, to ensure substantial impact and reach for both the schedule and the audience. We acknowledge that it is not possible to provide the same support for the entire output and we note the need for appropriate content for other times of the day and night which reflect the needs of the viewers in a suitable, original and interesting way.
- 1.9 The Strategy for children is exciting and long term. Our pre-school service **Cyw** has already received a warm welcome. Step by step we will realise our aspiration to present services for children of all ages, and programmes produced for them will also remain a key element of the main Channel's provision. Introducing children to S4C early on will encourage loyalty to the Channel and to the Welsh Language.
- 1.10 During 2009 and 2010 analogue television will be switched off in Wales area by area. We will pay attention in the schedule to each of these areas in their turn as they switch to a digital-only world. We intend to help them adapt and introduce them to the full offering on S4C Digital.
- 1.11 In order to ensure their usage in the future, we will have achieved the aim of ensuring that all our programmes are produced in High Definition by 2012.
- 1.12 We acknowledge that a Communications Plan is essential in ensuring the success of this Strategy. We will implement new marketing and promotional strategies as well as more traditional arrangements to provide information to our viewers and target people who do not watch the Channel at present.

2. The Schedule

- 2.1 As S4C digidol will be a solely Welsh-language Channel, without the need to show English-language programmes, the daily schedule will focus on four parts of the day – morning, afternoon, peak hours and late evening.
- 2.2 There will usually be a regular pattern for weekdays, with the peak hours being the main priority. There will be a regular News and Weather service.
- 2.3 It is inevitable that seasonal fluctuations and associated festivals will disrupt this core daily pattern. We will also ensure flexibility in order to be able to respond quickly to events or time-specific programme ideas. We will also make room in the schedule for ambitious projects that will leave a lasting impression.
- 2.4 After ensuring a comprehensive service on S4C digital from 07.00 until late, we will then over the next three years turn our efforts to the weekends. Programmes for children will be a prominent feature of the developments in the provision on Saturdays and Sundays.

- 2.5 We acknowledge the need to use less of the same programmes within specific periods. We will look to strike a balance between ensuring the impact and reach of individual programmes by repeating them. However, we will try to ensure that this will not be done to the detriment of the regular viewer. We will make use of the Channel's rich archive, as well as look for innovative ways to re-package elements of the archive. Content of this kind will be broadcast at appropriate times with consideration to audience expectations for different parts of the day.

Morning

We will commission pre-school programmes for this period but there is no intention to commission content in other genres. The morning will be used to continue with our extended services for children.

Afternoon

The investment in afternoon programming will reflect the number of available viewers and the nature of that audience. The programming will offer a combination of original programmes and repeats as well as material from the archive. This period will also include specific programmes for children.

Peak hours

The peak hours are our main priority. We will ensure appropriate investment in this time slot in order to provide excellent content of the highest quality for the audience and to attract a substantial number of viewers.

Late evening

We acknowledge that we need to strengthen our programming outside the peak hours. We will strengthen the original content that is available for this period. We note the need for a variety of programming for adults.

3. S4C's Programme and Content Service

- 3.1 S4C is a public service broadcaster, and its provision must fulfil that remit. The audience is at the heart of our services, and its expectations of S4C are very high. It is difficult for one channel with a limited budget to satisfy all those aspirations and needs. The challenge is to provide a variety of programmes and content appropriate for a public service broadcaster, whilst offering the best value and enjoyment to the Welsh audience.
- 3.2 We will place more emphasis on identifying the purposes and features of individual commissions. By doing this, we will consider audience targets in terms of numbers, audience demographics or a specific public broadcasting purpose.
- 3.3 Maintaining and developing our services requires programmes that are innovative, original and unique. That, in turn, emphasises the need for a clear understanding of the constant developments in technology and ground-breaking changes in broadcasting in order to produce content of a distinctive quality. A good story is essential in every genre and it must be communicated to the audience in understandable, clear and simple Welsh. We will also increase our interaction with the audience, and provide more opportunities for them to contribute and express their opinions.

4. Events and Event Television

- 4.1 S4C is the home of live events of Welsh interest. Our research shows the importance of this to the audience and their appreciation of the work and role of the Channel in this area. We will continue to invest, prioritise and expand our provision. The Eisteddfodau, the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, Sporting events, Festivals and various Musical Performances are broadcast live and for extended hours on the Channel. As more people take advantage of technological advancements to watch programmes as and when they wish, broadcasts of events such as these create important communal viewing experiences. We will continue to offer opportunities to watch and enjoy on different platforms from main events, encouraging further innovation in order to satisfy viewers and provide choice.
- 4.2 This is a period of exciting opportunities and we will encourage ideas to create multi-platform coverage from certain events or programmes. It is vital that we create an interactive, communal, enjoyable and elevating experience.

5. News and Current Affairs

- 5.1 The current crisis facing regional journalism is further increasing S4C's importance in this field. As a public service broadcaster, it is S4C's duty to provide content that informs the audience, thus increasing their understanding of Wales and the world through news coverage, information and analysis of current events and ideas.
- 5.2 Amongst the hundreds of information sources, the challenge facing S4C and our news and information providers is to offer a unique look and perspective on all that is happening in contemporary Wales.
- 5.3 S4C will work to meet the needs of the whole audience by offering comprehensive news and current affairs in keeping with the Channel's schedule, with prominence during peak hours. We will also develop comprehensive and continuous new Welsh services online that will satisfy the demands of the younger, less traditional, audiences.
- 5.4 S4C's aim, along with its partners, is to provide a comprehensive and consistent news and current affairs service for a channel that reflects Welsh identity, with the main emphasis on stories from Wales. Within the schedule, we will provide ways of delivering information, context and significance to the decisions and developments that affect the lives of the Welsh people. We will also provide the audience with more opportunities to express their opinions on the matters of the day. Devolution and new Assembly powers, along with the resulting social and political changes, call for analysis, explanation and debate.
- 5.5 As S4C continues to realise its aspiration to increase services for children and young people, this increase will also be reflected in the news genre.
- 5.6 In order to reflect different editorial viewpoints within the schedule, we will continue to receive our current affairs and factual journalistic programmes from more than one supplier. These programmes will also place an emphasis on thorough journalism, breaking stories and providing information and context in a compelling way to the Welsh audience.

6. Factual and Culture

- 6.1 Reflecting and strengthening cultural identity is a vital part of a public service broadcaster's duty, as well as raising awareness of other cultures and different points of view. In the factual genre, we will endeavour to provide information and stimulate interest in history, the arts, science and other subjects.
- 6.2 Wales and a Welsh perspective on the world will be the focus of this extensive area of programming. We will offer a unique look at contemporary Wales in terms of its texture, development and history and will look at the rest of the world through Welsh eyes. Ambitious international co-productions, where the Welsh input is prominent, is a means for us to strengthen this further. S4C has succeeded in positioning itself as a main provider of rural programmes, and content within this area will play a prominent part in the schedule.
- 6.3 We will encourage variety in the types of programmes and their stylistic make-up, as well as in multi-platform concepts.
- 6.4 We emphasise the need for programme scripts to be written in clear, easy to understand Welsh and presented by captivating individuals who have credibility and the ability to tell a story.

7. Sport

- 7.1 Rugby and football are our main sports, and we are eager that S4C secures and uses the rights to broadcast live and exclusive games alongside comprehensive and varied sports coverage. Securing sports rights is key in order to provide the Channel with opportunities to attract significant audiences as well as new viewers who are less familiar with our programmes. A prominent presence in this field will extend the reach and profile of S4C as well as people's awareness of the Channel. However, we acknowledge that the uncertain nature of sporting rights and the increasing fierce competition for rights could affect our aspirations in this area.
- 7.2 Credibility and expertise when covering sports are vitally important. It is also essential that our provision demonstrates innovation and new techniques when delivering sport to the screen and to other platforms. We will encourage visual and editorial ideas that break new ground when providing sports coverage.
- 7.3 As well as live sporting events and highlights, we will also include a variety of sports in programmes of a more factual or entertaining nature in order to appeal to a wider spread of the population, in turn attracting viewers from different age groups. We will develop ways of ensuring better access and availability in order to ensure that the highest number of people in Wales can enjoy our output in this genre.

8. Fiction and Entertainment

- 8.1 We consider it important that S4C maintains its investment in this competitive field.
- 8.2 Dramas, series and serials that attract the whole family are an essential part of the schedule, but we will also encourage innovative and original concepts.

- 8.3 At least one production from the fiction and entertainment genres will form one of the yearly landmarks on the Channel. It will be supported by an appropriate marketing strategy to ensure the best value and greatest impact. To this end, we will encourage ambitious ideas that will spark excitement and debate. Conversely the schedule also needs to offer a simpler style of fiction and entertainment that is easy to watch and enjoy.
- 8.4 Our research shows that the audience wants more Welsh-language comedy and entertainment shows. This is most prominent amongst adults under 44 years of age. We will respond to this challenge as a matter of priority.

9. Children

- 9.1 In accordance with the actions that have already been undertaken and the steps noted in the S4C public consultation, "Serving Children in the Digital Future", we will continue to extend our provision for children of all ages whilst guaranteeing exciting, original and varied content for them. We will extend our services for children to include the weekends.
- 9.2 Content for children will have the same features and priorities as noted in this Strategy for the Channel as a whole. However, we will place further emphasis on ensuring that the television programmes are strengthened with content for other platforms that will enrich the viewing experience. It is also vitally important that we offer children and families who are Welsh learners or are less familiar with the language the appropriate tools to use and benefit from the investment in the services.
- 9.3 We will require a wide variety of programmes in order to maintain the services for the different age groups. The programmes and content for the younger children will demonstrate that learning and growing is fun. We will ensure the introduction of brand new characters that will grow to become as popular and recognisable as the old favourites.
- 9.4 Even though the provision of entertainment programmes is essential for primary school children, we will place a further emphasis on entertaining factual programmes and programmes that provide children with the opportunity to discuss and respond to subjects that are important to them.
- 9.5 It is essential that we communicate with children through the most appropriate ways and at times to suit them. Programmes for older children will form part of a converged service consisting of innovative and interactive material. We will also provide them with a platform to respond and contribute to contemporary issues that are of relevance to them.
- 9.6 We will also ensure that a significant number of programmes that are broadcast during peak hours are appealing and entertaining to the younger viewers and their families.

10. Talent

- 10.1 High skill levels are vital to enable S4C to fulfil this Strategy. Recognising, nurturing and maintaining talent are key to the success of S4C's future. S4C expects the independent sector to introduce training schemes that promote innovation. We also offer scholarships in order to support the development of talent and strengthen our content.

11. Commissioning

- 11.1 S4C's relationship with the independent production sector has been defined within the Code of Practice, the Terms of Trade relating to fair trade, the Corporate Plan and the aims of this Strategy.
- 11.2 We will continue to use a rolling commissioning process in order to encourage creativity throughout the year and we will continue with our open tendering policy as a way to ensure competitive practices.
- 11.3 The ideas submitted will continue to be assessed according to the following criteria:
- ability to meet strategic aims
 - availability of appropriate budget
 - production company's creative ability
 - potential of the idea to fulfil public broadcasting or commercial aims
- 11.4 We will set a specific goal for our programmes. We will consider a programme's ability to attract a substantial or appropriate audience, to extend our reach, or achieve one of the main purposes of a public service broadcaster, which may occasionally attract fewer viewers. Inevitably this may lead to changes in our current output.
- 11.5 Following a review of the Supply Chain, we will implement some changes on an ad hoc basis, in order to ensure innovation and accountability of the sector to the audience.

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