

calon

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Dear Chair

I write as Managing Director of Calon to respond to the consultation document ***Serving Children in the Digital Future*** and the idea of establishing a new Welsh language service for children. Calon is in full support of the proposal.

I mentioned in an earlier letter, in my capacity as Chair of the Wales Animation Group, that we see the new channel as an opportunity to respond to the substantial growth in the number of Welsh speakers under the age of 15. It is also an opportunity to create original programming in Wales, for broadcast here as well as throughout the UK and further afield. A public service channel is needed to create original programmes for children. This new channel could meet this need across different media platforms, using the many ways that are now available to reach audiences.

No-one apart from the BBC spends more than S4C on original programmes for children in the UK. If it is to realise its ambitions, however, a creative and challenging attitude is needed to ensure that available monies can sustain a service of consistently high standard. The challenge that faces S4C is ensuring that dubbed foreign programmes or low quality originations are not used to bulk out the service because of budgetary constraints. That would not do justice to Wales' children.

We believe that commercial partnerships are integral to the success of the new service. S4C should be open to all the possibilities that exist to add value to its investment in children's programmes. The Calon management team have a wealth of experience of producing children's programmes over the last twenty five years, programmes that have been sold to over 100 countries throughout the world. Through this we have fostered strong links with broadcasters, distributors and funding partners throughout the world. Co-productions such as ***Holi Hana*** prove that programmes from Wales can have international appeal, attracting investment from broadcasters and financial institutions. We believe that we can attract more money to the channel, not only for animation programmes, but also for drama and entertainment formats. The partnership between S4C and independent producers should mean that producers co-fund programmes to add value to the S4C budget. The sort of investment made by Calon (£650,000) in the ***Holi Hana*** series should be considered the "norm" rather than an exception in a world where the responsibility for, and the opportunities that lie in, commercial rites lie with independent companies in partnership with broadcasters.

Calon has established an international distribution company, jointly with Boomerang. This company has already invested in the international sales rights for the second series of ***Holi***

Hana. The company was established to profit from the commercial rights vested in content produced by Boomerang, Calon and other companies. We see this joint scheme as a potential partner for the new channel, and an opportunity to attract joint funding for children's programming.

As a member of the PACT Children's Board and of the Animation Advisory Group, I am very well aware of the lobbying currently being undertaken to ensure tax benefits and alternative funding sources for television and content for children. The lobbying is powerful, and we believe that a scheme of this sort will be implemented in the short or medium term. S4C will need commercial partners, in order to benefit from this additional sponsorship.

In response to the Authority's questions about the shape and nature of the provision, we offer the following comments. We support the proposal in the document to create time blocks, running different blocks for different ages on the same channel. The programmes aimed at teenagers should be targeted narrowly, between 13 and 16 years of age. As mentioned in the document the audience is media savvy. Those aged between 10 and 12 are not young people, and they will insist on programmes produced specifically for them.

The slot for teenagers could run from 18:30 to 21:00 during the week, and during weekends a branded slot could be broadcast with special events etc for teenagers, giving them a sense of relevance and ownership. Original programming and cult animation commissioned for them.

In order to attract new viewers to the channel, one *genre* is especially important - long term, continuing drama. At least two series should be running, one for the core audience (6-12 years old) and one for teenagers. It will also be important to provide drama/comedy or a *sit com* for the older audience.

We believe that the new channel will provide impetus for independent production companies that develop and produce television programmes in Wales. It will confirm the good name Wales has in this sector and could provide independent companies with motivation to seek production partners outside Wales.

Ambitious programmes are needed for an ambitious channel, and strong innovative companies to produce them. We sincerely hope that the new channel will not be inward-looking, and that it will export programmes, rather than depending on importing programmes or on cheap content.

We look forward to contributing to the development and success of the new service, which will benefit the children of Wales and its industry.

Yours Sincerely

Robin Lyons

Managing Director