

20th June 2007

Mr Alun Thomas
Ysgrifennydd Awdurdod S4C
Parc Ty Glas
Llanisien
Caerdydd
CF14 5DU

Dear Alun,

Opus TF welcomes the opportunity to respond to the S4C consultation Serving Children in the Digital Future:

1. Do you agree with our view that a dedicated service for Children will enhance the public service offering in the Welsh language for Children?

We are in 100% agreement that a children's service will improve the public service available in the Welsh language to children, and we wish the new channel success.

We feel strongly that the new channel should not be an interrupted service. Services of that sort, or services that have to share a platform, or which have an element of 'opt out' are getting less and less attractive to users, especially young users. The BBC service, 2W, for example, does not sit comfortably with the younger generation. The C2 service on Radio Cymru has been somewhat more successful in attracting a young, niche audience.

Of the options outlined, the ideal would be a full, uninterrupted service, separate from the main S4C channel, enabling S4C to continue with its broadcasting of National Assembly proceedings. This would reinforce S4C's status as a major multi-service broadcaster.

For older children and teenagers, the main S4C channel maybe should provide a range of programmes, but we agree that the service should vary according to age groups. Children's channels currently include programmes that are more 'childish'. Teenagers are less willing to watch programmes for younger viewers and more likely to be attracted by English language entertainment broadcasts: Channels like E4, especially when **Big Brother** is on the air or 'User Generated Content', which is very attractive to teenagers: You tube, MSN etc - i.e. platforms that have a young style and 'feel', available whenever users want to access them.

Point 3.2.5 in the consultation document is a bit confused. It mentions **three** different audiences but two channels. We feel that two separate channels would confuse the audience - are two separate channels really needed for young people, children and teenagers? It seems that one channel could provide a service for children under 13 years old and a service for an older audience in the evenings, and act as a platform for supplementary content for the output of S4C Digital.

Clarity is also needed in point 3.4.2.1 'Simultaneous Broadcasting'. If a large proportion of the provision will also be shown on S4C Digital, will the uniqueness and potential of the new channel be undermined?

Schools

Entertainment is obviously the back bone, but the relationship between schools and education establishments should be built on - i.e. encouraging children to watch. Attempts should be made to consider how the provision inter-connects with the curriculum in an entertaining and fresh way. It may be an obvious point, but it is worth remembering that schools contain a large potential pool of

viewers, so it is important to keep some sort of connection - and ensure the channel is used during school hours. Television can supplement children's education, in a light-hearted and fun way. Introducing children to the main S4C channel (Eisteddfodau etc) is important. They, after all, are the future audience. We therefore feel that the point contained in 4.3 on page 14 of the consultation document is key: "Drawing children to an S4C channel at an early age will have a long term positive effect on their viewing of the main S4C channel, making it an essential part of their wide repertoire of viewing."

2. Do you have any comments / what are your views about the proposed hours of broadcast and the target audiences?

We feel that a 06:00 may be a little early - especially in light of the statement in PART 2 - Summary of S4C Research and Key Findings, 4.1: "In terms of viewing patterns, 4-9 year olds view television in the 0700 to 0900 time-slots and between 1515 - 2000 hours". We wonder if 07:00 would be a more realistic time to start broadcasting?

3. What would you consider to be the most important key characteristics for television services for Children provided by S4C?

We feel it very important that the current excellent standard of S4C's children's programmes should be maintained. The channel should be owned and populated by young people and be a service that provides a variety of content and styles - i.e. quizzes, leisure programmes, talent shows, news, drama, sport, events and music. Fun and entertainment is crucial, as is seeing young people presenting and taking part.

We feel that the channel should not be over-dependent on acquisitions and re-versioning cartoons from America (although **Spiderman** works fantastically well!). There are very many cartoon channels offering that kind of provision already: "Cartoon Network UK" / "Disney Channel" / "Nickelodeon" / "Cool-Toons" to name but a few.

4. Do you have any comments on the options set out at paragraph 4 and in particular option 1 and 2? Do you have any other comments you would like us to consider on this issue?

We favour option 2. We do not feel that an interrupted service would offer any advantage and would confuse the viewer. In an ideal world, option 3 would be better, but if S4C continues to broadcast Assembly proceedings and an uninterrupted 7day per week service for children, what will happen to extended broadcasting from the Eisteddfodau and the Royal Welsh Show? Would it be worth considering an additional bandwidth for the extended provision from these events? It would be a pity to sacrifice any element of these important events, which are obviously very popular.

5. Do you believe that a third party provider would be willing to provide a Welsh language television service for Children of a similar nature to that outlined above on a commercial basis?

We do not foresee that any commercial party would be willing to run a channel like the one outlined by S4C in the consultation document, using programmes commissioned by S4C under the trading agreements that currently exist between the channel and its various suppliers. The new service for children proposed by S4C is unique and has much more potential than anything a commercial company could offer.

6. Can you identify any other stakeholders we should be contacting not included at

Annex A?

No - the list seems complete.

7. Do you have any other comments you would like us to consider in relation to this Consultation on a new Welsh language television channel for Children?

We feel that the new channel belongs to Wales. It should be featured heavily on the S4C website in order to attract new users - i.e. the S4C website would be a natural user portal for the whole range of services. It would enable the audience to access the site during their leisure time and find the content and programmes they want. It would also be a space where they can network and create an on-line community for young users and for the audience outside Wales. We feel it would be supported by schools and education establishments and also by Welsh learners.

This service is a unique opportunity for us as a nation and the prominence given to the Welsh language in the consultation document is very warmly welcomed. In an age when so many UK broadcasters seem to be turning their backs on the younger audience, S4C is brave and shows clear vision. The channel will be at the forefront of children and young people's provision.

We support the new children and young people's service 100% and wish the channel every success.

We hope that our comments have been clear and of use. You are welcome to get in touch with Opus if you would like further clarification.

All the best with the consultation.

Yours faithfully

Gareth Williams

Chief Executive Opus TF