

National Assembly for Wales

The Rt Hon the Lord Elis-Thomas PC AM
Presiding Officer

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Mr Alun Thomas
Ysgrifennydd Awdurdod S4C
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18 Gorffennaf 2007

Dear Mr Thomas,

Serving Children in the Digital Future

I write this letter in my capacity as Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales and as Chair of the Assembly Commission, to give our comments on your suggestion of launching a new Welsh language public service channel for children.

We recognise the value of such a service and share your desire to develop it. However, our main concern is the implication of the new children's channel on broadcasting Assembly proceedings. The Wales Government Act 2006 empowers the Assembly Commission to increase awareness of devolved government in Wales amongst the public. A key part of this is increasing awareness of the work of the Assembly. We believe that there is much to be done before we achieve this effectively, and we do not want to see fewer opportunities for Welsh people to see the Assembly at work, especially in this important period of development in the Assembly's role and powers.

Your consultation paper offers three choices for broadcasting Assembly proceedings in the future:

- 1 continue with the broadcasting of Assembly proceedings but including children's programmes at other times on the same channel;
- 2 terminate the broadcasting of Assembly proceedings;
- 3 continue with the broadcasting of Assembly proceedings and also provide a children's service, through using spare and new broadcast capacities.

These choices have not convinced us that this is the best way forward. The first choice would be strange for viewers and it is difficult to believe that this would be provide a solution to the challenge of creating a children's service while continuing to provide coverage of Assembly proceedings. The second option would be unacceptable to us and, we would argue, not in the interests of the people of Wales. The paper itself suggests that the third option is not currently possible.

We would therefore like to meet formally with you and other key stakeholders, to look in detail at the possibility of alternative choices. We would like these discussions to look in detail at technical and editorial options. In the longer term, a better service based on the web might possibly be the most appropriate medium for broadcasting Assembly proceedings. However, over the next years, we believe that a service based entirely on the web would be of too limited accessibility and we are keen to keep a television service with a supplementary service on-line. This may mean devising a gradual process of change over the next years.

This is obviously a matter of great strategic importance to S4C and the National Assembly for Wales. Together, and with enthusiasm, we can hopefully find a solution of benefit to both parties.

Yours faithfully,

Dafydd Elis-Thomas

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