

Rhodri Glyn Thomas AC/AM
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth
Minister for Heritage
Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

John Walter Jones
Chair, S4C Authority
Parc Ty Glas
Llanisien
Caerdydd
CF14 5DU

3 August 2007

Dear John Walter Jones,

The Assembly Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the S4C Authority's consultation document *Serving Children in the Digital Future*. S4C plays an integral role in the nation's cultural life. The Assembly Government enthusiastically welcomes the fact, made evident by this consultation, that the S4C Authority continues to modernise the service it oversees, especially in an age of rapid technological changes in broadcasting and increased expectations by viewers.

I am sure that the comprehensive service provided by S4C is one of the main vehicles for the Government's wider policy of promoting the Welsh language, a policy which requires use of the language to be facilitated in new areas as well as the traditional aspects of Welsh life. In terms of television, the S4C Authority has recognised the need for S4C services to conform with the increased expectations of viewers. The proposal to create a dedicated children's channel reflects the changes in the way children watch television. Your outline plans also reflect the changes that all public service broadcasters will face when they become digital.

The Assembly Government believes that it is a matter for S4C to decide how best to face those challenges. However, we are extremely supportive of your proposal to establish a new children's service. In terms of language policy, it would be of clear benefit to have a Welsh language service as one of the options on Electronic Programme Guides. In terms of the Government, a service targeting young people specifically would also reflect our commitment to strengthening the Welsh language across the education system. Your proposed new service would specifically supplement our intention of introducing the Foundation Stage curriculum to every child aged between three and seven. We warmly welcome the commitment in your document to reflecting curriculum changes in the planning of any new service.

The Assembly Government is, therefore, extremely supportive of your proposal to establish a new targeted service broadcasting as many hours as possible and in a schedule that meets reasonable expectations of young viewers. We also recognise the invaluable role of the current S4C2 provision, which is a means of presenting Assembly proceedings to a wider audience than would otherwise be possible. As a government, we welcome the partnership between S4C and BBC that created this service. We emphasise strongly that the continuation of this service should be ensured and would therefore strongly encourage the Authority to consider how technological developments could make it possible to continue with S4C's current provision alongside the exciting new suggestions of a service for children.

I look forward to hearing more about this exciting new development over coming months as your plans develop.

Yours faithfully,

Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM
Culture Minister