



S4C Board Meeting Minute

1 April 2020 – Skype Meeting

Meeting No. 437

Present:

Non-executive Board Members:

Rhodri Williams	(Chairman)
Hugh Hesketh Evans	(Member of the Board)
Siân Lewis	(Member of the Board)
Anita George	(Member of the Board)
Owen Derbyshire	(Member of the Board)

Shadow Unitary Board

Executive Members:

Owen Evans	(Chief Executive) (Items 1-8)
Amanda Rees	(Director of Content)
Elin Morris	(Chief Operating Officer)

S4C Staff:

Gwyn Williams	(Director of Communications)
Catrin Hughes Roberts	(Director of Partnerships)
Steve Cowin	(Chief Technical Officer)
Rhys Bevan	(Content Operations Manager)
Owain Lloyd	(Board Secretary)
Bethan C. Williams	(Assistant to the Board Secretary)

STANDING ISSUES:

1. Welcome and Declaration of interest

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting of the S4C Unitary Board.

The Board thanked HHE for all his work as interim Chair since September 2019. RhW reiterated that he was grateful to HHE for his co-operation and support in recent months which had allowed him to start the work of looking to the future.

HHE noted that it had been an honour to serve as interim Chair. He had thoroughly enjoyed the work and thanked the Board and the officers for their support. He wished RhW well as the new S4C Chairman.

The Chairman asked any member with an interest in the business of the meeting to declare their interest. SL noted her interest in the discussion on COVID-19 and the arrangements for the Urdd Eisteddfod. There were no further declarations.

See the Register of Interests under the Board section on the S4C website for general declarations.

2. Minutes of Board Meeting 436 held on 18 March 2020

The minutes of meeting number 436 held on 18 March 2020 were presented. The Board approved the minutes.

3. **Register of Decisions and Action Points**

The register was noted. Several of the action points regarding COVID-19 and co-location would arise as part of the discussions.

4. **S4C's response to the Decriminalisation of the Licence Fee**

S4C's draft response to the consultation on the Decriminalisation of the Licence Fee was presented. The Board agreed that the response was clear and concise. OD suggested adding a sentence on S4C's role in supporting the independent sector and the economy in Wales and CHR agreed to do so before sending the response to DCMS by five o'clock.

5. **Chairman's Report**

RhW said that he looked forward to working with the Board and S4C staff over the coming years. He had tried to summarise the challenge and opportunities facing S4C in the coming years as part of his evidence to the Select Committee during the pre-appointment hearing. It should not sound unfamiliar to the Board. But of course, the short-term challenges regarding COVID-19 were the focus over the coming weeks and months.

6. **Chief Executive's Report**

S4C's response to COVID-19

OE outlined some of the main points. OE and AR had been busy in terms of press interviews. OE was also holding a weekly session with staff over Skype and robust measures were in place to ensure the health and safety of the workforce. The investment that had been made to enable flexible working was now a great help in the circumstances and the decision to keep Parc Tŷ Glas prudent. Officers were in close contact with TAC and the sector and were working with the DCMS and the Welsh Government. A great deal had been achieved in a very short time.

As a viewer, AG noted that the broadcasts looked extremely professional with programmes such as Heno adapting effectively. AR thanked her for the comments.

HHE asked if there was any information about the financial implications for S4C, given that all public services were under great pressure. With respect to the content budget, SW noted that most of the content had been delivered by the end of the 2019/20 financial year. Consideration would therefore need to be given to the impact on the 2020/21 and 2021/22 budgets. The DCMS had commissioned a financial impact assessment and S4C had responded.

HHE asked about the potential implications for the sector. OE noted that there were weekly meetings with TAC and the intention was to arrange calls with individual companies. Officers were considering ways of assisting the companies and had been updating the sector on the support available from government.

In terms of the financial impact on S4C, it was impossible to measure the long-term implications in detail. Instead of the Summer, there would be a UK Government spending review in the Autumn.

[Summary: The Board asked about the details of the support for the sector. EM explained the main measures under consideration, namely:

- to run a quick commissioning cycle,
- to release funds to companies that are developing programmes (in order to produce them as soon as the Covid-19 crisis permits),
- to speed up the payment process on productions with contracts in place, and
- to look sympathetically at situations where production milestones have not been fully met due to problems caused by COVID.

S4C was keeping a close eye on companies and OE, EM and AR would be talking with the management of the individual companies over the next few weeks. EM added that there was guidance from the Treasury on supporting companies and suppliers during this period. There would be a session with the sector on 8 April and the intention was to arrange a press release on the same day to announce the package.

OE noted that the first step for companies was to look at the business support available from the UK and Welsh Governments. A list was produced explaining what support was available to the sector. HHE reiterated that local authorities also have grants available to businesses. He noted that care needed to be taken that companies did not receive funding from different sources for the same purposes.]

The Board noted, from the update, that officers were doing everything possible to support the sector and that this was sensible and reasonable.

7. **Broadcasting/Technology**

SC explained that many of the staff had now been relocated from Central Square back to Llandaf in order to focus on the broadcasting service. It was also noted that some of S4C's staff were now back at Parc Tŷ Glas. There was a daily call with the BBC, and it was noted that everything was working properly at present with acceptable staffing levels at Parc Tŷ Glas.

[Summary: Automation tests had already taken place with the team following up on the results. A full DR test was carried out with the shopping channel.

Only technical and broadcasting staff now had access to Parc Tŷ Glas with everyone else working from home. It was noted that moving to Office365 had been beneficial in enabling and facilitating staff to work from home.

Most of the digitisation of the archive had now been completed, and one member of the team would return in order to complete some of the work that remained.]

8. **Content**

AR explained how the schedule had been affected to date.

[Summary: A proportion of the programmes will not be delivered on time, with some of those cancelled altogether. Clearly there were no sports or events, and a large part of the filming had to end, including Pobol y Cwm, Rownd a Rownd, and some dramas. The lack of sports and events over the summer was going to have a big impact on Reach. In recent weeks it has been noted that peak-time viewing is up, more than the average for other channels.]

AR said that a lot of work was involved looking at the potential impact on the schedule in the short, medium and long term. In the short term, the intention is to

keep the peak time schedule as full as possible, with quick commissions that will create a service that provides viewers with information, comfort and comedy. This includes: a Sunday morning service, y Byd yn ei Le and y Byd ar Bedwar, a new food programme with Chris Roberts, a programme on Wales from the air, and it is hoped Hello Syrjeri and Ffit Cymru.

In the medium term, a rapid commissioning cycle will take place for content up to the end of July. Public information films had already been commissioned along with a new poem by Mererid Hopwood. Material was being created for Hansh and work taking place to launch a new pop-up channel called Yma i Chi.

AR wanted to thank the sector and S4C staff for all their hard work. In particular, it was noted that Tinopolis had done an excellent job in keeping Heno on air.

It was noted that S4C had received several comments from people who wanted to see more of the classics from the archive. However, the cost of repeats would need to be considered and AR explained the challenge of clearing the rights for S4C Clic.

AR noted that discussions were continuing with companies regarding the filling of the missing hours from the events over the summer. It was hoped that something digital could be done.

The Board was very complimentary about what S4C had achieved over the last few weeks and expressed a special thank you to the staff.

9. **Commercial**

[Summary: EM gave a verbal report on the performance of the various investments.]

10. **Communication/Promotions**

GW explained that there were three elements to the communication resulting from COVID-19.

Firstly, it was important to update staff internally through e-mails, staff meetings etc. Over 90 staff had attended the second virtual staff meeting that morning.

The second element was to communicate with viewers with consistent programme information explaining how the service was adapting during this period. This was taking place through different forms e.g. on screen, through the press and via e-mails.

[Summary: In the face of staffing problems some production companies had been able to create promos for S4C.]

The third element was communication with the sector and key stakeholders such as politicians.

[Summary: OE had spoken to John Whittingdale of DCMS.

S4C had also written to the Welsh Government and the DCMS etc. to ask and press for support packages for the sector and the creative industries, particularly for freelancers.

OE and AR had also been interviewed for Golwg, Heno, C21, Broadcast etc.]

11. **Any Other Business**

The Board agreed that OD should chair the Content Committee in the future.

It was noted that the DCMS Select Committee had announced a consultation on the future of public service broadcasting and had invited written responses by 30 April. It was agreed that S4C should respond and that a draft should be prepared for the Board's consideration and approval on 23 April.

During this crisis, RhW noted that it would be sensible for members to keep in touch regularly and to ask any questions by e-mail if anything arises. OLI would continue to update the Board via e-mails.