

S4C's Content Policy Statement 2013

1. Introduction: Service Objectives

S4C's aim, as a unique public service broadcaster in the Welsh language, is to put the audience at the centre of the offer. S4C will also continue to provide content that offers information, entertains, and educates. Additionally, as the only broadcasting service in the Welsh language, S4C needs to provide a service that offers something for everyone from time to time.

But the way in which viewers use S4C's output is changing and, increasingly, we need to provide our content 'any place, any time', using multiple forms of media, devices and platforms, as well as through the medium of television broadcasts. It is also important that we consider our viewers' feedback as we plan our programmes. During 2012, clear themes emerged, for example at our viewers' evenings, where there were calls for S4C to provide a more light-hearted television service with more emphasis on entertainment. On the other hand, audiences were also very aware of the need to ensure high production standards for our programmes in order to compete effectively in the multi-channel, multi-platform, digital world.

There is a need to continuously review any content strategy but, additionally, the time cycle of television creates the need to plan over a number of years. The process of commissioning and producing a new drama series, for instance, can take at least eighteen months. Therefore producing a strategy from one year to the next is meaningless to a certain extent and has no use for a content service that evolves over a far longer period.

The current times of financial austerity, which have seen a cut of 36% in real terms in S4C's budget, give rise to a need to reconsider the priorities of the service. This will force us to face difficult questions and will create the need to undertake an assessment of our current ours and, for example, to consider whether there are too many hours in some genres. Our aim will therefore be to focus the expenditure on peak hours and revisit the schedule in order to create the most effective broadcasting pattern, in terms of our viewers and our use of resources. One priority will be to strengthen the news service and ensure flexibility in the content to respond to current stories. Additionally, we will be safeguarding our services for children and for learners.

S4C's offer will contain a number of 'high points' during the year – individual programmes or 'landmark' series of particular importance which will serve as milestones in the channel's development or will create memorable events on screen which will spark discussion or elicit a response among viewers. These high points may mark special historical events, for example 30 years since the miners' strike, or 100 years since the birth of Dylan Thomas. These high points would be in addition to our existing coverage of the national festivals of Wales during the summer, which includes our broadcasts from the National Eisteddfod, the Urdd Eisteddfod, the Llangollen International Eisteddfod and the Royal Welsh in Llanellwedd. These special programmes could potentially reflect historical events or be a reflection of the fruits of creative partnerships with other bodies, for example Theatr Genedlaethol. The high points will operate across programme genres – from drama to documentaries to children's programmes, and will be supported by digital content to be provided across multiple platforms and devices.

We will pursue a policy of fostering international co-productions and, where appropriate with BBC Wales, particularly in the area of factual. It will also be our aim to be active in the international market in the areas of animation, and possibly individual films. Our aim through co-producing will be to present higher investment and production values on screen and offer a broader editorial range.

2. The Schedule

In considering our new schedule, our aim is to respond to our viewers' requirements and to put their needs first. During 2013 there will be fundamental changes to the schedule which will strengthen the service and make it more attractive.

We will move our main news programme during weekdays from 7.30pm to 9pm, thereby freeing up peak hours for commissioning new drama and comedy during the week.

We will provide a longer slot for **Heno**, one of the cornerstones of the schedule, on Mondays and Fridays, giving more attention to our communities and activities all over the country and this change will create the opportunity to move **Rownd a Rownd** to a later slot on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7.30pm, thereby introducing the drama to a new audience. There will also be an opportunity to broadcast a range of new programmes on Wednesday evenings and an opportunity to watch some archive classics again. The new line-up will therefore ensure that most of our expenditure on programmes is on screen during peak hours.

Outside of peak hours, we will continue to provide programmes for children through our **Cyw** and **Stwnsh** services, along with our specific provision for learners through **Cariad @ Iaith** and **Hwb**.

3. The News and Current Affairs Service

Our main **Newyddion** programme on weekday evenings has been broadcast at 7.30pm for decades (after moving from 7pm in the early days of the channel). But our audience's living and viewing habits have changed significantly over the years and the programme's current slot causes creative difficulties in terms of developing the channel's provision and promoting continuity across the service during peak hours. Our research shows that our viewers vary considerably in terms of their fluency in Welsh and that some audiences search for more light-hearted and relaxed content during the first few hours on weekday evenings. We therefore decided to respond to this by moving our main **Newyddion** programme to 9pm and freeing up the time before **Pobol y Cwm** until 8pm to offer a new variety of programmes which would possibly have a broader appeal during those times.

Moving the broadcast time of **Newyddion** to 9pm during the week will enable us to change the format of the schedule during peak hours, and will create an opportunity to build our audience throughout the evening. It will create a new cornerstone for the S4C news service and create a service that will be relevant to that time of night and to the S4C audience, which will include news from Wales and the world. We believe that the **Newyddion** programme at 7.30pm is too close to the news programmes of other broadcasters and that broadcasting the main programme later in the evening offers new editorial opportunities to provide updates on the day's main stories and report on late-night events and incidents across Wales. We will also be increasing our use of special news programmes which will respond quickly to major stories. The new broadcast time for **Newyddion** will be introduced in April.

In addition to the editorial advantages there is a commercial advantage from moving the news to a later time since it creates a valuable new commercial break during peak hours.

We will continue to provide a comprehensive range of current affairs programmes and series that will include investigative journalism and treatment of political affairs which are relevant to Wales and locally, along with the latest developments in Cardiff Bay, Westminster and Brussels.

4. **Entertainment**

We will focus on providing entertainment programmes across the week and will develop ‘second-screen’ series, which will make creative use of mobile device technologies and new platforms. We will be offering a stage for our established performers through series based on unique talents. We will also be open to ideas that will provide a stage for the big names. We will work collaboratively with the production sector to develop talent over the next 5/10 years, be they authors, performers, directors or technicians. Ensuring a flow of creative talent into the future is extremely important for all broadcasters and it is our hope to be able to develop the next generation of performers and producers through our existing series.

We will be prioritising the development of comedy both independently and jointly with Radio Cymru. A new series of ‘stand-up’ shows will be commissioned as well as sketch shows and light drama.

This area can prove difficult since other broadcasters’ expenditure is so high and the competition on other channels is very strong. But we need to keep our ambition and develop ideas which offer a different experience from what is on network. S4C’s strength is its closeness to the audience and we are looking for ideas that are strongly rooted in Welsh communities. During the coming year we will develop ideas that will provide an opportunity for those various communities to be reflected on screen.

These ideas might vary from simple quiz shows to ambitious events and to content which will offer opportunities to interact directly with the channel.

It is also important that we prioritise the special talents that we have as a nation – be they big international names or original Welsh artists who are active in the communities. In the same way as the entertainment sector, we will also create a talent development strategy over a five year period for young people’s programmes. Our philosophy will be to commission a cross-section of types of programmes which have a broad appeal but have to compete for their place in the schedule. We will also commission a contemporary music programme.

5. **Factual**

Our aim in responding to viewer research will be to strengthen the range of factual programmes by including more series during peak hours which discuss science and history, with more emphasis on communities and local areas across Wales. This is in response to independent research on public service broadcasting, which suggests that recognition of S4C is significantly below broadcaster average for science, arts and history programmes. Our research also shows that viewers enjoy seeing a geographical and topical variety on screen, which gives the opportunity to learn about parts of Wales with the emphasis on local elements and people.

Our aim will therefore be to develop close links with the communities of Wales and various bodies by developing a partnerships strategy with a broad range of bodies and societies in Wales from the Sports Council to the Welsh Books Council.

We will strengthen **Heno** editorially by including leisure and sports elements. Our new schedule will also mean that **Heno** programmes on Mondays and Fridays will be an hour long and will be more relaxed with more items on location across Wales. In addition, it is our intention to further strengthen resources in North Wales to ensure consistent content across Wales. There will be increased opportunities to discuss, as well as some light music.

6. **Drama and Comedy**

Drama is one of the main elements of the service on Sunday evenings, but additionally the number of viewers for popular series is increasing on the web through our Clic service. Our long-term aim will be to introduce new drama series during the week, funding permitting. We will also be commissioning individual dramas and 2/3 part short series, as well as popular long series.

Pobol y Cwm will continue as the channel's main soap series with a regular slot at 8pm every weekday evening and an omnibus edition, which will include burnt-in subtitles, on Sunday afternoons.

As **Rownd a Rownd** is broadcast during peak hours it will bring a younger, more contemporary feel to the provision on two weekday evenings at half past seven, and this will certainly be welcomed. But in this area we also want to develop a close relationship with Theatr Genedlaethol – it is an opportunity to foster talent and to contribute added value to the Channel's content as well as the productions of Theatr Genedlaethol. It is also an opportunity to foster the talent of authors and actors, but it is also an opportunity to be forward-thinking with multi-platform content. The company's production **Y Bont** in Aberystwyth is a case in point. There will be an adaptation of the event on S4C following the performance but a lively digital life has already stemmed from the collaboration and will continue until the television version later in the year. This collaboration has already created content that is being discussed and appreciated. There won't be a production by S4C to accompany all of Theatr Genedlaethol's projects, that isn't the aim, but where it does work editorially for both organisations we will give detailed consideration to the options.

Also in the area of Drama we will be marking special events from time to time and for 2014 we are considering ideas related to notable anniversaries, for example the centenary of the birth of Dylan Thomas and 30 years since the Miners' Strike. The aim will be to produce creative high points within the schedule.

In 2013 we are broadcasting the ambitious drama series, **Mathias/ Hinterland** which is being shot back-to-back in Welsh and English, and it will also be broadcast on BBC Wales. It has already been sold to Danish television and it is our aim to continue to try and create similar ambitious projects into the future.

7. **Sport**

Sport offers an opportunity to broaden the S4C audience base since coverage of club rugby matches and key football matches is very popular and a means of drawing in non-Welsh speaking viewers to the channel. We will therefore continue to provide English-language commentary via the red button as well as the Welsh-language commentary, where we can secure the rights to do this. We will also consider what it is acceptable to spend on sporting rights, working in close collaboration with the BBC.

But there is more to sport than rugby or football, and it will also be our aim to reduce our mainstream sport hours and extend the provision to include alternative sport, using daily strands in the schedule to this end.

8. **Digital Content**

As has already been noted, the viewing patterns and habits of our viewers are changing and there is a need to ensure that S4C content continues to be relevant to all our viewers and users. We will therefore continue to produce supplementary digital material for all our programmes and develop new creative ways of exploiting new technologies in order to strengthen our service. We will be freeing up archive content from the S4C programme library for educational purposes and will

contribute educational material to the Welsh Government's new HWB. Looking to the future, it will also be our aim to establish a new remit through an agreement with the Government, in order to give us more freedom to develop digital content more independently of the content of our television programmes.

9. **Archive**

We will regard our archive as another important creative resource as we devise the schedule. The high points in the schedule offer a special opportunity to combine contemporary programmes with content from the past to strengthen the provision and offer richer experiences for the audience.

In addition, we will also be repeating series in their entirety, selecting ones of a high standard which will spark discussion. We will be repeating drama series during the week with burnt-in subtitles and we will mark notable days within the schedule with special programmes from the archive.

10. **Conclusions**

Our aim is to create a service of which all Welsh people regardless of their standard of language can be proud. We will be a haven for creativity. We will stir up excitement. We will be forward-thinking in reflecting Welsh life. And our content strategy will evolve greatly over the coming years.