
S4C's response to Ofcom's Consultation:

“The Future of Media Plurality in the UK

Including Ofcom’s consultation on the Media Ownership Rules Review”

Plurality in news

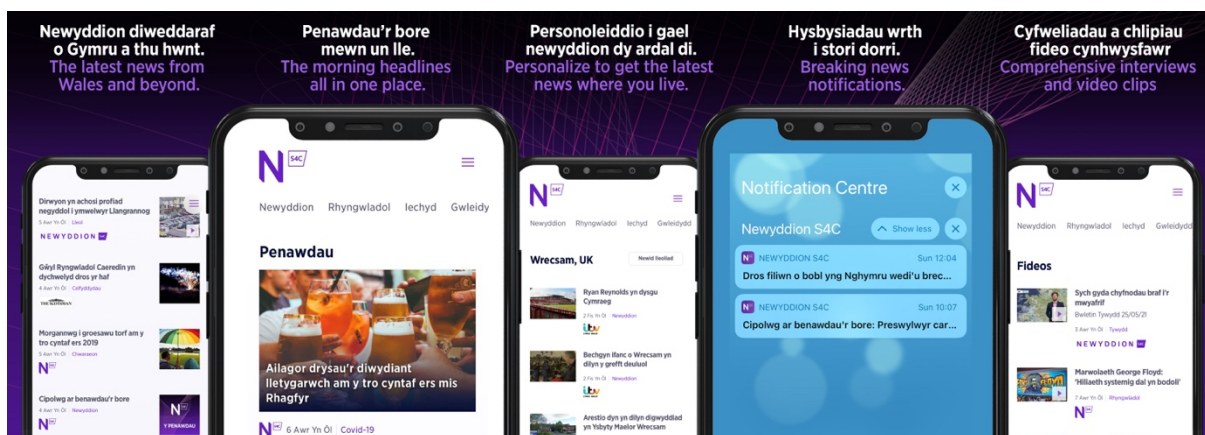
Ofcom's consultation document raises a number of significant questions regarding plurality in news and other issues. We have limited our response to issues specifically affecting S4C and Welsh language news services, rather than responding to issues common to the wider industry.

As a public service media (PSM) provider, S4C provides the S4C News service in linear and digital format. It offers a comprehensive television news service, daily news programmes and bulletins produced by BBC Wales, which are available on linear television and on catch-up services for a limited period.

Our research shows that our television news service primarily attracts older viewers and that younger people do not tend to turn to television for their news. The research shows that 86% of viewers of S4C's television news service are aged 65 and over. In order to offer a Welsh-language news service to younger audiences and those who do not use television as their main source of news, in April 2021 S4C launched a Welsh-language digital news service. The service packages news as short-form video clips on social media, a dedicated app and the S4C News website, offering 'breaking news' throughout the day.

The service ensures a plurality of news sources digitally with content produced by S4C, Golwg 360, ITV and the BBC, with links to stories from other reliable sources. This is the first time that a Welsh-language news service has published and curated content from several different sources, offering a comprehensive news service in one place.

S4C News App:



We have already responded to Ofcom's consultation on *Small Screen: Big Debate* and welcome Ofcom's recommendations to update legislation to give prominence to PSM on-demand services on connected television platforms.

I would like to make the following comments in the context of our digital news service on other platforms, and particularly on social media:

- Facebook is an important platform that gives us an opportunity to reach a new audience. 34% of people in Wales get their news through Facebook according to Ofcom's 2021 News Consumption Report. But at the same time our ability to reach them depends on the prominence that the algorithm gives to S4C News content, and there is a danger of it being drowned out by more popular English language sources.

In order to ensure that audiences have access to a Welsh-language news service as well as a plurality of news, we would call on Ofcom to consider placing requirements on big technology companies, and platforms such as Facebook News and Google News, to give prominence to PSM content and as part of that to include Welsh language news.

- In an age of concern about fake news, it is important that digital news produced by reliable and familiar brands such as S4C News is given priority over less reliable sources. At the moment, news producers are unclear about the way the algorithms work. If they are driven by click numbers (for example), that is not going to favour Welsh language content. When Ofcom considers future regulatory changes, we are asking for measures to ensure that the big technology companies use algorithms to promote reliable PSM news content, including news in Welsh.