



TAC response to Ofcom review of representation and portrayal on the BBC

March 2018

TAC (Teledwyr Annibynnol Cymru) represents independent TV production companies in Wales. There are around 50 companies in the sector, ranging from small firms to some of the leading players in the UK. They produce television programmes and digital content for the UK PSB networks BBC, Channel 4, ITV and Channel 5, and for cable and satellite channels, and are involved in international co-productions. They produce almost all of the original programmes on S4C, and a variety of productions for BBC Radio Wales and BBC Radio Cymru.

TAC welcomes Ofcom's review of representation and portrayal in the nations and regions, and this opportunity to comment on the terms of reference (TORs).

We have detailed below some comments in response to specific sections of the Ofcom TORs.

We hope you find them of interest and are happy to discuss these further.

Relevant section in TORs	TAC Comment
<p>1.7</p> <p><i>The people we see on television should be broadly reflective of those who are watching it. Our research shows this isn't always the case. While three in four viewers say it's important that our public service broadcasters show the different kind of cultures present within the UK, only two-thirds see this happening.</i></p>	<p>TV production companies in Wales can testify to the paucity of network commissions which reflect the lives of the nation's viewers, and the lack of programmes where Welsh voices and faces are a natural part of the narrative.</p> <p>At the Institute of Welsh Affairs' Media Policy Forum in March 2017, BBC Director of Content Charlotte Moore acknowledged the need for increased representation of content from the nations in general, but there is no evidence that this has led to any editorial shift.</p>
<p>1.15</p> <p><i>We recognise that what ends up on our screens is influenced by every decision throughout the content creation chain, from idea generation to commissioning, through to production and scheduling.</i></p>	<p>We greatly welcome this statement.</p> <p>TAC's members are concerned that while the BBC might point to a certain level of spend in Wales, it is sometimes the case that when commissioning, the preference is to use a London-based company which has a Wales-based office; or when using a Welsh company, to insist that some key personnel are used from outside Wales, simply because they are known to the commissioner.</p>

Relevant section in TORs	TAC Comment
	<p>This is due to a lack of engagement with the sector which leads to an underestimation of the level of skills and experience present in the Wales production community.</p> <p>As a step towards growing this understanding, TAC has already held a meeting between its members and BBC Director of Children’s Alice Webb, to discuss commissioning opportunities.</p> <p>We plan to hold similar meetings with other BBC commissioning staff.</p> <p>However while TAC is happy to play its part, this should not have to always be instigated by the sector. As part of its responsibilities to representation and portrayal, as well as growing the creative economy in the nations, the BBC should instigate a schedule of briefings between the BBC commissioning team and producers in the nations.</p> <p>If the BBC commissioning executives become familiar with the structure, quality and range of production companies based across Wales, it will facilitate commissioning from a more informed position throughout the process.</p>
<p>1.16</p> <p><i>To better understand this link, we will talk to people involved in the production process, both behind the scenes and on screen. We aim to get their views on a range of issues, such as organisational culture, the commissioning process, and equality of gender, race and other characteristics. We will explore how these and other factors may affect the quality, range and diversity of what audiences see on BBC TV programmes.</i></p>	<p>We are pleased that Ofcom wants to increase its understanding by talking to people involved in the production process, and of course will do what we can to facilitate such discussions. Whilst some companies in Wales are already known to Ofcom, it is important that a proper cross-section of companies, large and small and based in both North and South Wales, is consulted, and TAC will be glad to assist Ofcom in enabling this to be the case.</p> <p>It is important for Ofcom to talk to independent production companies in Wales and around the whole of the UK in order to garner a representative view from all nations, as well as consulting representative bodies who can reflect their memberships’ overall perspectives.</p>

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