

Delyth Jewell MS
Chair of the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International
Relations Committee
Senedd Cymru
Bae Caerdydd
CF99 1NA

17th October 2022

Annwyl Chair,

I am writing to respond to the committee's invitation for stakeholders to outline the **challenges facing the creative industry workforce in Wales**.

Public Service Broadcasters are at the heart of the creative economy - boosting the television production sector, creating jobs and nurturing talent all across Wales and the rest of the UK. ITV spends more on new UK content, more with independent producers and more on programmes made outside London than any other commercial PSB. Together with the ITV Studios company Boom Cymru, we are a significant employer here in Wales with some 400 staff operating from various locations right across the country.

Whilst the pandemic showed the value of public service broadcasters, we also saw our revenue move in an opposite direction as **advertising spend fell** and TV production across the world was put on hold. The crisis has hastened trends we have long observed with the likes of Google, Facebook and Amazon further strengthening their competitive position in advertising and other markets versus national players. As the UK Government prepares to introduce the forthcoming Media Bill, there is a clear consensus for an urgent new public service media settlement to maintain prominence and sustainability for content that makes a very important contribution to the cultural, economic and political life of Wales. This is particularly important in the context of the expiry of ITV's PSB licences in 2024 which is now not long away.

The pandemic had a fundamental impact on **television productions**, and the increase in delayed production activity post covid has seen an unprecedented demand for a skilled workforce, leading to more competition and an increase in costs and salaries.

We are also facing a shortage of **multi-skilled freelancers** who can help with multiple aspects of a production, with many of them specialists in one area of the industry. The pandemic disproportionately affected freelancers, who make up an estimated half the cultural sector workforce in Wales. Many freelancers have still not fully recovered from the financial and job losses in the industry, and have increased their fees and costs as a result of this. The pandemic highlighted the lack of job security and employment support for freelancers, resulting in an appetite for longer term contracts, more stability and employee benefits.



As an industry, we rely on a broad range of highly-developed **skills**, particularly in jobs that need a mix of creative and technical skills. We would like to see further support from public bodies to address the skills shortage in the sector, with the expansion of traineeships, internships and work placement programmes. Vocational training in a professional setting is vital to tackle the issue, and closer links between formal education and the industry is urgently needed.

In terms of our own workforce, the pandemic has greatly impacted **working life** and it's unsurprising that many employees have seen the benefits of flexible working during this difficult period. ITV Cymru Wales is proud to have introduced Smart Working back in 2019, allowing team members to work remotely for almost all tasks apart from those directly involved with gallery production of our studio based programmes. Smarter Working has continued to accelerate and develop, and it has improved employee engagement and well-being in a variety of ways.

Prior to the pandemic, a growing trend towards **digital technology** was already changing the way we worked. The outbreak and the subsequent lockdown has accelerated this shift to digital technology, and ITV's strategy to meet the challenge presented by a rapidly evolving market is to become a digitally led media company that creates and delivers brilliant content to audiences when and how they want it.

We have invested heavily in digital technologies and increasingly create news and current affairs content specifically for digital audiences. Our news website www.itv.com/wales is delivering significant growth for trusted, impartial news about Wales that can be accessed by audiences anywhere, anytime on mobile devices. In 2020, page views doubled to 20 million, and in June 2022 we achieved 1.74 million monthly page views on our website. We are also very proud to be producing current affairs programming and innovative digital content for S4C's platforms.

Whilst ITV is doing everything in its power to modernise its business for the online era, we also need the **policy framework to move at pace** to recognise the new realities and market power of global platform operators. The increase in our digital output and services has highlighted the digital skills shortage in the sector and workforce, and we are facing difficulties in filling vacancies that require digital competency.

As a significant employer and broadcaster in Wales, we have a crucial role to play to use our platform to reflect the **diversity** of modern Wales. ITV Cymru Wales is proud to be involved in several initiatives to increase diversity both on screen and behind the scenes, and we are proud to have a vibrant Diversity Panel that brings together a wide range of stakeholders in Wales to inform our content strategy and commissioning decisions.

Despite all of our successful initiatives, there is strong competition in the industry to create a diverse and representative workforce. We believe that there should be more collaboration between the key broadcasters and media companies to identify and retain key diverse talent. Broadcasters should be working to complement their similar initiatives, and work together to connect with the communities that are harder to reach and underrepresented



groups.

At ITV Cymru Wales, we are committed to developing and nurturing our team, and our employees are fortunate to be able to undertake numerous training courses within the business. As our digital offering and output increases, the need to upskill and reskill the workforce has never been more urgent. We welcome the launch of Creative Wales' Creative Skills Action Plan for 2022 to 2025 that is designed to support the development of the skilled workforce in Wales. We hope that this plan will address some of the challenges that we face as an industry, enabling our workforce to thrive.

We are also pleased to be supporting Creative Wales' bid to run the BFI National Lottery Skills Cluster for Wales, as we hope that this will further strengthen the implementation of the Creative Skills Action Plan. The Skills Cluster will work with local industry, education and training providers, and other screen organisations across the UK, to coordinate skills and training in their area. It will identify skills gaps and develop clearer pathways to employment for anyone in their area over the age of 18. There will be a focus on building local skills bases, leading to more people, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, working in the screen industry.

Internally at ITV, we were very pleased to welcome the recent appointment of Sonny Hanley to a new role as ITV Academy Director. ITV Academy will act as the focal point for future skills development to address current or anticipated production skill shortages and will work with partners such as Screen Skills, the National Film and TV School, BFI, Creative Access, CrewRoom Academy, Production Park and the Centre for Screen Excellence.

We hope that the Committee recognises the important contribution ITV Cymru Wales makes to the cultural, economic and political life of Wales, and we very much hope that members can help amplify the urgent need to reform the regulatory media framework, ensuring that ITV can play its vital role in the Welsh media landscape for years to come.

Yn gywir,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Henfrey'.

Phil Henfrey
Head of News and Programmes
ITV Cymru Wales