

BCR 18

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
Ymchwiliad i'r Adolygiad o Siarter y BBC

Inquiry into the BBC Charter Review

Ymateb gan: Dr John Geraint

Response from: Dr John Geraint



Submission to the Inquiry into the BBC Charter Review by the National Assembly's Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

from Dr John Geraint, Creative Director, Green Bay Media

1 The BBC is the cornerstone of public service broadcasting in the UK; and public service broadcasting is one of the cornerstones of a healthy democracy. Public service broadcasting is a reflection of - and stimulus to - a self-confident national culture. The way in which Wales and Welsh communities are represented in public service broadcasting is a crucial element in building a just and thriving society here.

2 In my doctoral submission *Representing Wales: Experience on Screen 1985-2010*, I argued that **representation** in the media has effects in the 'real world'. How we're seen determines in part how we're treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; and such seeing comes from representation. So how people in Wales are represented affects how we see ourselves and others, how we see our place in society, our right to the rights a society claims to ensure its citizens.

3 Wales and its communities have been historically *under*-represented in the dominant media which Welsh people themselves 'consume'. And often, even such representation as we have had has been from the perspective of the outsider rather our own.

4 Even when it has been represented, Wales has struggled to ensure that its stories enjoy parity of esteem with the stories of the more powerful and privileged; and that is not only unfair in its own right, but it further entrenches inequality, injustice and lack of true respect and self-respect.

5 In the early years of this new millennium, the prospects for Wales in television looked relatively promising: we enjoyed increasing network and national output on a well-funded BBC; some years of plenty on S4C; a still-substantial body of output for Wales on ITV; and even a nascent English-language channel, BBC 2W.

6 The English-speaking audience has been used to a wide range of public service television programmes for Wales from plural sources. Historically, this extended well beyond news and current affairs, to quality documentary, arts,



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entertainment and drama programming which reflected
the lives and concerns of the audience in a rounded way.



7 Welsh-language producers have enjoyed the security of a fully-funded and
comprehensive pattern of commissioning at reasonable tariffs.

8 All of the above (points 5-8) is now under threat or already gone.



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9 As the BBC's Director General himself has admitted, English-language programming for Wales outside of news and current affairs has been eroded to such an extent that it no longer represents the rounded life of the nation.

10 Unfortunately, public discussion as to how this inadequacy might be addressed tend to be reduced by BBC mandarins to a zero-sum game – i.e. *if we give more to Wales, we won't be able to do Bleak House*.

11 Wales needs to express a sense of outrage at this state of affairs.

12 BBC Network television has begun to commission more output from Wales, but this output has, for the most part, failed to represent Wales adequately.

13 Further cuts to S4C's programme budget will threaten its ability to represent Wales properly and to fund quality production.

14 We need to ensure that S4C continues to have the scope to work with producers in international markets. S4C's commitment and ambition has, over the years, bolstered companies like Green Bay in developing as players in their own right in international co-production, bringing valuable inward investment and allowing Welsh stories to reach a global audience (e.g. in Green Bay's recent historical documentary series *The Castle Builders*).

15 In his 2010 report, 'The Heart of Digital Wales', Prof Ian Hargreaves reminded us that media production is a cultural as well as economic activity: *'Because creative industries policy operates in a space which involves the pursuit of cultural as well as economic goals, a strong creative industries policy also requires a highly effective partnership with public service broadcasters and arts institutions, along with the bodies that fund them.'*

16 The Committee may wish to consider whether this balanced approach is being properly recognised by the Welsh Government in its support of the Creative Industries.

17 Green Bay sees itself as a business which operates in a cultural space. Our work – and that of producers like us – has a greater significance than can be calculated within the parameters of simple economic functions.

18 Put simply, television production has the potential to 'make the weather for Wales' – it can help determine both how we see ourselves in the world and

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how the world sees us. Regarding it simply in economic terms underplays its importance and is likely to lead to missed opportunities.



19 At its best, Public Service Broadcasting – at the BBC and S4C – maximises the synergies that operate and the connection between cultural and economic well-being. Wales needs PSB to be properly funded *and* to be functioning so as to represent Wales in properly rounded way.



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Dr John Geraint, Creative Director, Green Bay Media



John established Green Bay Media with Phil George in 2001.

Green Bay produces documentaries, drama and arts programmes for BBC, ITV, S4C, France Télévisions, National Geographic and other international broadcasters.

John was director and series producer of Green Bay's landmark history of the nation, *The Story of Wales* (BBC, 2012).

John's other credits for Green Bay include *Do Not Go Gentle*, nominated alongside blue-chip series *Band of Brothers* and *Blue Planet* at the 2002 Banff Rockies; *Gêm y Ganrif (Game of the Century)* which scooped the Gold Torc at the 2006 Celtic Film and Television Festival; and other award-winning programmes including the drama series *Calon Gaeth (Small Country)* and feature-length documentaries *Fel Arall (Otherwise)* and *Carwyn*.

John Geraint was previously at the BBC where he had a 20-year career as a programme-maker and executive, leading a department of 430 programme-makers, and doubling network output from Wales in the late 1990s.

John is a former chair of the Skillset Cymru National Board and of media development charity for young people, Zoom Cymru. He is a Trustee of the Arts Council of Wales.

John was educated at Porth County School in the Rhondda and at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He holds an MBA in Public Service Management from Bradford University and a Ph D from the University of Glamorgan.