

Ken MacQuarrie  
Director of Nations and Regions  
BBC

7 May 2019

Dear Ken,

I am copying to you the [exchange of letters](#) between myself and Rhodri Talfan Davies regarding the BBC's proposal to request that Ofcom remove the requirement for 100% speech content for radio stations between 07.30 and 08.30 on weekdays.

The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee have discussed this proposal and are agreed that any change to the requirement for 100% speech content in this early morning slot would be a step backwards. Listeners in Wales tune into BBC Radio broadcasts in greater numbers than in any other UK nation. They should expect to hear a discussion of the political and current events which shape their lives.

Although the response from Mr Davies said 'it is about devolving these decisions to editorial leaders who are best placed to judge what is most appropriate in their own parts of the UK' and 'there is no plan for BBC Radio Wales or BBC Radio Cymru to change their current news focus in peak', this is not reassuring. Once the requirement for 100% speech content is removed for this slot it will result in a loss of a protected time in radio broadcasting dedicated to information and discussion rather than entertainment.

I have also written to the Welsh Government in similar terms with our concerns. I feel strongly that any reduction of speech content in this slot would deprive the people of Wales of an important means of understanding the decisions which have the most impact on their lives. On that basis, I am asking that BBC Cymru Wales is not part of any future request to Ofcom to vary the requirement for speech content.

Please can you let me know what work was carried out in advance of you endorsing this proposal? What assessment was made of the impact of this proposal on the provision of news content for the nations and regions? Was this proposal consulted on? In particular, please can you give us your assessment of the need for and potential consequences of removing the requirement for 100% speech content in this broadcasting slot?

Please can you reply by 31 May so that I can update our stakeholders on this issue?

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bethan Sayed".

Bethan Sayed

**Chair of the Committee**

## **BBC** Nations and Regions

5 June 2019

Bethan Sayed AM  
Chair Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

Dear Bethan

Thank you for your recent letter about the BBC's Annual Plan. I apologise for the delay in replying. As Rhodri outlined in his response to you, the BBC has set out in the Annual Plan for 2019-2020 some of the areas in which it is considering seeking regulatory changes. These changes are considered to be a significant part of our responsibility to continue to provide value for licence fee payers and develop and evolve services to meet changing audience needs and preferences.

The rationale for the radio amendment is to permit a level of devolved editorial control in different parts of the UK. As I'm sure you'll appreciate, radio stations across the UK cater for very different and diverse audiences. As a result, imposing a 'one size fits all' approach can be restrictive for editors as they strive to best serve their particular audiences.

The removal of the 100% speech requirement in between 0700 and 0830 would - as Rhodri has outlined - give individual radio stations a flexibility at breakfast to respond to the changing patterns of listening in their particular areas of the country.

Turning to Wales, however, I believe Rhodri has been very clear about BBC Wales' plans. Indeed, BBC Radio Wales has this week launched a new all-speech breakfast news programme.

Finally, let me also reassure you that we have committed to engaging with stakeholders across the board on these matters to ensure we take all views into account when developing our proposals.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ken MacQuarrie".

Ken MacQuarrie  
Director, BBC Nations & Regions