# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Update on Broadcasting** |
| **DATE**  | **12 March 2024** |
| **BY** | **Dawn Bowden MS, Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism** |

We created an expert panel on broadcasting and communications in 2022, in response to a commitment in the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru. The panel published its report [*A new future for broadcasting and communications in Wales*](https://www.gov.wales/new-future-broadcasting-and-communications-wales) in August 2023, following extensive engagement and research.

We have carefully considered the panel’s report and findings, and I would like to thank the panel once again for its work. We are committed to pursuing the devolution of powers over communications and broadcasting to Wales but recognise it will require the legislative and financial support of UK Government.

There are significant practical considerations arising from the panel’s central recommendation to establish a Shadow Broadcasting and Communications Authority, particularly in relation to longer term funding and its powers. However, there is now a growing body of evidence, which demonstrates that the current situation in Wales is unsustainable. These include the Institute of Welsh Affairs’ Broadcasting Regulation in Wales reports and the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales’ recent report. We note in particular the commission’s recommendation that “robust work should continue on potential routes to devolution”.

In keeping with the view of the expert panel, and the growing body of independent evidence, we believe action is needed to protect public broadcasting and to improve the overall media environment in Wales. We need to ensure that Wales has a stronger voice and is not left behind as broadcasting and the wider media sector undergoes rapid change.

We have therefore agreed to establish a Broadcasting and Communications Advisory Body to provide guidance on broadcasting and communications, to inform policy in Wales as well as navigating the many changes on the horizon.

**The body will aim to include representatives from key stakeholder bodies in its make up, ensure regular, reliable advice is available to the Welsh Government in a rapidly evolving sector, provide advice on efforts to strengthen the media in Wales and make recommendations about how those efforts could be brought together.**

This approach, aligned to the aspirations set out in the Co-operation Agreement, will help to strengthen relationships with key stakeholder bodies and provide independent challenge and oversight to provide a stronger voice for the people of Wales.

The body will advise on taking forward targeted approaches and improve accountability, will **aim to further strengthen the relationship with Ofcom at a Wales and UK level and will aim to consider how its regulation role could be contributing to the strengthening of Welsh democracy. It will explore what an effective future governance structure for S4C may look like and how it may be brought about, as well as suggesting similar made-in-Wales opportunities for other broadcasters, and advise the Welsh Government accordingly.**

Finally, it will aim to explore plans for an alternative broadcasting and communications framework if broadcasting were to be devolved and will keep the case for the establishment of a Broadcasting and Communications Authority for Wales in the future under review.

Through the Co-operation Agreement, I am continuing to engage about the detailed arrangements for the new body, including its membership, and I will provide a further update to Members in the near future.