

*Response to the DCMS Consultation on the BBC Digital Curriculum
Proposals from the Education Broadcasting Council for Wales (EBCW)*

1. Background

- 1.1 The Education Broadcasting Council for Wales (EBCW) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the BBC Digital Curriculum Proposals submitted to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. EBCW acts as an advisory council to the Broadcasting Council for Wales on BBC Cymru Wales education and lifelong learning activities.
- 1.2 This role includes providing feedback on strategies and output to support BBC Cymru Wales in fulfilling its important role as a national strategic partner in creating the 'Learning Country' in Wales. (The Welsh Assembly Government's vision for lifelong learning, published as the 'Learning Country', highlights the importance of ICT services for learning.)
- 1.3 EBCW members represent many aspects of education and learning in Wales including primary and secondary schools, higher education, community education and the private sector. Over recent months, EBCW has taken a close interest in the development of the BBC Digital Curriculum Proposals and this response represents the collective view of members.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Quality Bilingual Content

- 2.11 EBCW is directly concerned with advising on the quality and relevance of BBC Cymru Wales output for education and lifelong learning in Wales. Our comments are based on ensuring that Wales maximises the benefits resulting from BBC investment in developing curriculum materials. We are satisfied that the proposals represent a natural progression, building on previous strategies, to deliver high quality bilingual content on a digital platform.
- 2.12 Wales faces particular challenges for the production of high quality bilingual content to support the national curriculum. This circumstance not only applies to the production of Welsh language materials for a limited market. The Curicwlwm Cymreig requires English language materials to be similarly tailored to Welsh needs and contexts in some subject areas. **We consider that it is unlikely that sufficient high quality bilingual content would be produced if the BBC does not implement its proposals for the Digital Curriculum.**
- 2.13 We support the proposal that the same level of service for the curriculum will be offered in the two main languages in Wales **although we wish to note the absence of Welsh, both as a first and second language, as a core subject in Wales.**

2.2 Supporting National Strategies

- 2.21 The recent announcement of the Welsh Assembly Government's broadband lifelong learning network strengthens the commitment of the government to provide the infrastructure for learning at schools, colleges, libraries and community centres. In developing the digital curriculum materials, the BBC is playing a vital role in pioneering the role of e-learning across Wales, addressing digital divides.
- 2.22 It is worth noting that the Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning and the E-Minister have been briefed on the Digital Curriculum by BBC Cymru Wales and both expressed support. The Education and Lifelong Learning Committee has similarly expressed support as demonstrated by the reference to an 'eager anticipation' of the implementation of the BBC proposals by the Committee in the recent Review of the Welsh Language, commissioned by the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language.
- 2.23 EBCW considers that without the critical mass provided by the BBC digital curriculum proposals, Wales will struggle to develop an effective National Grid for Learning. The proposals will also enable material to be developed to address specific audiences e.g. disaffected youth, where the use of ICT has shown that it improves motivation and engagement.
- 2.24 **Wales is a small nation which requires key players such as BBC Cymru Wales to play a full part in achieving strategic outcomes and supporting a coherent learning country vision.**

3. Creating Capacity

- 3.1 EBCW has been impressed with recent output from the BBC to support learning activities from Bitesize, the Web revision service for GCSEs, to Webwise, an introduction to the world wide web for new users. The digital curriculum proposals addresses the need to develop capacity to deliver e-learning effectively.
- 3.2 We welcome proposals to work with teachers and mentors to develop materials which will enable teachers to deliver the national curriculum more effectively. The BBC Cymru Wales Department of Education and Lifelong Learning has extensive experience in understanding the needs of teachers and pupils and has conducted focused research on the change management process which will be required to successfully introduce ICT-based learning. This work includes extensive consultation with the Welsh education sector and pilot actions to test best practice.
- 3.3 **We are satisfied that the proposals will act as an important catalyst to develop e-learning and e-teaching skills on an all Wales basis, building on the work of the New Opportunities Lottery Fund Programme.**

4. Moving Forward

- 4.1 The Education Broadcasting Council for Wales has had the opportunity to examine and discuss the BBC Digital Curriculum proposals over recent months and **is firmly convinced that they need to be implemented if Wales is to move forward to achieve the vision of the Learning Country.**
- 4.2 **The Council is unable to identify any alternative strategy which would result in a socially inclusive, bilingual learning resource being available to Wales. Wales does not represent a competitive market for learning resources. What is needed is a strong strategic partnership with the Executive and other key players to address the challenges raised by learning in e-environments.**

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