

AHRC Creative Communities

Community Innovation Practitioner 2025-26

Policy Paper

Newyddion
i Bawb

(News for All)

Wales

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Devolved Policy Context

Wales already has much of what it needs to deliver a robust and healthy information ecosystem: the statutory architecture, the policy frameworks and the evidence base. All that's missing is the connective tissue bringing together government aims across democracy, cohesion, future generations and the foundational economy. That starts with a strong Welsh voice in BBC Charter Renewal - which will determine not just the BBC's future, but S4C's funding and what public service media should look like.

The Future Generations Act already gives the Welsh Government the tools to embed community sense-making within existing statutory duties; the Foundational Economy agenda supplies the economic logic.

The Welsh language creates a responsibility and an opportunity unique to Wales. Bilingual civic infrastructure is something Wales is well-placed to build. By investing in it, Wales can show that the answer to the information crisis is local, relational, and right here - not dependent on the goodwill of platforms or organisations whose priorities lie elsewhere.

Communities across Wales, and beyond, are facing a '[democratic emergency](#)' - an information crisis threatening social cohesion and civic participation, driven by collapsing trust in [government, institutions](#) and [journalism](#), a flood of [misinformation](#), and an accelerating [restructuring of the information environment](#) by AI.

In Wales, the stakes are especially high. Carnegie UK's [Life in the UK 2025 Wales](#) report found trust in devolved democracy is "alarmingly low". This is compounded by a [persistent failure](#) of UK-wide coverage to signpost which government - UK or Welsh - holds responsibility for devolved issues.

Journalism also stands at an existential crossroads: the business model was predicated on scarcity of information and the costs of distribution, but neither exists anymore. That leaves many news organisations trapped in a click-reliant model, producing content many [people don't trust](#), while a growing dependence on platforms whose incentives don't serve the public interest deepens the problem.

The Senedd's Culture Committee flagged this shift toward [clicks over public interest](#) as long ago as 2018. Propping up that obsolete paradigm is not a policy option.

What's needed now are interventions built for the pace of technological and social change, Wales's linguistic and cultural context, and what Welsh citizens actually need from their information ecosystem. [Newyddion i Bawb/News for All](#) research adds to a [growing evidence](#) base that people don't need more content, they need the conditions to make meaning together. The research evidences the need for a different, more resilient intervention - one that puts people in charge, not institutions, and one Wales is uniquely placed to deliver.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Use the Shadow Broadcasting Authority to prove the model, not wait for the powers

The [Shadow Broadcasting and Communications Authority](#) (SBA) should take the opportunity to frame public interest standards and support innovation in community-centred journalism and information. Broadcasting powers are unlikely to be devolved soon, but by developing distinctively Welsh evidence now, the SBA can assemble a practical, evidence-based case, building on work already done by the [Senedd Culture Committee](#).

Newyddion i Bawb shows what that community-centred model could look like: participatory, place-based, bilingual, and defined by communities rather than imposed on them. Our community co-researchers reported greater connection to each other and greater willingness to take part in civic and democratic life. They want more connection, not more content.

The SBA should build a funded strand for community-led, community-centred innovation into its founding remit, with funding open to communities themselves, not just newsrooms or media organisations. Impact should be assessed against social cohesion and democratic participation, rather than simple content creation metrics. Wales should use the evidence this generates to shape its position on wider policy questions.

Recommendation 2: Use BBC Charter Renewal to secure a Welsh public service settlement fit for the future

Newyddion i Bawb's findings cut against industry and policy orthodoxy: people aren't asking for more journalism or content, they're already drowning in it and want help making sense of what they have. That has direct implications for BBC Charter Renewal, which will govern public service broadcasting - including S4C's funding - until well into the 2030s. At that point the information landscape will look unrecognisable from today's. A settlement built around current assumptions therefore risks being obsolete well before it expires.

Although broadcasting remains reserved, the Welsh Government's consultative role in Charter Renewal gives Wales a real opportunity to shape the debate - one that now extends beyond funding to distribution. Public service journalism increasingly depends on platforms like YouTube and TikTok, whose incentives don't align with the public interest. UK ministers are [already weighing rules to force greater prominence](#) for public service news, backed by [Ofcom](#).

The AI transition will deepen this dependency: as people turn to AI assistants instead of seeking out news themselves, those systems decide what they see and where it comes from - and content not built to be surfaced this way risks disappearing from view. For S4C, competing in a smaller-audience language, the stakes are higher still.

That's the test any post-Charter settlement should be judged against - not reach or output, but whether it helps people make sense of the world together. The Welsh Government should insist on this: a settlement addressing platform dependency directly, and a forward-looking, community-rooted position on the [whole public-purpose media ecosystem](#), not the BBC alone.

S4C's long-term sustainability depends on maintaining deep community roots, not simply platform metrics, and this context should inform the Welsh Government and Senedd Culture Committee's scrutiny of Charter Renewal.

Recommendation 3: Recognise community sense-making as foundational economic infrastructure, and fund it for the long term

Wales has already embraced [Foundational Economy](#) thinking - but information and communication infrastructure is strikingly absent from it, despite being both *part of*, and a *precondition for*, that economy. Communities can't meaningfully shape decisions about health, housing, food or energy without the means to make sense of those choices together. Information infrastructure is increasingly understood internationally as a public utility, alongside housing or transport, and the Foundational Economy in Wales needs to reflect that.

The platform dependency named above cuts both ways: community sense-making risks the same fate if its online strand

defaults to the same engagement-driven infrastructure that gate-keeps journalism today - built for scale, not place, and flattening local distinctiveness into a single, homogenised culture.

Newyddion i Bawb demonstrates what in-person, place-based sense-making can achieve - but it's one strand of a plural system, not a substitute for one. [Tŵt Cymru](#) is a working Welsh example online: a non-profit, bilingual social platform where individuals choose which accounts and sources to follow, rather than an algorithm or editorial panel deciding for them. Civic infrastructure funding should support digital strands alongside in-person work - as complementary, rather than competing, investments.

This need is already being addressed separately - by the [Innovating Democracy Advisory Group](#), the [Expert Group on Cohesion's](#) recommendations, the Foundational Economy agenda, the [Future Generations Act](#) and the proposed SBA - without a shared framework connecting them.

As the AI transition puts growing pressure on Wales's information ecosystem as a whole, the Welsh Government should supply that connective tissue: dedicated, long-term funding, open to communities themselves and not just delivery bodies or institutions. This should support place-based, participatory, bilingual civic infrastructure within the Foundational Economy framework - all tied to a cross-departmental approach across cohesion, democratic participation and the Future Generations Act.

Further Information:

For more information on AHRC Creative Communities visit www.creativecommunities.uk

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