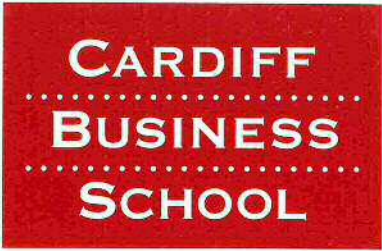


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Welsh Economic Review

Volume 14.1 Spring 2002

Produced in association with



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ISSN 0965-2450

The *Welsh Economic Review* is produced twice yearly, by the Welsh Economy Research Unit (WERU) at Cardiff Business School. The aim of the *Review* is to provide an authoritative and objective analysis of the Welsh economy in a manner that promotes understanding and informs decision-making. The 'core' section of the *Review* is written by members of WERU, with feature articles contributed by academics or practitioners within or outside Wales. The *Review* is circulated widely within Wales, to both private and public sector organisations, including the education sector and the National Assembly.

Notes for Contributors

Authors should send papers for potential publication in the *Welsh Economic Review* to the Editor at the address given below, preferably via e-mail in a Word for Windows format. Papers are welcome on any topic that would be of general interest to the readership, and should be written in a style suitable for non-specialist readers. Papers should be approximately 3,000-4,000 words and any graphs or figures should be accompanied by the underlying data to allow reproduction.

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**Interview
&
Feature
Articles**

Interview with Menna Richards



Menna Richards kindly agreed to an electronic interview with the editorial team of the *Welsh Economic Review* for this edition.

Menna was appointed to the role of Controller of BBC Wales at the beginning of 2000, following the retirement of Geraint Talfan Davies. She was previously Managing Director of HTV Wales and a director of the HTV Group, having joined the organisation as current affairs reporter and producer in 1983. She was born in Maesteg in South Wales, and educated at Maesteg Grammar School and University of Wales, Aberystwyth, where she now holds an honorary fellowship. Menna is a great advocate of the arts and is Vice President of the Llangollen International Eisteddfod, and a Board Director of the International Film festival of Wales.

Can you explain to us your responsibilities as Controller?

My job is to manage all the broadcast output of BBC Wales. That includes BBC Wales Television on BBC One, BBC Two; our new digital service BBC 2W; two national radio services – Radio Cymru in the Welsh language and Radio Wales, the English language service; BBC Wales' output on S4C amounting to at least 10 hours a week; BBC Wales Online – twin English and Welsh language services incorporating news and features.

BBC Wales employs more than 1,100 staff and has a budget of more than £110 million. We also have the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

It's also my job to provide strategic leadership for BBC Wales, determining how BBC Wales will develop in future in response to a number of factors, most importantly audience demand. The greater the competition for audiences from many numbers of channels, the

more important it is that BBC Wales offers relevant and distinctive services to its audiences.

Do you agree that the Media is an influential sector, in the UK as a whole and in Wales, and can you enlarge upon how you see those influences developing and changing?

Yes it is immensely influential. For instance, with devolution, broadcasters in Wales have additional responsibilities to ensure that audiences here are well informed about the activities of the Assembly, and the way in which policy decisions affect their lives, whilst ensuring that Westminster too continues to be comprehensively reported.

Another important consideration in these post-devolutionary times is the representation of Wales on the UK networks. This isn't just about content of programmes, it's about demonstrating that we have the

production and technical skills here in Wales to make excellent programmes about any subject, Welsh or not.

BBC Wales is influential in many areas simply because of the programmes we broadcast including current affairs, consumer, sport, and business. BBC Wales can influence in other ways too. Take the arts in Wales as one example – BBC Wales is a significant cultural patron. We sustain the National Orchestra of Wales in partnership with the Arts Council for Wales and S4C; we develop and commission writers, composers and dramatists; we support the National Eisteddfod, Urdd Eisteddfod; Hay Festival and the International Festival of Musical Theatre. BBC Wales' relationship with the creative life of Wales is extremely important.

What are the pros and cons of being female at a senior management level, in a working world that is still predominantly male?

I've seen many changes in senior management since I've been in broadcasting. There have always been capable and powerful women in broadcasting, although until relatively recently they were the exception. Now, it's become much more common which means it's easier for women to get on with their work rather than being objects of surprise and amazement.

Some men in the business community in Wales still have a problem coming to terms with the fact that women hold senior positions in increasing numbers. It's a particular characteristic of men of a certain age. I suspect it's because we've had such a recent tradition of male-dominated heavy industry and it's still a bit of a novelty for some of these men to see women in position of influence and power.

Among your achievements has been winning the rights to show Welsh Rugby for the next five years, effectively returning Welsh rugby to the BBC. Why was this so important to you?

Obviously because it's what audiences want. There is still tremendous interest in rugby. BBC Wales wants to give the best service to licence fee payers, and offering high quality rugby programming is part of that ambition.

It was also important because when I was Managing Director of HTV we won the rugby contract from BBC Wales. Now that I'm Controller of BBC Wales, it's good to have it back.

Soon after your appointment, you announced a radical management restructuring to reduce costs and release more money for programmes. Has this been a successful strategy or is it too soon to tell?

The entire management of BBC Wales has been restructured and reorganised. We have released more money for programmes – we are producing more than ever. We have also created a more collaborative, co-operative environment in BBC Wales. There's still more work to be done though.

What other achievements are you proud of?

During the past year we have seen many achievements. Amongst the most memorable were Cardiff Signer of the World, one of the most highly regarded international singing competitions in the world. Our music department produced more than 50 hours of programming for six different BBC services (including BBC2 and Radio3) over the course of a week.

Our coverage of the General Election Results in 2001 made me feel very proud of the News, Current Affairs and Politics departments. For the first time, BBC Wales produced an all-night results programme on BBC2 (previously we'd only had opt-outs from the network). In total we broadcast five full but entirely distinct election results services in two languages. It was a remarkable achievement by any standards and by far the most ambitious of any part of the BBC outside London.

This year, too, we have seen exciting developments in our new media strategy. Over the next 18 months we will be spending more than £2 million

setting up local 'Where I Live' sites in five different parts of Wales. Linked to them will be community studios with access to the public so that they can contribute to our online services.

And I'm proud of the fact that we have appointed 200 new staff in the last year, a very important and significant step in developing high quantity talent in Wales.

These days people in authority are often compelled to work towards a vision. What is yours, in the widest sense, for Wales and for broadcasting?

I want to see BBC Wales continue to produce high-quality programmes that are relevant to people living in Wales today. Linked to our traditional programme services I want to see us developing much closer links with the diverse communities we serve.

Wales is a small country and as the national broadcaster we need to be more in touch with our audiences. We already do this with our radio and television programmes, but over the next few years we will be developing other ways of connecting with the different communities around Wales. For instance, we are launching local online sites for five different areas of Wales; we are setting up community studios – places the public can use to contribute to BBC services. In rural areas, there will be mobile studios travelling around from place to place. One of our most ambitious and exciting projects is called Digital Storytelling – it's about enabling members of the public to make short films using digital technology that can be webcast or broadcast on TV.

These are just a few of the projects being developed to ensure that all audiences in Wales are better served by the BBC.

Having worked in two of the principal media organisations, do you agree with the perception of nepotism? Are the best people in the right jobs in Welsh media, and if not what can be done about it?

I've never achieved any kind of job because of family connections. At BBC Wales we're scrupulous about ensuring that everyone, whether candidates for jobs or members of staff are treated equally and fairly.

What are the main differences between HTV and BBC, and what positive experiences were you able to bring with you from the 'private' sector?

Clearly the BBC is a much bigger place. The great benefit of working in HTV was the way everyone wanted to get things done quickly and recognised a rapidly-changing environment and the importance of responding quickly to change. The BBC is a much more lumbering, bureaucratic organisation and it's sometimes quite difficult to get things done as quickly as I would like, but we're getting there.

In the last review we asked John Humphrys what made him proud to be Welsh. Can we ask the same of you?

Landscape, music, literature, warmth of character, closeness of community and, in some parts, a wicked sense of humour. I just wish we could laugh at ourselves a bit more.