

FUTURE SKILLS ISSUES AFFECTING
INDUSTRY SECTORS IN WALES



Media and New Media Sector

Executive Summary

Introduction

This document is one of a series commissioned by the Future Skills Wales Research Forum. The overall project aims to extend and complement the work begun by the original Future Skills Wales project, which forecast future generic skills needs across Wales using forecasting and survey data. The current project adds studies of future vocational skills needs within key sectors in Wales. Each sector study is based on desk research and qualitative interviews with practitioners and employers, and aims to provide an overview of the sector, the skills issues, and current and potential actions to further strengthen the sector.

Businesses and employees in each of the sectors studied have achieved great successes; that is why these sectors have become important for Wales. Our focus on current skills issues should not obscure these achievements or the determination of all concerned to meet current and future challenges.

Sector Profile

The Media and New Media sector in Wales is a hybrid of two technologies and traditions:

- video and film for broadcast;
- digital multimedia for all distribution channels including the Internet.

The video/film part of the sector has been strong in relation to the size of the Welsh economy, due to demand from the major broadcasters, S4C, BBC Wales and HTV Wales. But the independent producers have sometimes been limited in their ambitions, reflecting their reliance on relationships with local broadcasters. This part of the sector faces an uncertain future due to these internal factors and the external pressures of global competition.

New media and multi-media technologies are being adopted by these firms, but there is a new generation of New Media enterprises which have based their entire strategies around these. Many of the better known examples are based in Cardiff, with others in the Valleys and distributed throughout Wales. Due to the expansion of services based on the new technologies, this part of the sector may have clearer growth potential. Infrastructure developments may offer new opportunities for rurally located businesses.

Apart from these considerations, the sector is important in cultural terms, being a key means of expressing Welsh identity both in Wales and potentially across the developing global media markets.

Estimation of the number of firms and employees is not straightforward, partly due to the large numbers of freelancers and the volatile nature of the New Media part of the sector. However, current estimates suggest around 600 businesses employ around 6,000 in Wales. The main centre of activity is around Cardiff, with a significant cluster of both 'traditional' Media and New Media business in the North, particularly around Caernarfon.

The occupational profile of the sector is distinctive, with very few operatives, but significant proportions in professional, associate professional, technical, craft and service occupations.

In employment terms, the sector is smaller in Wales than is normal, relative to the rest of the UK. The employment forecast for the sector is for growth, which is seen as fairly modest in terms of absolute numbers, but significant in percentage terms - around 28% over ten years. However employment in the sector is not forecast to grow in importance relative to the UK sector as a whole.

A determining factor will be the extent to which major purchasers in Wales are prepared to establish innovative business strategies using new digital technologies.

Skills Issues

Skills issues identified by our study include:

- separation between business, creative and technical skills;
- skills deficiencies in commercial and marketing areas;
- interactive and new media technical skills needs;
- strengthening skills and entrepreneurial approach in new entrants.

Action on Skills

The media and new media companies have established links and groups to address issues for the sector, including skills issues. Detailed action plans have been prepared for the sector in North Wales.

Themes for ongoing action include:

- strengthening funding and provision arrangements for New Media, especially the NVQs offered (Cyfle/Media Skills Wales);
- establishment of a Digital Media Wales Forum, building on current work by the New Media Group Wales and on proposals and action in North Wales, to provide a national dimension to action;
- location of skills strategy within a national development strategy embracing New Media;
- within Careers advisory work, emphasis on the distinction between general academic and vocational media studies.

A number of more detailed recommendations are made and are summarised in the table below.

Recommendations are also made for further research:

- on the New Media subsector across Wales;
- to extend the research directory recently produced for Sgrŷn;
- on training provision covering the latest technologies;
- on the destinations of FE media studies students;
- and using an event-based methodology to engage micro businesses and freelancers.

Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	When	Key Players
1	Disseminate results of qualifications mapping and AVITG work, and any proposed changes	Late 2000	ACCAC/NTOs
2	Reinforce messages to independent sector to stimulate demand for management and new media training	ongoing	Cyfle/MSW/TAC/S4C/Assembly/CETW
3	Facilitate formation of a Digital Media Wales Forum for companies in traditional and new media, to transcend existing boundaries and represent the digital content sector on policy and training issues. Adapt and adopt existing North Wales cluster development proposals for all Wales.	Start 2000	Employers/WDA/Assembly/NTOs/New Media Group Wales/Partners in 'North Wales Multimedia Action Plan'
4	Use Digital College to offer and promote supply-chain development courses for the sector	From late 2000	S4C/Cyfle/MSW/WDA/Key employers
5	Within the Forum, constitute a global marketing and exploitation sub-group to co-ordinate and support the sale of Welsh product, building on existing North Wales plans	From 2001	Employers/WDA/CETW/Sgrin/Cyfle/TAC and North Wales partners
6	Celebrate and disseminate excellence in HE, FE and Cyfle/Media Skills Wales provision for the sector in Wales		HE/FE/Cyfle/MSW/CETW
7	Offer the Cyfle/MSW New Media NVQ more widely, and agree the funding arrangements needed to allow this	For 2001 courses	Cyfle/MSW and Board, with WDA and Assembly/CETW
8	Identify and co-ordinate sources of investment for new content and production ventures	ongoing	Broadcasters/New Media Group Wales/key employers/WDA
9	Emphasise distinction between 'general' academic Media Studies provision and vocational provision, and encourage young people – especially females – to consider vocational routes	ongoing	Careers/schools/FE/HE ES/New Deal/CETW
10	Review and encourage potential for New Media development within rural and Objective 1 areas	2000	Assembly/WDA/Obj 1 bidders

