

# Agenda – Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

---

Meeting Venue:

Committee room 3 – Senedd  
and video conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 29 January 2025

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

Lleu Williams

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

[SeneddCulture@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddCulture@senedd.wales)

## Hybrid

---

### Pre-meeting registration

09.15 – 09.30

### Public session

09.30

### 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions, and declarations of interest

09.30

### 2 Papers to note

09.30

#### 2.1 Forward work programme

(Pages 1 – 10)

Attached Documents:

Correspondence from Paul Griffiths: Sharing open letter to the National Eisteddfod of Wales raising concerns over the future of literary competitions

– 10 December 2024

Correspondence from Paul Griffiths: Sharing response from the National



Eisteddfod of Wales to the open letter of 10 December 2024 – 12 December 2024

## **2.2 Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport**

(Pages 11 – 12)

Attached Documents:

Correspondence from Sean Harris raising concerns about freelance workers in the arts in Wales – 16 December 2024

## **2.3 Welsh Government international relations**

(Page 13)

Attached Documents:

Ministerial international engagement for December 2024 – 10 January 2024

## **2.4 Forward work programme**

(Pages 14 – 15)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Llywydd to the Chair's Forum: Advising appointment of Senedd representatives to the Inter-Parliamentary Forum and the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly – 7 January 2025

## **2.5 Forward work programme**

(Pages 16 – 40)

Attached Documents:

Correspondence from Louise Miles-Payne, Director of Creu Cymru: Providing a copy of its Sector Snapshot Report – 14 January 2025  
Creu Cymru Sector Snapshot Report – December 2024

## **2.6 Legislative Consent: Data (Use and Access) Bill**

(Page 41)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning: Inviting the Minister to give oral evidence on the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Data (Use and Access) Bill – 14 January 2025

## **2.7 Charging for exhibitions**

(Pages 42 – 43)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership: Responding to the Committee's letter of 20 December 2024 seeking clarification around charging for visitor experiences and exhibitions by Amgueddfa Cymru – 16 January 2025

## **2.8 Scrutiny of the Welsh Language Commissioner**

(Pages 44 – 53)

Attached Documents:

Correspondence from Cymdeithas yr Iaith to the Welsh Language Commissioner: Sharing response to the Welsh Language Commissioner's consultation on its draft priorities for 2025–2030

## **3 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting**

09.30

## **Private session**

09.30 – 11.30

### **4 Consideration of papers to note**

09.30 – 09.40

### **5 Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025–26: Consideration of draft report**

09.40 – 10.40

(Pages 54 – 100)

Attached Documents:

Draft report: Scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2025–26

### **6 Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Data (Use and Access) Bill**

10.40 – 11.00

(Pages 101 – 132)

Attached Documents:

Research brief: Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Data (Use and Access) Bill

Legal advice note: Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Data (Use and Access) Bill

## **7 Welsh Government's International Strategy: Consideration of consultation responses and next steps**

11.00 – 11.20

(Pages 133 – 152)

Attached Documents:

Research brief: Summary of consultation responses and suggested next steps

## **8 Cymraeg for all?: Consideration of approach to citizen engagement**

11.20 – 11.30

(Pages 153 – 154)

Attached Documents:

Engagement proposal: Cymraeg for all?

An Open Letter to the Council of the National Eisteddfod of Wales and the Eisteddfod's Board of Trustees.

Dear fellow Eisteddfod-goers,

10 December 2024

In light of the decisions made about **The Drama Medal** competition this year [Rhondda Cynon Taf 2024], and the ensuing fuss, we continue to be very unhappy with the lack of response, clarification and full discussion regarding the issue.

In your statement [13 August 2024], you noted *“We agree that there needs to be a discussion on this year’s competition, and on the endless comments and speculation aired through the press and media over the last few days. We would welcome the opportunity to jointly lead a discussion with the sector in the autumn.”*

It is now early December, and the only event to be organised by you was the partially confidential *“Virtual Symposium” - “Cynrychioli Cynrychiolaeth”* - where the identity of part of the audience was not revealed. Of the two hour discussion among the Panel, chosen by you, **the audience only had the last 15 minutes and asked only 3 questions**, and they were typed in the question box. There was no way of commenting or responding for the remaining 100 minutes, or to what was being said at the time, as you had restricted the comment box. We understand that everyone has very strong feelings, and the desire to avoid any potential legal issues, but why could the comments not have been moderated before publication?

We felt that this was very unfair and didn't constitute a proper **“conversation”** to discuss what happened, the **“competition”** or the *“endless comments and speculation”*. If a Symposium is to be held, shouldn't the “conversation” be completely open for everyone to ask questions and discuss all points?

During the Symposium, the advice was given that the dramatists needed to do more **“research”**, and seek advice and discussion from representatives of the **“community”** or [as you put it] *“the community the dramatist claimed to represent”*. Yet, several examples have been given and noted **that that is the normal and expected process in every rehearsal room** in preparation for the staging of theatrical work. That is when the actors come together with experts from whatever background is needed, to discuss the content of the drama, to suggest improvements and experiences. It is unfair and utterly impossible to expect any dramatist, writer or poet to include the views of every member of the *“community” they have “claimed to represent”*. Is the war in Gaza not conclusive proof of that, since not all Jews share the same opinion, viewpoint and understanding? That was noted by your Panel with the two members of “colour” stating that they do not necessarily agree on the same issues. It has been repeatedly stated that **most characters are mortal**, regardless of gender, race, ancestry, colour, religion or heritage.

The way in which the Eisteddfod has responded to what happened this year undermines the whole basis of every literary competition at the Festival. That is why so many of us continue to be unhappy. This year's winning drama was chosen

by the adjudicators on the basis that it was *“an exciting voice and a fresh perspective for theatre in Wales.”* The adjudicators at the time had no idea who the dramatist was, and that is how it should be. Fair to everyone, without the need to “protect” anyone. Competing under a pseudonym and in secret is **the basic premise of the Eisteddfod’s ancient tradition**. As stated in your *General Rules and Conditions* under *“Confidentiality: All entries must state the number and title of the competition and the competitor’s pseudonym only and endeavour to remove or hide any details that would reveal the competitor’s details”*.

It is therefore clear that the winning drama was **worthy on its literary and theatrical strength**. It was neither the place nor the responsibility of anyone else [except the adjudicator] to question the material, before the dramatist had the opportunity to place it in the hands of the actors. The rehearsal room is the place to interrogate the words and perspectives. That’s the pattern in the world of theatre. You cannot expect every literary adjudicator to be an expert on every human “community”. That’s impossible. By all means, choose adjudicators from different “communities”, but if you were to include tens of individuals, it is unlikely everyone would agree with each other.

You have to admit that your choices this year have stirred a dangerous and concerning hornet’s nest. **The identity, gender, race, ancestry, colour, religion or heritage of the winner should not be revealed until the Ceremony**. If the adjudicators deem the literary work worthy of winning, then it should be awarded the prize, regardless of who the winner is. It is not the responsibility of the Eisteddfod or any other creative individual to question the winning work on the basis of the author’s gender, race, colour, religion or legacy. That runs contrary to all basic principles and can be seen as and considered to be racism.

It was also unfair to expect the Panel to discuss what happened in the context of this particular competition this year without [by their admission] really knowing, [like everyone else], what happened. The constant message received was that there was a *“need to protect”* - but protect who really? What about your responsibility to protect ***all other competitors***, this year and in the future? Potential competitors who remain uncertain and ignorant of what literary crime was committed this year, a crime that justified the cancellation of the entire/whole competition?

We therefore plead for open DISCUSSION by members of the Council and the “Panels” who advised for **a more comprehensive explanation, for the ORIGINAL adjudication to be published IN FULL**, along with the **rationale for the decisions made, so that such a situation can be avoided in future**.

Yours faithfully,

from the 236 of us named below,

(in alphabetical order)

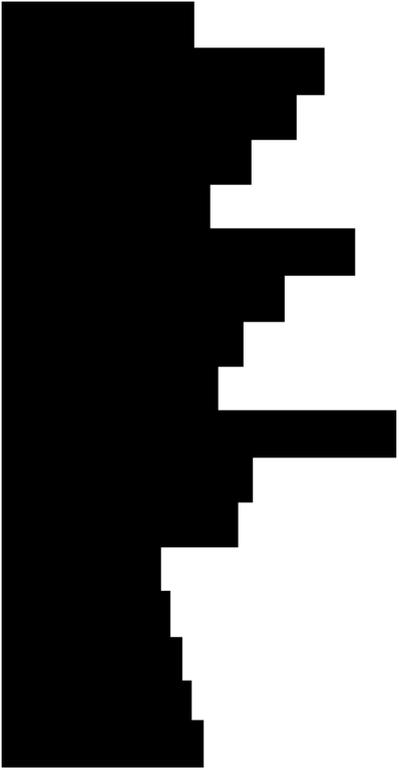
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Dear Paul Griffiths

Thank you to those who have signed the open letter to the Eisteddfod Council and Board.

We appreciate that the decision to suspend the Drama Medal competition remains a hot topic for many. We have listened carefully to the criticism that has already been circulated, and accept that our previous statements did not ease the worries of many people about the decision.

The Board of Trustees of the Eisteddfod, and the Board alone, is responsible for this decision. No volunteers involved in the Eisteddfod should therefore be criticised nor the staff.

Below is a response to the two issues you raised.

### **The Virtual Symposium**

The Virtual Symposium was held in November this year to discuss representation in theatre in Wales, and to try to look forward to the future.

We are sorry if you did not feel you were allowed to express your opinion at the event. There was an opportunity for people to ask questions in the usual way within the Webinar throughout the session, and this was made clear more than once during the evening. No person was prevented from making comments or raising questions at any point. All comments and questions were visible to the panel.

It is also worth noting that very few of those who have signed the open letter (less than 8%) had registered and therefore attended the Symposium.

The Symposium was an opportunity to raise a number of important principles that have also been discussed by our panels and committees when revising our processes, rules and conditions in relation to the competitions. We believe that those principles will give confidence to competitors, judges, and benefactors of the Eisteddfod and the theatre in Wales when they are included in our guidelines and processes in their new form.

### **The way the Eisteddfod responded to what happened this year**

We apologise for any upset caused because it appears that the principle of competing under a pseudonym, and in secret has been undermined for invalid, unnecessary reasons, or due to censorship, by the Eisteddfod.

Things were not like that. A completely valid and unprecedented concern arose which justified the need for us to make further enquiries. Following this, the Board's decision was to exercise their right to stop the competition in its entirety to protect everyone involved, and to ensure compliance with country's legislation.

We behaved in accordance with the rules and conditions of the Eisteddfod when taking this step. We had to act as we did, because of our duties as trustees for the benefit of the charity, and the integrity of the competition process.

As stated in August, our duty is to ensure that we have appropriate guidelines to avoid such situations arising in the future.

Yours truly,

**Ashok Ahir**

**President of the Court and Chairman of the Management Board**

National Eisteddfod of Wales | National Eisteddfod of Wales

-----

██████████

██████████

██████████

██████████

# Agenda Item 2.2

Dear Llyr, Mark and (especially) Carolyn,

It's been almost exactly a year since The Conference of the Birds ended. Unfortunately I feel compelled to write to express my anger and concern.

This Welsh Labour government is quite quickly destroying the freelance not-for-profit creative workforce in Wales.

The void this is creating will render the propaganda stories that you (Carolyn) and leadership have put out in the last twenty four hours largely pointless.

How much of the additional funding that Welsh Government had found for the art organisations will be spent on holiday pay, pensions and sick leave?

How much will be spent on assessing funding applications written by people who have spent days and weeks of unpaid time developing and writing them - especially as the chances of success increasingly dwindle? This is not 'competition' - it's the systematic exploitation of hope.

All the while the freelance workforce that is the heartbeat of the largely urban 'bricks and mortar' institutions – which you so visibly celebrate – is rapidly draining away.

Mark might remember ██████████, the young artist who was assisting me when we met ██████████ a year ago.

Aged 27, ██████████ is an extremely talented Welsh speaking practitioner. She already has work in the ██████████ and this year had a solo exhibition at ██████████ ██████████ exploring through her work her ancestral connection with culture and landscape. Generations of her family worked in the quarries and her home was until a month ago ██████████. Her achievements are astonishing given her age.

In October ██████████ left for ██████████ having purchased a one-way ticket. She is utterly disillusioned with the way the arts are 'done' in Wales and feels that there is no future for her here.

Again: ██████████ is 27 - and should have a future ahead of her as a shining light in the visual arts in Wales.

This loss is on you.

I find myself wondering if you grasp that freelance experimentation yields the innovation that brings tomorrow's financial success. The National Theatre's War Horse was, for example, founded on puppetry evolved by Handspring Theatre Company whose roots lie in South African experimental political theatre.

I understand that these are challenging times - but Brexit can no longer be used as an excuse. Cuts to arts funding in Wales exceed those in all of the other home nations.

Welsh Government's decisions are creating a wasteland which will impact on the wellbeing of future generations.

This will be your legacy.

Regards,

Sean Harris

**MINISTERIAL INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

**DECEMBER 2024**

<b>INWARD VISITS</b>	
06 Dec	<p><b>UK-Canada Colloquium 2024</b>                      Between 6-8 December Wales hosted the UK-Canada Colloquium. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance took part in a panel session and the Cabinet Secretary for Health addressed the Colloquium at a reception highlighting the ongoing work in Wales to address health inequalities, our framework of enabling legislation, as well as action being taken within the healthcare sector.</p>
<b>OUTWARD VISITS</b>	
Nil	Nil

Chairs' Forum

Via e-mail

7 January 2025

Dear Chairs,

### **Representation on inter-parliamentary bodies**

Following the discussion at the Chairs' Forum meeting of 2 December, I am writing to confirm the decisions taken around the Senedd's representation on the Inter-Parliamentary Forum and the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly. The Senedd may nominate two Members each group. Chairs agreed that:

- The Senedd's representation on the two bodies should continue to be linked to committee remits;
- The nominated Members should be the chairs of the relevant committees in each case, but with the continued ability for a chair to nominate alternates from their committee to attend meetings as required;
- Continuity of representation was important, where that could be maintained;
- The Legislation, Justice and Constitution (LJC), Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure (CCEI), Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs (ETRA) and Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations (CCWLSIR) Committees would provide the Senedd's representation on the two bodies, with the allocation of roles to be determined with those committee chairs outside the Chairs' Forum meeting.

Discussion outside of the Forum has led to the following nominations being agreed:

- Inter-Parliamentary Forum: The Chairs of the LJC and CCEI Committees.
- UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly: The Chairs of the ETRA and CCWLSIR Committees.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elin Jones".

The Rt. Hon. Elin Jones MS/AS

Llywydd

Chair of the Chairs' Forum

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

# Agenda Item 2.5

Bore da

We are pleased to release our Sector Snapshot Report, highlighting both the acute challenges and the remarkable resilience of the performing arts sector amidst ongoing financial pressures.

Creu Cymru represents Wales' vibrant performing arts sector. Our membership embodies virtually all of Wales' professionally run theatres, arts centres and producing companies, as well as a range of creative individuals.

We undertook this report to capture a snapshot of the experiences, challenges, and shared concerns of its members with regards to the current funding crisis and broader cost of living crisis.

It highlights the common trends and themes that are revealing themselves across the membership in relation to cultural workforce, building stock, artistic work and creative production and programming, and its civic role in serving the needs of audience and communities across Wales.

English - <https://creucymru.com/news/creu-cymru-sector-snapshot-research>

Cymraeg - <https://creucymru.com/cy/news/creu-cymru-cipolwg-ar-y-sector>

I welcome the chance to discuss the report with you and how we may find a way forward for the arts and culture sector in Wales.

Cofion cynnes,

Louise

Louise Miles-Payne

**Director / Cyfarwyddwr**

*Creu Cymru: Yn Gosod y Llwyfan i'r Celfyddydau Perfformio yng Nghymru / Creu Cymru: Setting the Stage for the Performing Arts in Wales*

 **Dysgwr**

# CREU CYMRU | SECTOR SNAPSHOT

*A collation of the shared experience and challenges facing the Creu Cymru membership in times of financial hardship.*

## **Executive Summary**

Creu Cymru represents Wales' vibrant performing arts sector. Its membership embodies virtually all of Wales' professionally run theatres, arts centres and producing companies, as well as a range of creative individuals.

Creu Cymru undertook this report to capture a snapshot of the experiences, challenges, and shared concerns of its members with regards to the current funding crisis and broader cost of living crisis. It highlights the common trends and themes that are revealing themselves across the membership in relation to cultural workforce, building stock, artistic work and creative production and programming, and its civic role in serving the needs of audience and communities across Wales.

## **Key Findings**

### **1. Funding Pressure and Sector Ecology:**

- The sector has seen a 25% decline in core government funding since 2010, with Arts Council of Wales making challenging decisions around the dissemination of funds. This in turn has created heavier reliance and significant pressure on National Lottery Funding and the potential income provided by Trusts and Foundations.
- The performing arts relies on an ecology of symbiotic creative organisational, independent, freelance and community networks. Reduced funding directly correlates with reduced artistic output, employment and resources, placing unsustainable pressure on sector staff and limiting capacity across the board to support new projects, community and creative collaborations and freelance employment opportunities.
- The performing arts runs through and underpins areas of society in unique and intrinsic ways, including health, education, community and social care. Funding cuts don't only affect the arts industry but have direct impact on the wellbeing and vibrancy of communities and Welsh society.

### **2. Cultural and Workforce Shifts:**

- The pandemic accelerated systemic change, with increased commitment to diversity, inclusion, and fair employment practices within the arts. The sector is seeing

increased prioritisation of equitable pay and better support for staff and creative freelancers. The workforce welcomes a shift to progressive, more flexible work arrangements.

- Fulfilling these commitments to systemic change is at the same time placing organisations under increased financial pressure, forcing a compromise and limitations on productions and programming, activity and staffing.
- Lowered organisational headcounts are increasing pressure on the remaining workforce, impacting levels of job satisfaction and heightening insecurity. Recruitment challenges and a skills and talent drain - particularly among specialised roles - created by this instability threatens the sector's long-term sustainability.

### **3. Building Stock and Operational Challenges:**

- Wales is fast-moving towards a crisis in relation to its ageing arts and theatre building stock. Theatres and arts venues are facing vastly increased operational costs, particularly related to energy, insurance and maintenance.
- Older buildings, many of which are culturally significant and grade 2 listed are environmentally harmful in terms of energy use and demand high insurance premiums that drain already limited budgets. All need urgent investment to remain safe and functional for their communities and audiences.
- Developments in carbon efficiency and environmental and accessibility standards mean that even relatively new buildings are now in need of high value investment.
- Financial constraints are pushing some venues to limit opening hours, rely on volunteers, or defer maintenance, impacting both service delivery and audience experience.

### **4. Touring, Programming, and Audience Engagement:**

- The impact of reduced funding on the creative ecology – specifically production capacity and increased technical costs – is leading to reduced available product, and fewer home-grown productions. This further limits opportunities for Welsh talent and increasingly raises concerns about the viability of touring in Wales.
- Audiences remain cautious, favouring familiar, lower-risk productions. Cost of Living crisis is directly correlating with frequency of attendance rather than pricing bands. Venues have adapted with flexible pricing models, though the need for specialised

marketing and audience development expertise is hampered by the skills drain and limited resources.

#### **5. Social Impact and Community Role:**

- The arts are integral to community wellbeing, and works hard in collaboration with health, educations and social care to serve its civic role in improving the lives of communities.
- Restricted budgets make fulfilling this role increasingly challenging. The ability to deliver meaningful connections with communities is interwoven with challenges faced by education, health and social welfare to meet the increased needs of communities - specifically the needs of young people impacted by the fall out of Covid.
- Demand for community delivered arts and cultural activity is increasingly acute, particularly in areas of social deprivation with venues and theatres shouldering impact of issues around anti-social behaviour, poverty and fuel poverty. The need is growing while the ability to deliver is diminishing.

#### **6. Advocacy and Strategic Focus:**

- Members express frustration over the lack of coordinated advocacy and data to clearly communicate the sector's value and needs. Many organisations struggle to capture and demonstrate their impact due to limited resources and systemic support.
- There is disparity of leadership focus and capacity across the sector from which to galvanise a coordinated voice around impact and value and guide for navigating the challenging socio-economic landscape
- There needs to be a shared, coordinated approach between grassroots, organisational and government level to develop robust, shared understanding of the ecology, mechanisms and value of the sector to develop a plan to protect it from deepening crisis.

## INTRODUCTION

Creu Cymru champions Wales' vibrant performing arts sector; connecting people, audiences and communities across the nation. Our membership represents virtually all of Wales' professionally run theatres, arts centres and producing companies, as well as a range of creative individuals.

The arts and cultural sector employs 7000 people across Wales, and makes a vital contribution to the economy, health and wellbeing and the international profile and reputation of our nation. However, since 2010 arts funding across the UK has seen persistent and dramatic cuts on several different fronts, meaning that currently, the UK has one of the lowest levels of government spending on culture amongst the European Nations<sup>1</sup>.

This report seeks to provide a snapshot of the experiences and perceptions that exist across the Creu Cymru membership with regards to this current funding crisis. It also explores how this intersects with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on audiences and communities across Wales.

In an increasingly precarious and unstable sector, Creu Cymru's purpose is to serve as a voice for its membership, representing the experiences and perspectives of our performing arts organisations to the Welsh public and its key policy and decision makers. This feels more important now than ever. Consultation with our membership confirms that the sustained pressure that the sector has experienced over the last 14 years has left it severely depleted. It is vital that we convey the seriousness of the issues facing the sector and the risk of their far-reaching impacts on the immediate and future cultural life of Wales.

The content of this report is drawn from in-depth interviews conducted across our membership. The sample represents the perspectives of the breadth of scale and output of Wales' performing arts sector. It covers the different geographical areas of Wales, and includes large-scale arts centres and producing houses, mid and small-scale venues and independent producing touring companies. It brings in the perspectives of both University and Local Authority owned venues, independent theatre trusts and includes both Arts Council Wales multiyear and project funded organisations.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Campaign for the Arts & University of Warwick, The State of the Arts, Campaign for the Arts & Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies, University of Warwick, July 2024

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 1

People had a lot to say, and the conversations have been candid, robust and detailed. It was notable that many of the themes that emerged were common across the entirety of the sample, regardless of scale, locality or demographic context.

When pulled together the key themes of the report reveal a complex range of intersecting and increasingly paradoxical factors impacting the performing arts sector in Wales. These factors need to be fully understood to effectively advocate for the sector and the ongoing investment it desperately needs.

## **THEATRE AS ECOLOGY**

One of the prevailing themes of this report is an appeal for greater levels of understanding of the ecology that exists within the performing arts in Wales. The sectors that exist within the cultural and creative industries are deeply interwoven, with each other as well as wider society. It can therefore be hard to quantify and determine impact, as it runs through and underpins areas of society in ways that are unique and intrinsic, including health, education, community and social care and community wellbeing.

This interconnection is also one of the hardest factors in articulating the specifics and depth of the crisis that arts and culture is facing. All our conversations touched on the many symbioses that exists across the sector, that if interrupted can cause the entire system to falter.

Many members feel that the sector has failed to build an effective narrative about the complexities of how this ecology functions, and therefore a rigorous understanding at a public sector or government level. The perceived result is that the performing arts and the role they play in societal health isn't properly valued at the highest level, indicated by the cuts in investment it has experienced since 2010. This report aims to convey the unique aspects of this ecology as an appeal for a deeper examination into the ways it can be protected, nurtured or galvanised to avoid further erosion.

## **FUNDING**

While the Arts Council Wales Investment Review in 2023 saw 23 additional organisations receiving multi-year funding, ACW was forced to enact several challenging decisions around the distribution

of funding across its portfolio. With the exception of two of the sample who provided insight for this report, all had seen either total loss, reduced or standstill funding.

You don't have to look very far to understand the context of these decisions. Since 2010 there has been a 25% decrease in the Arts Council Wales core Government Funding, and a 40% decrease in local government revenue funding of culture and related services.<sup>3</sup> Times are tough for arts and cultural organisations. This erosion of funding has been made worse by the societal and sectoral upheaval that came with the 2020 pandemic, which delivered a near existential blow to the industry which it's still working hard to recover from.

All the members referenced a simple circular equation relating to the heart of their day-to-day challenge. Reduced funding links directly to reduced activity. Reduced artistic programme and activity correlates directly with reduction of employment opportunities. Reduced employment results in reduced resource and capacity, leaving core staff and workforce under-resourced and overstretched.

The reduction in multi-year portfolio funding has placed heightened pressure and demand on National Lottery Arts Funding programme (Create). For many project-funded organisations or creatives, Create funding often depends on the co-producing or in-kind support of the larger venues and portfolio funded organisations to support the production of work. The funding squeeze has resulted in many of those organisations paring back support due to stretched capacities and uncertainty. Many voiced concerns about the long-term impact that this will have on the creation of work and the availability of future product.

Reduced government investment has placed further pressure on organisations' capacity for fundraising and development. Trusts and Foundations generally serve as the main alternative income source for arts and cultural organisations. All members referenced difficulty in securing additional income, citing early closure of application pathways due to overwhelming demand. Additionally, the tendency of these sources not to fund operational or core costs - instead focusing on funding for community and social engagement work - means that while being a vital lifeline for the civic social purpose of organisations' work, this funding does nothing to reduce pressure in terms of staff capacity or resource.

---

<sup>3</sup> Campaign for the Arts & University of Warwick, The State of the Arts, Campaign for the Arts & Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies, University of Warwick, July 2024

## CULTURE SHIFTS

The Covid-19 pandemic saw a seismic shift in the cultural dialogue of the sector, fast tracking discussions and demand for systemic change within UK arts and culture. The interwoven nature of arts, culture and society made it impossible not to face up to the systemic injustice mirrored in our own sector's systems and structures.

This increased ambition and commitment to change; tackling lack of representation, increasing equity and diversity within the sector was palpable and continued to be at the heart of the strategic direction of those we talked to. Additionally, there was unanimous acknowledgement that for too long the arts have asked for too much from their employees for too little. And that this was interwoven with a sector culture that had excluded lower socio-economic and marginalised groups from the workforce.

All members referred to increased levels of pay as a fundamental aspect of delivering on the EDI agenda and confirmed prioritising inflationary increases or matching cost of living increases for their workforces. The uplift and support of the freelance community as a vital component in the health of the sector ecology was recognised as part of this. Producing theatres and companies noted that the emergence of freelance alliances during and post Covid had seen a greater assertion of value-based costing by freelance creatives (i.e. sound, production or lighting design). They also acknowledged that historically, a lack of formal industry guidance around commissioning rates for this type of work had led to an informal peer benchmarking practice which had kept fees artificially low across the sector. There is a shift to address this; all members firmly supported the need for better pay for the freelance workforce, with most members (apart from local authority or university) meeting if not exceeding ITC / Equity minimum rates.

Theatr Clwyd recently undertook a mapping exercise across their freelance workforce. They tracked different disciplines across production types and scales, calculating actual time spent in relation to activity against core company members (staff) roles. This resulted in a 10% increase in freelance rates across productions. While this acts as a positive shift for Theatr Clwyd and its relationships with freelancers, the reality of this in the context of the wider sector is that this level of increase can't be matched. It conveys a need for greater focus in this area, but also highlights the risk of inconsistencies around pay rates across the sector, complicating co-production partnerships which creation of work relies upon and potentially impacting provision in certain areas.

It's clear that, in the context of decreased funding, the drive to improve pay and conditions of employment across the sector has seen the redirection of budgets from artistic and audience-facing programmes and activity. In the cases of those organisations who had no capacity to absorb those costs, there was the strong belief that this had directly led to staff losses, or difficulties in engaging freelancers at a level of specialism required.

We are an artistic and creative workforce, driven by passion, ideas and a compulsion to create. Artists need infrastructure in which to create professionally and for their work to engage and connect at a civic level. Arts Management provides the structure for this to happen, and both perspectives are driven by a commitment not to compromise or dilute the work, or the impact of the experience for audiences or participants. As a result, cultural behaviours have developed in the arts that rely on the willingness of its workers to make something from nothing, demanding significant amounts of self and financial sacrifice to do so. This has and continues to exclude those workers and creatives whose needs (financial, physical, socio-economic) can't be met by the existing systems and structures we work within. There was a common view that this culture of sacrifice has resulted in a continuance of a problem, masking severe cracks in the foundations of the sector that have been bowing under pressure for some time.

A common theme in relation to questions around staff and workforce was the need to address what are considered to be these entrenched cultural behaviours. Prioritisation of equality and staff wellbeing, and embedding supportive caring cultures was consistently higher up on strategic agendas. Staff access riders, mental health first aiders and wellbeing facilitator roles are more commonplace across the membership. This has led to increased awareness amongst leadership about the levels of need within their workforce. It brings to the fore the breadth of complex situations individuals are managing as a result of the current challenging socio economic environment.

It was noted that this cultural shift was being fast-tracked by a new generation of cultural workforce coming into the workplace. People referenced differences in expectations around work/life balance and what constitutes reasonable working conditions and practices on the part of the younger people. This, alongside strides forward in diversity and inclusion has fed a fundamental aspect of the sector's wellbeing agenda and unanimously supported by everyone we spoke with.

However, this support was voiced with a caveat about the paradox of actioning these cultural shifts whilst shouldering the impact of significantly decreased funding. The common view was that to

make the sector more accessible, inclusive and equitable, the sector needs to factor in significant extra time to its processes; or to do far less; or employ more people. None of this is deemed possible in the current context and the perception is that this dilemma isn't fully acknowledged by funders.

The overwhelming message is that the sector has reached a tipping point, even by its own standards. And, in such precarious times, strong decisive leadership is needed to break the cycle. Examples of this can be seen in Wales Millennium Centre's decision to stop all activity with artists, young people and communities outside of the main large-scale performances between Jan and March 2024, while Aberystwyth Arts Centre made the decision to close over a busy May Bank Holiday due to staff shortages, rather than place unfeasible working conditions on remaining staff.

These decisions are tough and not without considerable impact on staff morale and audience provision and experience. They are, however, necessary in terms of financial and organisational health. It was acknowledged across the membership that not all organisations were structured or enabled to make these types of decisions.

## **JOBS & EMPLOYMENT**

When asked about the impact of the current situation on staff and workforce, the primary concern was about decreasing jobs and employment opportunities across the sector, and the related impacts.

While this hasn't shown itself in immediate job losses - redundancies haven't been commonplace across the sector - the reality is less obvious but equally alarming. Every organisation we talked to spoke of reviewing strategic plans and activity, primarily involving the restructuring or reimagining of teams. Most commonly this looks like not replacing staff when people leave, and absorbing responsibilities into existing roles.

Other examples of restructuring or reimagining includes an increasing shift to short-term or self-employed contracts within organisational teams, with many core staff holding second or multiple other jobs. While short-term, flexible or zero hours contracts have always played their part in the cultural workforce (namely performers and backstage creatives) it was noted that this extension into arts administration and management was having a destabilising impact on the infrastructure needed to support the sector's creative production. Introduction of more flexible and adaptive working

patterns were often acknowledged as positive examples of staff wellbeing and care structures. However, it was also pointed out that this shift is also indicative of an attempt to claw back funds, with staff also encouraged to take unpaid leave or voluntarily move to part time hours.

Venues frequently reported a paring back of Front of House staff, with many limiting opening hours to reduce staffing costs. A pattern is emerging of venues shifting the balance to a reliance on casual staff or increasingly, volunteers. These volunteers tend to be retirees, rather than young people at the start of their working lives. This is notable in relation to the wider point around sector ecology. Sherman Theatre observed that while historically the organisation would have seen a clear pathway from FOH / Box Office through to their arts administration and management teams, this is no longer the case. This chimes with broader concerns voiced across the membership about where the future generation of workforce is getting its grounding in the cultural day to day practice of working theatres.

These shifts are having a direct impact on organisational cultures. Core staff teams are becoming thinner and less robust, with remaining reduced staff and leadership holding the burden of responsibility and pressure, with increased workload. This feels both un-strategic and unsustainable, and fails to model the systemic change needed across the sector to embed more inclusive practices and better working environments.

## **RECRUITMENT, SKILLS AND TALENT DRAIN**

There is general recognition that a growing skills gap is emerging across the sector. Wales' performing arts sector spans urban, disparate post-industrial and rural areas. As a result, there is less movement across the sector and career progression is harder, with those in better paid strategic roles staying put for longer. This poses an obvious risk to sustaining skills, energy and dynamism amongst the workforces.

Many members voiced concerns about the disparity of leadership across the sector. Securing the experience and talent in creative and executive leadership is difficult. Specialisms relating to audiences, people management and the organisational change needed to navigate this challenging socio-economic landscape, particularly outside the city regions, were seen as increasingly thin on the ground. While the better resourced organisations acknowledged their role in modelling change and more adaptive, brave decision making, it was also acknowledged that many smaller organisations don't always have the senior leadership structures in place to follow suit.

Theatr Clwyd noted that the energy around its large-scale capital development, combined with its proximity to key cities across the border in the North of England, makes relocation or commuting more viable - but that seems to be an anomaly. All organisations based outside that of the city regions cited location as a difficulty in securing talent into core teams.

In addition to this, a common view emerged regarding a 'squeezed middle' layer of management in organisations, linked to a wider pattern of roles considered as embodying key transferable skills (notably audience development and marketing, producing and technical production) leaving the sector for opportunities elsewhere.

Artistic directors noted a historic lack of sector investment in the role of the producer and a joined up producing strategy, leaving Wales with a considerable gap in expertise in this area. Executive directors and managers noted the lack of communications and audiences' specialisms available, with many marketing roles having been removed from venue staff teams entirely, absorbed into general management and box office roles.

In terms of production and technical skills drain, this came into stark view during the pandemic where an explosion in film and media production saw an exodus of technical roles in the face of venue closures and the shutdown of live performing arts. While some of those workers have since returned, the view is that the sector still can't compete with the rates of pay to build back the pool of availability it needs. It remains that the sector has large gaps in skills and experience, with a cohort of junior staff coming through with not enough people to develop them.

Those skilled specialists still working in the sector were seen as generally unaffordable for smaller producing companies or venues.

Many observed that skills development was seen as something that had fallen between the cracks in between ACW and Creative Wales. Of the producing companies we spoke to, many felt they had no choice but to take on inexperienced graduates for demanding design or technical roles, absorbing mentoring responsibilities themselves without having proper capacity or the relevant skill sets.

Securing Welsh speaking backstage staff, particularly stage managers and production staff, was seen as particularly difficult. More so, due its impact on rehearsal rooms reverting to English, which works against Welsh Language performing arts organisations' core purpose. Theatr Genedlaethol

Cymru are currently working with backstage interns funded by a specific Welsh Government programme, linking Welsh language to the economy in the Welsh speaking stronghold areas. However, where to secure support for wider industry skills development outside the realms of Welsh language provision is problematic and unclear.

Some producing companies noted having seen a shift in the expectations of creatives graduates entering the workforce from training and higher education. The introduction of several post graduate courses means students staying at university longer, leaving with increased levels of debt, alongside unrealistic expectations of the work available as a first job.

Taking Flight Theatre Company's recent Connect and Flourish Project, Breaking the Box, provided emerging Deaf, Disabled and Neurodiverse creatives with a range of developmental placements and experience in backstage disciplines. The Company noted that they had seen an obvious and significant shift in the mental health and resilience of their early career creatives during the project, exacerbated the impact and related systems failures of Covid, and the ongoing socio-economic challenges.

There is concern around the impact of this trend on skills levels and the long-term erosion of specialist skill sets and disciplines in Wales.

Many of those we talked to spoke of morale being intrinsically linked to value. There can be no doubt that the uncertainty and volatility the sector is experiencing is having a damaging effect on morale across the workforce.

The main assertion is that the consistent de-valuing of arts and culture through cuts to public funding, and the absence of obvious advocacy at a public and political level is perpetuating lower levels of job satisfaction and increased levels of exhaustion and burnout. This differed in individual cases where audience engagement had continued to be high, and public support and value recognition was shown through audience attendance. It's notable that these organisations tended to be those with higher levels of public subsidy enabling investment in audience engagement, communications and marketing specialisms.

The broader concern is that increasingly, the Welsh performing arts sector is unable to attract the levels of skill and specialism needed to weather the current crisis. Lack of competitive salaries and

job security makes capturing the interest of wider pool of UK or international arts and cultural specialists, or encouraging people to cross sector boundaries, increasingly difficult.

## **BUILDING STOCK**

Wales has a network of independent, Local Authority and University owned arts and cultural venues, serving a broad demographic of communities across the nation. Some serve urban populations, some serve densely populated but isolated and underserved communities, while others draw in disparate rural audiences from wide rural geographic radius.

No one venue is the same and, in many cases, they are symbiotic with the local community they serve. Many are historic spaces built specifically for the cultural needs of the old industrial communities of Wales, where community activity, alongside artistic work still takes place. Many of these buildings are grade 2 listed in need of ongoing repair and maintenance to keep them safe for public use.

Everyone we spoke to - from venue members and producing companies to individual artists, producers and creatives voiced concern for this area. The call for a strategic long-term plan for investment in Wales' theatre building stock as a key component in the broader arts and cultural ecology was unanimous and urgent.

At a basic level buildings are expensive to run. Running costs and maintenance requirements are at the forefront of day-to-day existence for most theatres managers. Across the board members spoke of the impact of skyrocketing energy costs, as well as eye watering increases in insurance premiums increasing the financial burden they're factoring into their operations.

Years of lack of investment in the public estate means that, like our hospitals and schools, arts and cultural buildings in Wales are reaching their own crunch point. Venue managers are making tough but necessary decisions on a daily basis, prioritising health and safety over artistic or customer experience.

Many of these buildings are environmentally harmful in terms of energy use and demand high insurance premiums that drain already limited budgets. Developments in carbon efficiency and environmental and accessibility standards mean that even relatively new buildings are now in need of high value investment.

Theatr Clwyd's capital rebuild, due for completion in 2025 will see it open as one of the most environmentally friendly theatres in Europe. However, this shift to a non-fossil fuel run setting comes with significant cost increases, with a budgeted increase of nearly half a million pounds in energy costs.

Also, at only twenty years old, Wales Millennium Centre has a comprehensive building maintenance plan built into its core operation costs. However, its team is now looking at costly large-scale replacement of equipment that has simply reached its shelf-life, costing thousands to replace. This is one of Wales most commercially successful venues with considerable earned income and investment potential. But these projects are not easy or attractive additional funding propositions.

For many of Wales' smaller arts and cultural venues, years of pinched budgets has resulted in many simply unable to operate in a way that builds up surplus to invest back into buildings. Without some strategic focus this issue will only become more acute, and many members called for guidance and support from local and national governments in how to plan and manage this looming issue.

Another key factor is the intersection of arts with Local Authority and Universities. Each are experiencing their own crises, and the precariousness of these relationships have been brought into sharper view as the situation worsens across the board.

The continued withdrawal of central government funding and the redirection of funds to high-need social care, has seen many local authorities forced into taking a short-term view about their arts and cultural provision. Local authority funding for the arts has fallen by 40% in Wales since 2010<sup>4</sup>. Those we spoke to from University or Local Authority owned venues were concerned that the stasis in arts and cultural spending from the government has created a green light for withdrawal of investment from those institutions, rather than galvanising support.

Despite this, in most cases Local Authorities and Universities are still footing the bill on energy and maintenance costs as part of their building portfolios. Although increasingly venues are facing recharges, or general maintenance and upkeep isn't happening, furthering the impending issues around widespread capital investment needs.

---

<sup>4</sup> Campaign for the Arts & University of Warwick, The State of the Arts, Campaign for the Arts & Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies, University of Warwick, July 2024

As the situation worsens, things feel more unstable. Our members were clear that were they suddenly asked to shoulder energy costs, they would no longer be able to function. With the recent consultation around the proposed 'mothballing' Blackwood Miners Institute, there is concern that a local authority asset stripping could become more commonplace.

The general message across our conversations is that action around this issue is imperative, due to the considerable impact it poses to cultural provision across Wales. It was recognised that capital projects are both disruptive and unpopular during times of downturn, but at the same time this is a cyclical issue that isn't going anywhere. It calls for targeted commitment from national and local governments as part of their green and cultural policies, with clear guidance and support for the sector on how to make this shift.

Theatr Clwyd noted the significance of Government and public sector investment in catalysing and leveraging further private investment for its own capital project. The call for a strategic plan for investment in the sector building stock as valuable and vital community assets is loud across the sector.

## **THE ECOLOGY OF TOURING, PROGRAMMING, SUPPORTING AND PRODUCING WORK**

The challenges of the operational running of business and buildings is a huge strain on strategic leadership across the sector. But for performing arts creatives and managers, welcoming audiences to quality work and artistic activity that enriches lives and enlivens communities is what gets up in the morning. But there is growing concern about the ongoing ability to produce and tour work, with many companies questioning the viability of touring in Wales in the current situation.

One of the key issues voiced across the membership is the shortage of artistic touring product - particularly quality Wales-produced work. A lack of producing and touring strategy correlating with limited opportunities for Wales' independent theatre makers to create work of scale has been a concern for some time. But now, continued cuts to funding; matched by increased costs in materials; technical production; artists and creative team fees; travel and accommodation for cast and crew, are deepening the problem further. The number of high-quality professional theatre productions created in both producing theatres and available to tour across Wales is shrinking.

The producing houses and companies we spoke to all referenced reducing the number of productions they can create over the next three years. Despite being a positive case study of growth and investment in Wales' theatre sector, its largest producing house, Theatr Clwyd is also projecting the need to drop the number of productions by nearly half next year. In addition to this, producing companies across the board are prioritising commissioning and creation of work with lower cast numbers. Sherman Theatre spoke of where possible, prioritising local casting choices to keep accommodation costs down, as well as being forced to cut production R&Ds in the next 18 months.

As a result, the climate is increasingly hard for artists and creatives not living and working near creative bases like Cardiff and Swansea. Conversely, with Wales largest producing house situated in the Northeast Wales and large swathes of its creative community living and working in South Wales this also poses issues in terms of travel and accommodation costs as part of production planning. Overall, the simple outcome is that there is less work available, with more people seeking work outside Wales or in other sectors.

Small-scale independent fringe work is a vital component of the theatre and performing arts ecology in Wales. With venues struggling to keep up with spiralling costs, they are less able to support this creation of new work. As one of the key venues in West Wales, Aberystwyth Arts Centre spoke of having to be more restrictive and discerning when underpinning project funding applications for independent companies to ensure that they can follow through on their offers of support. As well as this all venues spoke of the increasing need to charge for rehearsal space to assist with running costs or sometimes needing to compromise on artistic development or community focused programming to make way for commercial hires and income generating activity.

For receiving venues, the scarcity of home-grown product from Wales, inevitably necessitates an increase in visiting product from outside Wales. For Wales' large and mid-scale venues, commercial, populist products serve as a vital part of their operation, and therefore the wider theatre ecology they support. The revenue from commercial work allows for investment back into the more diverse, artistic elements of the programme. However, programmers were clear that theatre production, specifically commercial touring product - hasn't returned properly in any consistent or reliable sense since the pandemic. The view is that, for a while the touring network caught the crest of the wave created by the increase in Theatre Tax Relief and the confidence it gave promoters to tour as part of the bounce back recovery from Covid. However, there is concern that this confidence is likely to

contract again due to a drop in TTR rates and further funding cuts, already indicated by a reduced product availability.

The knock-on impact of this, is that venues will increasingly need to fill programmes with riskier work, for shorter runs. This work doesn't attract large audiences or income easily, and therefore demands increased capacity and resources invested in audience development initiatives (already a growing skills gap across the sector, particularly for venues outside the city regions) and increased administrative operation. Generally, this results in lower return and in most cases short-term losses.

From both a programming and producing perspective, everyone reported a shift in contractual agreements between venues and visiting companies. Moving away from guarantees to box office splits was seen as a necessity on the part of the venues to recoup costs. However, it was generally recognised that the nature of project funding cycles and existing models of producing theatre and programming hasn't been able to adapt to these shifts in a way that works for either party. Conversations around audience development, and pricing are continuing to happen too late. And productions are simply not on sale long enough to ensure the extensive leg work and marketing lead times needed to build an audience to deliver on the splits.

Many felt that these shifts in the ecology regarding venue resource, commercial and artistic touring product, isn't properly recognised at a funder level. In addition to this, the considerable investment and long term focus that meaningful audience development initiatives require also doesn't correlate with expectations around artistic programming.

The view is that there is a need for better shared understanding and clarity between the sector and ACW, around the ecology of touring productions and producing in Wales, and the balance of product required to support it. Without this, the concern is that availability of product will continue to shrink, with serious consequences for audiences and cultural provision across Wales that could take years to build back from.

## **TICKET BUYING AUDIENCES**

When reflecting on the impact of the current climate on audiences' patterns and behaviours, the common view emerged that while audiences are still coming, their booking behaviours are shifting. Booking frequency is lower, with ticket buyers showing less inclination towards riskier

(more artistic or new) work. Booking patterns and choices are demanding guaranteed entertainment; known titles and casts, with riskier programmes and unknown titles being shunned. Saying this, in the case of Cardiff's main producing house, Sherman Theatre have noticed their in-house produced correlating with a marked growth in brand loyalty over the last few years. Audiences are returning and supporting new work and titles, specifically those that explored stories representing communities and social identities of Cardiff as a city.

With regards to ticket prices, all venues were clear that as much as possible they needed to balance their business needs with their core purpose as civic resources. Most venues spoke of a commitment not to pass on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis onto their audiences. This view was particularly strong in venues operating in localities with extreme social deprivation. Even when the decision wasn't values-driven, the practical experience was that any increase in ticket price would be a barrier to attendance.

Those better resourced venues and companies noted exploring new models of pricing, with dynamic pricing becoming more commonplace. Venue Cymru reported a considerable uptake in ticket sales through their newly introduced 'pay in three' option. In more local community contexts, 'pay what you can' models on certain performances and key programmes were common. Many members noted that the lack of specialism and experience in strategic audiences and marketing was a particular issue in relation to introducing these kinds of models to their operation. This was cited in relation to staffing reductions across the board where particularly box office, fundraising, front of house and marketing roles often being split and, in some cases, becoming the role of one individual.

This highlights again the skills drain that the sector has seen in this area, symbolised by the withdrawal of any national strategic audience development focus in Wales since the loss of Audiences Wales in 2008. This lack of investment in this area correlates with a decrease in audiences, as well as reduced capacity to effectively articulate, profile and amplify the value of arts and culture to the public.

## **SOCIAL NEED**

There is a wealth of evidence that engaging and accessing the arts improves quality of life and supports health and wellbeing. All our members hold this as a core belief in different ways. All identify as civic, social or community resources.

All voiced a commitment to serving their local communities as a part of improving and enriching people's lives and tackling wider social issues. And all voiced an urgent message that the increased need for socially engaged, community focused work, is harder to fulfil in the face of diminishing budgets and the wider social challenges that we are collectively facing.

It's common that organisations and venues have shifted their engagement focus to young people and their emotional and mental wellbeing, as well as tackling poverty and social deprivation.

Theatr Clwyd observed an increase in demand for their arts and health, social prescribing programme, as well as their work with social services offering creative referrals with young people outside school settings. Many venues reported offering a range of activities as part of the Warm Hubs scheme. Newbridge Memo and Torch Theatre both noted that the levels of attendance at these sessions conveyed strong demand from the local community, and the need to provide this activity year-round was clear. However, neither venue was able to continue this work without that continuation of that funding stream. This was echoed across the board from the other venues involved in the scheme.

For many venues operating in areas of social deprivation, the loss of social care services, mental health and community provision is becoming more obvious. There is a growing concern that the arts are being asked to plug gaps with interventions and support in areas that they are neither funded or properly trained to provide.

Newbridge Memo noted a marked increase in anti-social behaviour, particularly school truancy and vandalism. They spoke of the day-to-day challenge of managing violence, aggressive and nuisance behaviour of young school age teenagers from in and around the community, both in and outside the building. This is indicative of the significant loss of wider youth services supporting and engaging young people in these areas, combined with the ongoing impact of Covid on that age group's mental health and social behaviour.

Many members spoke of the significance of the crisis in education on their work, and their ability to reach audiences. This is another example of the interwoven nature of arts and culture across the breadth of the public sector. It's clear that schools and teachers are fully aware of the value of children and young people connecting with the arts. However, everyone noted the growing complexity of issues facing schools and the impact this is having on their pupil's connection with arts

and cultural experiences. Shifts in pupil behaviour and the sharp spike in additional needs provision was cited as a growing barrier to off-site trips to the theatre.

Additionally, it was suggested that the Creative Schools programme may have shifted the perspectives of teachers and education professionals about the nature of creative engagement. While in the past, company run workshops and in-school activity would have brokered tickets and venue schools' audiences in theatres, it was suggested that an expectation had shifted to arts experiences taking place within the school setting.

Torch Theatre made the point that over the last ten years the local education authority funding that they used for schools specific touring had fallen from £200K to £10k, highlighting again the difficulties in retaining the level of provision needed to maintain relationships between arts and education.

The infrastructure of transport in Wales came up several times as a fundamental sticking point in relationships between schools, theatres and producing companies. Cost of travel and availability of coach hire is prohibitive, and many of the producing companies' creative learning teams noted that the Go and See and Have a Go Funds are still not as known across the school system as they could be. The common view is that the funds place administrative burden on already overstretched schools, and that in some cases this is prohibitive. Additionally, companies reported that some venue box office teams are not as knowledgeable about the details of the funds, with information not filtering down from creative learning teams, some of whom bypass the issues by administering applications on the school's behalf to secure the booking. Again, without a strategic process connecting education, transport and creative learning as part of the creative curriculum there was a feeling that these barriers would continue to be an issue.

## **ADVOCATING OUR VALUE**

These conversations communicate a range of issues that are indicative of the wider experiences of the Creu Cymru membership and arts and cultural organisations across Wales.

One of the most persistent sources of frustration voiced by the membership is feeling unable to rigorously communicate the social value and impact of the performing arts. Specifically, the lack of time needed to slow down and review the system, individually and as a sector. To gather robust and rigorous evidence of both the impacts and the challenges we're facing. Across our sample only one

or two organisations had accessible ROI or ROSI data, making it hard to build a representative snapshot of the sector. The correlation between better resourced organisations and robust data capture and evaluation creates a skewed balance of evidence, perpetuated further by chronic firefighting and skills drain in the smaller less resourced organisations.

There is a lack of tools and centralised systems in place to capture, monitor and communicate the real nuances of the impact of arts and culture in a way that penetrates - through human-centred storytelling and examples that connect emotionally.

Every member spoke of their appreciation of the public subsidy they receive, and acknowledged the extreme challenges and difficulties faced by Arts Council of Wales in the current climate. However, there was considerable concern about the perceived lack of public advocacy for arts and culture, or communication of a clear, strategic framework from which to make decisions within.

We are keen to understand how awareness of the impacts and challenges we raise in this report might inform decisions about investment and support for our sector. We hope that this report can initiate a wider and more in-depth dialogue about how to stabilise and balance public investment in our work. Investment that will enable us to navigate the challenges, but more importantly, tap the untold opportunities that the performing arts offer individuals and communities of Wales, strengthening the social fabric of our cultural nation in these difficult times.

---

## **Appendix 1.**

### **MEMBERS INTERVIEWED**

- Aberystwyth Arts Centre (University Venue)
- Arad Goch (Producing Company)
- August 012 (Producing Company / Independent)
- Blackwood Miners Institute (Local Authority Venue)
- Carmarthenshire Theatres (Local Authority Venues)
- Dirty Protest (Producing Company / Independent)
- Lighthouse Theatre (Producing Company)
- National Dance Company Wales (National Producing Dance Company / Venue)

- Newbridge Memo (Venue / Independent Theatre Trust)
- Pontardawe Arts Centre (Local Authority Venue)
- Pontio (University Venue)
- Riverfront Theatre (Local Authority Venue)
- Sherman Theatre (Producing House / Venue)
- Taking Flight Theatre Company (Producing Theatre Company)
- Taliesin Arts Centre (University Venue)
- Theatr Clywd (Producing House / Venue)
- Theatr Colwyn (Local Authority Venue)
- Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru (National Producing Theatre Company)
- Theatr Iolo (Producing Theatre Company)
- Theatr na NÓg (Producing Theatre Company)
- Torch Theatre (Producing House / Venue)
- Venue Cymru (Local Authority Venue)
- Wales Millennium Centre (National Arts Centre)

Rebecca Evans MS  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning

14 January 2025

Dear Rebecca,

**Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Data (Use and Access) Bill**

At our meeting on 13 January 2025, we considered the Welsh Government's Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) on the Data (Use and Access) Bill, which you laid before the Senedd on 2 January.

We have a number of questions in relation to this LCM and would therefore be grateful if you would be available to appear before the Committee in person on 3 February in order to help inform our scrutiny.

We would be grateful if your officials could liaise with the clerking team to make arrangements.

I am copying this letter to the Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee; the Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee; the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee; and the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Hedges  
Chair



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Our ref: AL1886

Delyth Jewell MS  
Chair Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations  
Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

[SeneddCulture@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddCulture@senedd.wales)

16 January 2025

Dear Delyth,

Thank you for your letter of 20 December regarding charging for curated experiences and exhibitions by Amgueddfa Cymru.

In 2001, the Welsh Government introduced free entry to the permanent collections in the national museums in Wales, to ensure they are accessible for everyone and to encourage a more diverse range of visitors. This was introduced ahead of the rest of the UK and, thanks to Welsh Government funding, visitors continue to enter all seven of Amgueddfa Cymru's sites for free. Our continued commitment to this policy is reflected in our draft Priorities for Culture, which include the Ambition 'Culture is inclusive, accessible and diverse'. I have also emphasised to Amgueddfa Cymru the importance of ensuring the national collection continues to be accessible to all.

Whilst admission to their permanent collections is free, national museums across the UK continue to charge for the curated experiences you describe in your letter including some temporary exhibitions and special events. In line with the arm's-length principle, it is for Amgueddfa Cymru to make decisions on whether to ask for a donation or charge for such curated experiences. Bearing in mind the current financial climate, I am supportive of Amgueddfa Cymru exploring innovative income-generation and charging approaches to help it become more financially sustainable. Should its Board of Trustees decide to consider a proposal to permanently change its charging model for curated experiences, my expectation is that:

- the decision-making process would consider how the change could help to maximise income, whilst minimising any risks to visitor numbers, engagement and equity of access to the national collections in Amgueddfa's care

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

[Gohebiaeth.Jack.Sargeant@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Jack.Sargeant@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Jack.Sargeant@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Jack.Sargeant@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

- an impact assessment would be carried out, drawing on relevant data, to identify whether any groups within our communities would be at a disadvantage; and that appropriate and effective mitigating arrangements would be put in place to address this.

Amgueddfa Cymru leads on the work for assessing the effect of its charging trials. It is considering whether further trials are needed to gather more data. It is also exploring how it can access comparative data and is working with us to consider how it can better use its anonymised data. All the data gathered will help Amgueddfa Cymru evaluate how any change to charging models conforms with our policy on free access to the permanent collections and its underlying ethos.

My relationship with our cultural arm's-length bodies based on the principle of effective communication, where we are open, share information and manage complex or challenging matters through dialogue. By taking a partnership approach, and by working together, I am confident that we can ensure the right balance is struck between specific income generation initiatives and the enduring principle of free access for all to our national collection.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JACK SARGEANT". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath it.

**Jack Sargeant AS/MS**

Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership

Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Sgiliau a Phartneriaeth Gymdeithasol

## **Response from Cymdeithas yr Iaith to the Welsh Language Commissioner's draft strategic plan for 2025-2030 – Introduction**

Cymdeithas yr Iaith is an organisation that has campaigned non-violently for the Welsh language and all communities in Wales, as part of the international revolution for freedom and justice, for more than 60 years.

### **SUMMARY OF MAIN DEMANDS**

We call upon you, as Commissioner, in general terms, to:

- Resume your core function as an independent regulator for the Welsh language and an advocate for the rights of Welsh speakers
- Stop facilitating the back-door implementation of the Welsh Government's plans (2017-2019) to weaken the regulatory system pertaining to the Welsh language, and to turn the Commissioner primarily into a body that promotes the Welsh language, contrary to the Welsh Language Measure 2011. The Commissioner's office needs to be able to implement the core function of the Measure, and to strengthen the expert, independent function of providing scrutiny and advice for the benefit of the Welsh language. There will be increasing demand for this work if the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill comes to fruition, if we wish to transform the situation of the Welsh language in respect of town and country planning, and if we wish to hold the Government's feet to the fire in terms of reaching a million Welsh speakers. We anticipate that specialist units will be needed to work in the area of Welsh education, planning and realising the trajectory towards the 2050 target.
- Commit to leaving the Welsh Government's offices in Cardiff at the earliest opportunity and look for a more suitable location in the capital, in order to rekindle at least some kind of semblance of credibility and independence regarding the body's work

We call on you to overhaul the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan:

- So that *people's rights* to use the Welsh language are central to the objectives, and that there is a commitment to use the full force of the law in a measurable way (SMART commitments) to move things forward
- So that there is a definitive and measurable commitment in relation to the Welsh language in the workplace to create a certain number of workplaces that are administered mainly or entirely through the medium of Welsh – orally and in writing – by the end of the plan's lifespan in 2030, thereby normalising the successful policies of bodies such as Gwynedd Council and the National Library
- So that there is a commitment in the health and care sector to try to realise, by 2030, the existence of an absolute right for the people of Wales to receive clinical care, specialist care (e.g. mental and psychiatric health care) and social care entirely through the medium of Welsh, and to pressure the Government to impose language standards on primary care providers so that, for example, a GP, dentist and pharmacist can be seen through the medium of Welsh, thereby highlighting the scandalous situation at present, where they have been omitted.

- To stop wasting Welsh language resources and funding by encouraging wealthy bodies such as banks and supermarkets to use the Welsh language and to use those resources instead to (i) run a public campaign to shame the Welsh Government over its failure to use its powers to impose language standards on large corporations such as energy and gas companies, which make a fortune on the backs of the people of Wales every year; (ii) launch a standards investigation into telecoms operators, and press the Welsh Government for the right to use the Welsh language when dealing with supermarkets, banks, private car parks and the private sector as a whole; and (iii) create and operate a fund for initiating and joining court cases for the benefit of the Welsh language. This would be open for applications from communities and could make a real difference to the status of the language and the ability of individuals to use it.
- To include a commitment to provide public guidance regarding the work of completing the roll-out of standards regulations to all organisations for which it is possible to do so under the current schedules of the Measure: important bodies and those with which the people of Wales come into contact regularly, such as Post Office Ltd., the benefits system, Crown bodies etc.
- To reintroduce indicators regarding the number and percentage of statutory investigations that are opened annually following the receipt of valid complaints under section 93 of the Welsh Language Measure, and the number that are terminated, as a [percentage] of the total number of complaints received
- To include a commitment to use the Commissioner's powers to initiate and to intervene regularly and strategically in legal cases, and to report the number of cases as an annual indicator.
- To make use of the Commissioner's powers to conduct statutory inquiries, as was done with 'My Language, My Health'.

We call on the Welsh Government:

- To restore the 25% cut to the Commissioner's budget and honour the commitments made in the Explanatory Memorandum for the Welsh Language Measure regarding the organisation's funding levels

We call on the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee, the opposition parties in the Senedd, and back-bench Members of the legislature:

- To ask difficult and persistent questions of the Commissioner until there is certainty that she is acting in accordance with the Measure and for the benefit of the rights of Welsh speakers, and that her resources have been reconfigured on that basis
- To scrutinise the relationship between the Commissioner and the Government
- To scrutinise the effectiveness of the administration of the Welsh Language Tribunal and its role in empowering complainants and in promoting access to administrative justice, and the extent to which its decisions have the effect of holding the Commissioner to account.

## **SUBSTANCE OF THE RESPONSE**

### **Role of the Welsh Language Commissioner**

Although the Government's attempts to introduce a weaker language Act between 2017-2019 have been rejected entirely, it appears that the Commissioner remains enthusiastic about trying to achieve the Government's plans on its behalf, which raises further questions about her suitability to be an independent advocate for the rights of Welsh speakers. We are concerned that the conduct of the Commissioner here is far removed from the role of being an advocate for Welsh speakers.

It is most regrettable that the character of the organisation, which is evident in this plan, has changed entirely from the character and mission of the organisation that was created in 2012 – and in a fashion that was not intended at all as a result of the Welsh Language Measure 2011. A Measure that was the subject of a long campaign. A Measure that remains unchanged, despite efforts to do so – efforts that were withdrawn amid strong opposition.

These changes have come about without a single piece of primary legislation having been changed, without any change to the enforcement policy (although we understand that efforts are underway to do so, and we will respond separately to your consultation in that regard), and with everything happening behind closed doors. That is unacceptable and completely undemocratic. Questions must be asked regarding how it happened. There are major questions to be asked about Welsh Language Commissioners (their governance arrangements and internal challenge – the Advisory Panel, the Risk and Audit Committee, etc.), and about the three branches of governance relating to the Welsh language, namely the Government, the opposition parties / legislature, and the Welsh Language Tribunal. We are therefore making recommendations in relation to all of the above.

It is striking to compare the draft strategic plan with the narrative of the organisation, created in 2012. It could be said that it confirms the gradual erosion on the body. For example, the regulatory section of the plan, on page 6, states the following: "The purpose of Welsh language standards and Welsh language schemes is to increase the number of Welsh medium services available, and to promote and facilitate the use of those services." This seems to ignore the fact that the language standards are a mechanism to create rights for Welsh speakers. The Measure states, in section 1. 2(a), that the official status of the language will be affected, among other things, by "the rights which arise from the enforceability of those duties".

The plan in general terms, and its language, emphasis and analysis reflect an excessively cosy culture and relationship with the Government and the bodies that the Commissioner is supposed to be regulating for the benefit of the language, and in terms of the Commissioner's intended role as an independent advocate and champion for Welsh speakers.

The words 'right', 'rights' or 'complainant' do not appear in this draft strategic plan at all, as one might expect from a body that is supposed to be an advocate for people, and as has been the case in the past.

The objectives have also been weakened. Your *current* strategic plan sets clear objectives and ensures that people, increasing services and promoting the Welsh language are central:

Objective 1: Ensure fairness, justice and rights for Welsh speakers

Objective 2: Ensure that the Welsh language is a central consideration in policy and legislation

Objective 3: Maintain and increase organisations' compliance with their statutory duties

Objective 4: Increase the use of the Welsh language by organisations across all sectors

The *proposed* Objectives in the strategic plan for 2025-30, on the other hand, are very general. Although no one would disagree with them, they reflect insufficient ambition as objectives, and they are weakened in terms of language, content and impact:

Objective 1: Increasing services available in Welsh Objective 2: Promoting the use of Welsh medium services Objective 3: Increasing opportunities for the wider use of Welsh

What is clear from these objectives is that there is an emphasis on giving people more opportunities to use the Welsh language, and that it is then their choice to use the language or not, with no consideration given to the fact that language is a social phenomenon and that forces of all kinds restrict and influence individual choices.

As opposed to objectives that ensure Welsh language services and provision and ensure that the provision is clearly available, these objectives place a responsibility on the public to make use of services.

It is clear in the objectives, purposes and priorities of the Children's Commissioner and the Older People's Commissioner that they take seriously their roles as strong and firm advocates for people. The Children's Commissioner states that her purpose is to be a rights realiser and a challenger. Her [objectives](#) include the following:

*"...support and empower children to speak out and share their diverse experiences with decision makers.*

*"...challenge and support others to ensure children's human rights are realised."1*

In the same way, [the Older People's Commissioner notes](#) that one of her functions is to: *"Challenge discrimination against older people in Wales".*

It is clear that people are central to their objectives and priorities, and that their aim is to advocate on behalf of the people whom they represent. The rights that children and older people have are more clear and common across all areas, while language rights are limited to specific areas, which means that it is easier to set the kind of objectives that the Children's Commissioner and Older People's Commissioner have. However, this also means that the Welsh Language Commissioner needs to do more to expand rights.

The Welsh Language Commissioner should serve as a strong voice for the people of Wales in the same way, and demand more Welsh language provision.

Moreover, questions arise regarding the location of the Commissioner's office in our capital, within the Government's headquarters in Cathays Park, given that the Government is a body that the Commissioner is responsible for holding to account. While we understand that there are financial savings to be made from closing an office, and that the funding that has been saved could be used for the Commissioner's other work, the truth of the matter is that this was a money-saving measure in the face of cuts to the Welsh Language Commissioner's budget. Alternative solutions would have achieved the same goal, such as sharing an office with the other Commissioners, or with other Welsh-language bodies in the capital. We note that the other Commissioners, as far as we know, have not taken up any space in Cathays Park, and that

the Welsh Language Commissioner, unlike those Commissioners, has direct regulatory powers over the Government and its operations.

The Government appoints and funds the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner, of course, and so this role is conducted at arm's length from the Government. However, the sharing office space and resources means that the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner is more susceptible to the perception that it is being influenced by the Government and failing to maintain proper independence.

We call upon the Commissioner to re-engage with her function as an independent regulator, above all else, and to start operating in this way.

The Commissioner should be more vocal and proactive. She should press the Government to implement and drive its standards timetable. Although the Government is responsible for drawing up a programme and timetable for setting standards, the Welsh Language Commissioner is meant to be a body that advocates on behalf of the Welsh language and Welsh speakers. That needs to be done through public calls that draw attention to the Government's tardiness and through internal pressure.

The majority of the services that people use on a daily basis are services provided by private companies. The Commissioner has the scope to demand the right to use Welsh in the private sector, again by drawing attention to need, and by pressuring the Government to do so.

### **Use of powers**

The Welsh Language Commissioner has a number of powers through the Measure, and these powers need to be used for the benefit of Welsh speakers. Over the years, fewer investigations have been conducted in relation to complaints regarding failure to comply with the standards.

While we accept that the Commissioner seeks solutions with organisations in the first instance, and that this process can lead to swifter resolution, organisations do not record complaints against them in those cases, and thus their compliance reports do not reflect the situation, and the issues in question are not treated with the same gravity or transparency.

After an investigation is opened, we believe that the Commissioner should make full use of her enforcement and sanctioning powers when appropriate, in order to ensure fairness for those who have failed to receive a Welsh language service, and to demonstrate the gravity of the issue. The publicising of failures and solutions, for example, would encourage organisations to adhere to the standards and ensure that action plans are in place. Given that members of the public would be aware of a failure of this kind, it would be more important for an organisation to ensure that it adheres to its action plan and that there is no recurrence.

We call for the reintroduction of an indicator relating to the number of investigations opened and concluded, and the introduction of an indicator for the number of judicial reviews that have been commenced and contributed to – both as key indicators that need to be included in the plan. Although the Register of Enforcement Actions is public, it does not provide a full picture of the number of investigations, complaints, and so forth.

It is important, for the sake of transparency, that the public is able to see more detail pertaining to the Commissioner's work, and how many complaints are received but not investigated.

### **Themes in the strategic plan**

Health and care, the workplace, and children and young people are worthy priorities, but the actions of the strategic plan (under the heading "Over the next five years we will:") do not reflect the three themes. There are a few actions related to the three priority areas, but they are, on the whole, very general in nature, and so it is difficult to see how they will improve people's experience in the three areas in question.

Moreover, there is a need to prioritise technical and detailed work in specific areas, such as healthcare and education. The Welsh Language Commissioner will have an important role to play in scrutinising in detail the significant growth that will be needed in Welsh education, in preparation for the implementation of the Welsh education Bill.

The expectation is that there will be a tremendous increase in the documentation that will be produced at the school governing body level for the first time, given that each governing body is expected to draw up delivery plan. The Welsh Language Commissioner will probably be expected to analyse and challenge these bodies, together with Qualifications Wales, the WJEC, Estyn, and the Education Workforce Council.

In the area of Welsh language education, the role of the Welsh Language Commissioner is to challenge providers. That is not clear in the strategic plan.

The strategic plan also notes that the attitudes of children and young people towards the Welsh language "and their practices in using the language now, will affect their future use of Welsh." Statutory education is an important part of that, but extracurricular activities are also central. Welsh is considered a language of education, and an irrelevance in the world

beyond the classroom, because sports and leisure activities for children and young people are mainly conducted in English. We believe that specific attention needs to be paid to ensuring that extracurricular activities for children are provided through the medium of Welsh. To highlight one example, the Commissioner has, to date, failed to ensure that children and young people have the right and opportunity to have swimming lessons through the medium of Welsh.

### **Health and care**

Increasing opportunities to use the Welsh language in this area is not enough in itself, without considering all of the planning work that is required to ensure that the Welsh language is placed at the heart of our health and care services.

From the perspective of patients, the use of Welsh is essential if that is their language of choice, especially in respect of stroke care and dementia, and for children. It is also essential that mental health support and services are available in Welsh, and in an accessible and timely fashion.

In addition, the following statement is made clearly in the [Duty of Quality Statutory Guidance 2023 and Quality Standards 2023](#): "*Being able to access services in the Welsh language makes a significant positive difference to the quality of the overall experience and health and wellbeing outcomes for many Welsh-speakers.*" Furthermore, the *More than just words* strategic framework (Welsh Government, 2022) pledges that Welsh speakers will receive health and care services that meet their needs as a natural part of their care, with an increasing emphasis on implementing a proactive offer of Welsh language provision. Therefore, strong leadership, data mapping and workforce planning are key themes within the framework actions. However, a lack of effective planning and action is hindering efforts to increase Welsh language provision, thereby compounding the suffering of service users. We call upon the Commissioner to adopt a

leading role in holding the Welsh Government to account on all actions within the *More than just words* framework.

Primary care was omitted from the language standards for the health sector, but the sector was included in separate, parallel regulations in 2019. The The National Health Service (Welsh Language in Primary Care Services) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Wales) Regulations 2019 do not introduce a single mandatory right of any value. This perpetuates a shameful situation in which there is still no right to primary health services such as seeing a GP or a dentist who can speak Welsh. There is an urgent need to return to this issue. We note that [the Welsh Government intends to review](#) the regulations, and so we expect the Commissioner to lead the way in calling and pressing for the inclusion of primary care within mainstream standards, and in asserting that there is a right to receive care, treatment and consultations through the medium of Welsh.

What is missing from the proposed strategic plan from a health perspective is attention to the work of Digital Health and Care Wales, which is vital in terms of installing technical systems in order to identify and respond to the linguistic needs of service users, and in terms of planning the workforce to provide services through the medium of Welsh.

### **Workplaces**

In terms of workplaces, we feel that there needs to be a greater emphasis on organisational change. At present, those who wish to work through the medium of Welsh are in the minority and are swimming against the tide, given that English is the language of many workplaces. What we need to do is change workplaces so that they are Welsh-speaking. As a starting point, we need to identify organisations that undertake their internal administration in Welsh, both orally and in writing, and use that as a baseline before setting a target for how many more will be doing this by the end of the plan's lifespan. The emphasis of the regulatory actions under Objective 3 is on increasing opportunities to use the Welsh language. However, we believe that it is necessary to go further by collaborating closely with specific organisations on how to move things [forward]. We accept that this is already happening to a certain extent. However, we need to build on this and collaborate with public authorities across Wales with which the public have regular contact, such as county councils, to take action towards working through the medium of Welsh.

### **Objective 1**

We have doubts about encouraging organisations "to use technology and artificial intelligence to increase and improve their services in Welsh" as a means of increasing Welsh language services. The use of artificial intelligence can be beneficial in giving existing staff more confidence or increasing their skills. Nevertheless, it could also increase dependence on technology or software, instead of creating a workforce that can work through the medium of Welsh.

The number of investigations launched on the basis of complaints has decreased over recent years. Therefore, monitoring "the percentage of enforcement actions being implemented" is certainly not a reliable yardstick.

### **Objective 2**

While we agree that it is necessary to ensure that the public knows about opportunities to use the Welsh language, encouraging people to use those services puts the responsibility on the

public to make use of services. In a delicate situation, people feel powerless and lack the confidence to ask service providers for a Welsh language service. Therefore, Welsh language services need to be available by default, and there should be no need to complain if they are not available when they should be.

As we have already stated, being able to use Welsh outside school settings is an important part of confirming that Welsh is an everyday language, and not just a language for the classroom. We need to do more than influence “policy areas that specifically affect

children and young people’s opportunities to use Welsh”. We believe that work needs to be done with local authorities, management bodies and private providers in order to increase the provision of sports and cultural activities available through the medium of Welsh.

### **Objective 3**

There is no doubt that the Welsh language needs to be central to decisions. Too many organisations consider the Welsh language only when they have to, and they do so in superficial ways designed merely to comply with requirements. Consideration of the Welsh language is included in the policy standards of a number of organisations. In her regulatory work, the Commissioner should ensure that organisations exceed the minimum expectations, and that the Welsh language is central to their decisions. And when seeking to influence, the Commissioner should, in our view, expand her policy work to local and grassroots settings, as well as seeking to influence the policy framework and national legislation. It is in our communities that the Welsh language exists from day to day, and the Commissioner has a key role in developing her detailed work in this area: responding to local authorities' local development plans and important individual planning applications (as do other regulators, such as Natural Resources Wales), and scrutinising WESPs and the school-level Welsh delivery plans proposed in the education Bill, for example. We therefore propose that there is a need to create dedicated units within your office to achieve these goals – an Education Unit, a Town and Country Planning Unit etc. – and to nurture the necessary linguistic planning expertise. There is a gap here for the Commissioner to fill.

There is also an intention to "engage purposefully with the public to understand when and why incidents of interference with people’s freedom to use Welsh occur". There is a need to do more than engage. Procedures within the Measure need to be used in full to encourage complaints about interference, and to investigate and expose the people responsible for interfering with the human rights of Welsh speakers. There have been a number of effective instances of this in the past, in the case of organisations such as Bupa. One effective way of understanding when and why people are unable to use the Welsh language is by looking at the complaints received from the public. Changing the complaints procedure to dictate that complaints must be made, in the first instance, to the body that fails to provide a Welsh language service will lead to a reduction in the Commissioner's knowledge of problems and cases of non-compliance.

### **Other areas needed in the strategic plan**

With regard to language infrastructure, we note that Members have discussed on the floor of the Senedd the absence of a timetable for full development of Welsh speech-to-text technology. In a world where virtual assistant devices are part and parcel of our everyday lives, it is vital for the future of the language that Welsh speakers are able to use this technology in their language. The Commissioner therefore needs to try to put that timetable in place and monitor it.

Another area missing from the strategic plan is research. The Government has set a goal of creating a million Welsh speakers by 2050, and there is only a quarter of a century left to hit that target. According to the results of the 2021 Census, the percentage and numbers of Welsh speakers continue to fall, and the Government is not doing enough to arrest this decline.

In order to hold the Government to account, we believe that there is a need for a research unit or research officers tasked with monitoring, on a quarterly basis, the trajectory towards a million speakers by 2050, and with measuring the impact of the measures implemented by the Government as part of the Cymraeg 2050 plan.

A copy of this response will be sent to the Chair of the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, along with the Welsh language spokespeople of the Senedd parties, so that it can inform their scrutiny of the Commissioner's work.

# Agenda Item 5

Document is Restricted

# Agenda Item 6

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

# Agenda Item 7

Document is Restricted

# Agenda Item 8

Document is Restricted