

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

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 2 – Senedd

Meeting date: 17 October 2024

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

Lleu Williams

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

SeneddCulture@senedd.wales

Hybrid

Pre-meeting registration

(09.15 – 09.30)

Public

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.30)

2 Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport: Evidence session with culture bodies (6)

(09.30 – 10.30)

(Pages 1 – 24)

Louise Miles–Payne, Director, Creu Cymru

Hannah Firth, Co–Director, Artistic Director, Chapter Arts Centre

Sharon Stone, Co–Director, Director of Finance and Resources, Chapter Arts Centre

Naomi Chiffi, Director of Collaboration, National Theatre Wales

Attached Documents:

Research brief



Creu Cymru consultation response
Chapter Arts Centre consultation response

Break

(10.30 – 10.40)

3 Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport: Evidence session with Books Council Wales (7)

(10.40 – 11.30)

Helgard Krause, Chief Executive Officer

4 Paper(s) to note

(11.30)

4.1 Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport

(Pages 25 – 36)

Attached Documents:

Correspondence from Cyhoeddi Cymru – Publishing Wales: Expressing concerns about the future of publishing in Wales – 4 October 2024

Correspondence from Professor Emeritus Marged Haycock, Department of Welsh, Aberystwyth University: Expressing concerns about the financial support for the publishing sector in Wales – 7 October 2024 (English Translation by Senedd Commission)

Letter copied for information from Gwasg Rily to the Welsh Government and Senedd Members representing South Wales East and Caerphilly: Expressing concerns about the financial support for the publishing sector in Wales – 7 October 2024

Open letter to the Prime Minister

Letter from Seren Books: Expressing concerns around financial support in the Welsh Government's 2025/2026 Draft Budget – 7 October 2024

4.2 Ministerial scrutiny sessions

(Pages 37 – 39)

Attached Documents:

Response from the Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership:
Providing information following the Committee's correspondence of 9
September 2024 following the former Cabinet Secretary for Culture and
Social Justice's appearance before the Committee on 10 July 2024 – 7
October 2024

4.3 Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024–25

(Page 40)

Attached Documents:

Response from the Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership:
Providing an update on stakeholder meetings to discuss the funding situation
at the Welsh National Opera – 8 October 2024

4.4 Financial Position of Wales Rugby League

(Page 41)

Attached Documents:

Response from the Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership:
Providing an update following the Committee's letter regarding the financial
position of Wales Rugby League – 8 October 2024

4.5 Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill

(Pages 42 – 43)

Attached Documents:

Letter from Cymdeithas yr Iaith: Highlighting barriers to accessing services
and extracurricular activities for children and young people through the
medium of Welsh – 4 October 2024 (English Translation by Senedd
Commission)

5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting

(11.30)

Private

6 Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport: Consideration of evidence

(11.30 – 11.50)

Break

(11.50 – 12.00)

7 Culture and the new relationship with the EU: Consideration of draft report

(12.00 – 13.00)

(Pages 44 – 107)

Attached Documents:

Draft report

Document is Restricted

IFRCS25 Louise Miles-Payne, Director, Creu Cymru

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Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Effaith Gostyngiadau Cyllid ar Ddiwylliant a Chwaraeon | Impact of Funding Reductions for Culture and Sport

Ymateb gan: Louise Miles-Payne, Cyfarwyddwr, Creu Cymru | Evidence from: Louise Miles-Payne, Director, Creu Cymru

1. What impacts has reduced funding had on your organisation and sector so far?

The arts and culture sector, which employs 7000 people across Wales, makes a vital contribution to the economy, health and wellbeing, and international reputation of our nation. Government funding of ACW in 2020 was 21% lower than in 2010 and this steady decline must be reversed in the next budget round if the sector is to secure a sustainable future.

Cultural spending as a proportion of the Welsh Government budget represents less than 0.15% of total overall expenditure – one of the lowest in Europe, where the average is 1.5% with some reaching 2.5%.

Culture is the lifeblood of local communities, providing inspiration, entertainment and a creative outlet for so many. Theatre supports individual wellbeing and provides jobs for skilled local people.

It provides value to the community at large through revived highstreets, a thriving nighttime economy and by encouraging social cohesion. Research shows that nearly three quarters (74%) of all UK adults attended an arts event in the last 12 months. Despite this, the theatre sector faces challenges on multiple fronts. All our members are experiencing rising costs, alongside increasing pressures on public funding and sector wide skills shortages. Parents and teachers are also reporting a decline in school trips to the theatre, meaning children are missing out on the benefits a visit brings due to the cost of transport and the increased complexities faced by schools relating to funding and socio-economic issues.

The reduced funding in the culture and sports sectors in Wales has had far-reaching impacts on our members and wider sector.

Operational Constraints: Reduced funding often leads to budget cuts across the board. This has forced some members to reduce staff, limit programming, shorten operating hours, or even close venues. Essential maintenance and upgrades have also been delayed, affecting the quality of services offered.

Programme Reductions: Many organisations have had to scale back on the number and diversity of events, exhibitions, or performances they can offer. This has also meant cutting outreach programmes (such as the Young Studio programme at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama which has affected 340 students, five salaried staff and 112 freelancers), education initiatives, or community engagement activities, which are vital for broadening access to the arts.

Talent Drain: Financial pressures have led to job losses or reduced employment opportunities within the sector, especially for freelancers. This results in a loss of specialist skills as professionals move to other sectors or elsewhere in the UK where opportunities are more abundant. This loss might be irreversible, especially for niche roles or highly skilled positions. Many of our members have seen technical staff leave to other higher paying creative sectors such as TV and film. Our members have also reported issues around delays in recruitment when staff leave, sometimes being forced to wait to advertise roles resulting in remaining staff members are often left with increased workload and responsibilities.

Increased Reliance on Volunteers: To cope with staff reductions, organisations need to rely more heavily on volunteers, which may impact the quality of service or overburden the volunteer workforce. Front of house capacity is being drawn on volunteers more so than ever. Sherman Theatre have told us that their volunteers are more likely to be older people, rather than younger people which has a knock-on effect on career pathways into the arts.

2. What measures have you taken in light of it, such as changing what you do and how you do it.

Cost-Cutting and Efficiency Measures: Implementing austerity measures, such as reducing administrative overhead, sharing resources with other organisations, or renegotiating contracts with suppliers, have been necessary steps.

Programme Adaptation: Many of our members have adapted by offering fewer events which has reduced costs. As a result of increased production costs one producing venue is looking at cutting their in house produced work by 50%. Some producing companies and venues are also looking at producing work with fewer cast members and using more local performers to reduce accommodation and travel costs.

3. To what extent will these impacts be irreversible (e.g. venues closing, or specialist skills being lost rather than a temporary restriction in activities)?

Venue Closures: Permanent closure of venues will have long-lasting impacts on the community and cultural landscape, reducing access to cultural experiences and spaces for artistic expression. Caerphilly Council are proposing the closure of Blackwood Miners' Institute(<https://creucymru.com/news/creu-cymru-statement-proposed-cuts-blackwood-miners-institute>), and we have already seen the closure of the Redhouse in Merthyr Tydfil earlier this year.

Skill Loss: The departure of skilled professionals and the reduction in training opportunities will lead to a long-term skills deficit, particularly in specialised areas of arts and culture. Consistent underfunding in the sector has affected the morale of the workforce, leaving staff overworked, undervalued and underpaid compared to their counterparts in other sectors or elsewhere in Europe.

Inability to recruit: Members are reporting issues when it comes to attracting senior managers and leaders within the sector due to the inability to be competitive to similar roles elsewhere in the UK. This impacts the ability to manage businesses effectively and sustainably.

Cultural Erosion: A decline in diverse programming may reduce cultural diversity and diminish the cultural vibrancy of communities, potentially leading to a less inclusive cultural sector. It also influences diverse recruitment, if the cultural sector can't pay staff at competitive rates or more open to those from diverse backgrounds then organisations won't be able to achieve a more representative workforce.

4. What interventions would you like to see from the Welsh Government, beyond increased funding?

No further cuts are made to the Arts Council of Wales. There is no room in the sector for additional cuts.

Strategic Support Beyond Funding: Beyond increasing financial support, the Welsh Government could offer strategic assistance in areas like capital funding, sustainability, capacity building, digital transformation, and fostering collaborations across sectors.

Policy and Advocacy: The government could play a more active role in advocating for the value of culture and sport, raising public awareness, and integrating cultural objectives into broader social and economic policies.

Targeted Support for Vulnerable Groups: Initiatives focused on supporting organisations that serve vulnerable populations, including those with protected characteristics or from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, could ensure that cuts do not disproportionately affect these groups.

Skills Development Programmes: Investment in skills development, apprenticeships, and training programmes to address the loss of specialised skills in the sector would be vital for long-term sustainability.

Addressing these issues requires a combination of immediate relief measures and long-term strategic planning to ensure that the cultural sector in Wales remains resilient, inclusive, and vibrant despite financial challenges.

5. To what extent do the impacts you describe fall differently on people with protected characteristics and people of a lower socioeconomic status?

Access and Participation: Reduced funding could disproportionately affect people with protected characteristics and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Cuts to outreach and community programmes might limit access to cultural activities for these groups, exacerbating existing inequalities.

Representation: Diverse voices and representation in the arts will diminish if organisations focusing on underrepresented communities face greater financial challenges, leading to a less inclusive cultural landscape.

Economic Barriers: Increased ticket prices or reduced free programming will create additional barriers for low-income individuals, making it harder for them to engage with cultural activities.

6. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

Preventing further cuts to the Arts Council of Wales is essential for protecting the economic, social, and cultural fabric of the nation. The arts sector is not just a luxury; it is a vital component of a healthy, vibrant, and resilient society. Further cuts would risk long-term damage that would be difficult, if not impossible, to reverse, with consequences felt across communities, economies, and future generations.

Theatres should be at the heart of local life and local plans – including cultural strategy, planning policy and transport provision. Theatres will only thrive when they are adequately supported and funded to deliver for the communities around Wales. We recognise the fiscal challenges facing the Welsh Government, and echo calls for a sustainable, long-term cultural funding solution that can give creative organisations the security they need.

IFRCS21 Beki Pope, Pennaeth Codi Arian, Chapter Cardiff Ltd

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Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Effaith Gostyngiadau Cyllid ar Ddiwylliant a Chwaraeon | Impact of Funding Reductions for Culture and Sport

Ymateb gan: Beki Pope, Pennaeth Codi Arian, Chapter Cardiff Ltd | Evidence from: Beki Pope, Head of Fundraising, Chapter Cardiff Ltd

1. What impacts has reduced funding had on your organisation and sector so far?

Reduced funding has had a serious impact on our business model, creating increased difficulty delivering a balanced budget.

Pre-pandemic, we used income generated via the box office and the café bar alongside revenue funding from Arts Council Wales, to support our arts programming. Due to an increase in all costs (eg. Staff, energy, materials etc) and a fall in ticket sales and profit from our caffi bar, there is less income available to support arts activity, putting increased pressure on funding achieved via trusts and foundations, individual and corporate giving.

This has led to a reduction in our programme, including engagement work with schools, community groups, and support for Wales' talent pipeline. The reduction of funding has led to a loss of investment in the future of arts in Wales, including our ability to support research & development projects for emerging artists, across all artforms. It has been necessary for us to increase charges for hire spaces and rents for our studio associates and simultaneously reduce the availability of free or low-cost R&D spaces for emerging artists. This has had a negative effect for the sector as artists across all artforms find it harder and more expensive to find temporary rehearsal space, production studios etc, leading to more of them leaving the sector/ Wales to find work.

2. What measures have you taken in light of it, such as changing what you do and how you do it.

We've reduced our general opening hours and the hours of our caffi bar. We've increased prices across the business including the introduction of a booking fee on all ticket sales, caffi bar prices, ticket prices. We have fewer opportunities for freelancers as we can manage most of the programme with core staff. We have fewer hours available for free or subsidised rehearsal space as we look to prioritise availability of space to organisations or individuals who can pay. Where possible, we've cut expenditure budgets across the organisation including fewer opportunities for paid staff training and professional development opportunities and look for free, low cost or funded courses. Finally, we've had to implement some redundancies to reduce the salaries bill but also reflect the revised opening hours.

In 2023-24 we were able to offer 5,432 hours of subsidised R&D space and £101,000 of rent support. For 2024 these figures have been reduced to 1,500 hours and £40,000.

3. To what extent will these impacts be irreversible (e.g. venues closing, or specialist skills being lost rather than a temporary restriction in activities)?

There is a potential loss of skills to the organisation and the sector as people leave Wales to seek opportunities elsewhere. The necessary freeze in salaries could lead to staff retention issues. Pressure on smaller staff teams will lead to burnout, encouraging skilled people to leave the sector.

4. What interventions would you like to see from the Welsh Government, beyond increased funding?

Strategic investment in leadership skills – networking and advocacy opportunities. Support for art and creative learning in schools including GCSE and A Level. Clear and supported opportunities for paid apprenticeships in the sector. More sector relevant training and support for talent pipeline.

Review, support and invest in utilities ie energy costs to help lower these. Incentives for more environmentally sustainable opportunities, such as solar panels, or insulation and windows for older buildings.

Where funding is offered enable some of it to be provided prior to the activity happening to support the cashflow rather than on production of receipts and defrayment at the bank.

5. To what extent do the impacts you describe fall differently on people with protected characteristics and people of a lower socioeconomic status?

The enforced reduction in the programme has a huge impact on our engagement work, including schools, young people and community groups. The necessary increase in price is a barrier to attendance, as is the reduction in free and reduced price community tickets that we are in a position of offer. Embedded access support (BSL screenings, captioning, audio description etc) is harder to provide across the programme. We are unable to take risk across the programme, reducing the opportunity to reach new audiences.

6. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

There appears to be a move away from monitoring the quality of the arts in Wales to a situation where the number of jobs created is the key driver. This does not support the overall economic impact that the arts can deliver nor does it help create a future for the industry.

Agenda Item 4.1

Annwyl Delyth

I write to you, as Chair of the Culture Committee, in my role as Chair of Cyhoeddi Cymru (Publishing Wales) which was established in 2022 to be the voice of Welsh publishers.

Further background to the organisation can be found on our website:

www.cyhoeddi.cymru

There are two main reasons why we've made contact:

1. From 16-20 October 2024, 16 publishers will be representing Wales at the Frankfurt Book Fair – the world's biggest and most prestigious publishing trade fair – where we will be endeavouring to sell the literary rights of our books (Welsh and English language) to publishers around the world. Our presence at the fair has been supported by Welsh Government and we are very grateful for that funding. In addition to Frankfurt, the Welsh Government provides the financial support that enables Cyhoeddi Cymru to have a presence at the London Book Fair each Spring at Olympia. We sincerely appreciate the financial support for these two fairs and have suggestions as to how our presence could be further improved in future years. Moreover, we'd also wish to stress the importance of a Wales stand at the Bologna Book Fair - the world's most important event for children's publishers - where we currently do not have a national presence. We would relish the opportunity to brief the Culture Committee on our activities at international book fairs and how we promote our nation to a global audience. The briefing would also include our home-grown successes such as *The Blue Book of Nebo* by Manon Steffan Ros (originally published in Welsh as *Llyfr Glas Nebo*) which has been translated into several languages and won the prestigious Carnegie Prize for children's literature in 2023.
2. While funding for the business-to-business book fairs is good news we also have some bad news. Many Welsh publishers receive specific grant funding which enable them to publish new books (for adults and children) in both languages but that budget, which had been provided on a standstill basis for well over 10 years, was reduced for the 2023-24 financial year by approximately 8% and then cut again for the present financial year (2024-25) by a further 10%. Our understanding is that another significant cut is being discussed for 2025-26. Three consecutive cuts on the back of a decade or more of standstill budgets will be catastrophic for many of Wales's publishers. It would signal nothing less than an existential crisis for the Welsh publishing industry. The funding cuts have already had an impact on publisher's staffing levels and this will worsen further if additional cuts are introduced. It is not inconceivable that publishers may cease trading altogether. Fewer staff working fewer hours in fewer publishing houses will result in fewer books for

our nation, and fewer books from Wales for Wales will undoubtedly be detrimental to literacy levels in Wales, in both languages. As the OECD has stated: 'Reading for pleasure is the single biggest indicator of a child's future success – more than their family circumstances, their parents' educational background or their income'.

We are frustrated that funding is being provided by one part of Government yet is being removed by another – it's not the best example of a holistic strategy of support for Wales's oldest creative industry – and we have real fears for the future of publishing in Wales.

Cyhoeddi Cymru would be very grateful for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Culture Committee and to share our plan to secure the future of the Welsh publishing industry. Our leading authors would also welcome the chance to participate in those discussions.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yn gywir iawn

Mr Ashley Drake

Cadeirydd Dros Dro / Acting Chair

Cyhoeddi Cymru / Publishing Wales

www.cyhoeddi.cymru

Cyhoeddi Cymru

Publishing Wales

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to express my concern about the financial support for the publishing sector in Wales.

The sector is led by the **Books Council of Wales (Cyngor Llyfrau Cymru)** which saw a 10.5% cut in its annual budget from the Welsh Government in 2024-25. This followed years without any increase in its budget - before the cut, the size of the grant had remained unchanged for over 10 years - and did not take into account the effects of inflation. The prospect of a further cut to its budget in 2025-26 is a matter of great concern.

The need for government support for the publishing sector in Wales has never been greater:

The publishing sector supports literacy at the very time when reading standards among 15-year-old school pupils in Wales are at their lowest ever – a situation exacerbated by the effects of the Covid pandemic. According to the Pisa test results released in December 2023, Wales is the only country in the UK where pupils' reading scores are below the international average.

The publishing sector supports the Welsh language and has a key role to play in meeting the Welsh government's target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. In terms of the use of the Welsh language and its viability, its role is as central as that of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, the National Centre for Learning Welsh and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, three national bodies saved from cuts in 2024-25. In the case of the National Centre for Learning Welsh and the Coleg Cymraeg, it was decided to maintain 'budgets at 2023-24 levels to cause the least disruption to the Welsh language sector'.

The publishing sector supports the Welsh economy and many publishers employ a number of freelancers, e.g. editors, designers, authors and translators, who live and work in rural Wales.

The publishing sector supports the health of the nation: among its many other benefits, reading has been proven to be beneficial to mental health and well-being. Here is a recent report by the National Literacy Trust, one of several pieces of research that confirm this important point: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/reading-for-mental-wellbeing-in-2023/>

Not only that, but the publishing sector is making great strides — with the motivation of the Books Council and Literature Wales in particular — **to meet the needs of cohorts in society who are disadvantaged, or are under-represented.**

The publishing sector is also **a shop window to show Wales and its rich culture to the world**, thereby boosting tourism, and the heritage sector and the country's economy as a whole.

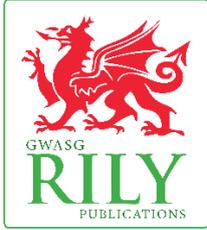
The new Labour Government's Chancellor of the Exchequer pledged there would be no more economic austerity: with the publishing sector in Wales still trying to deal with the devastating impact of the 10.5% cut in 2024-25, we ask that you honour this pledge and ensure that no further cuts are introduced in 2025-26. This would go some way towards trying to ensure that an already extremely challenging situation does not turn into a very real crisis.

Yours sincerely

Marged Haycock

Emeritus Professor Marged Haycock, Department of Welsh, Aberystwyth University

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7 October 2024

To:

Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership; Jack.Sargeant@senedd.wales
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language; Mark.Drakeford@senedd.wales
Cabinet Secretary for Education; Lynne.Neagle@senedd.wales
Minister for Further and Higher Education; Vikki.Howells@senedd.wales
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning; Rebecca.Evans@senedd.wales
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs; huw.Irranca-Davies@senedd.wales
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing; Sarah.Murphy@Senedd.Wales
Minister for Children and Social Care; Dawn.Bowden@senedd.wales
Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales; Ken.Skates@senedd.wales

And to the member representing South Wales East and Caerphilly – Gwasg Rily areas -

Natasha.Asgar@senedd.wales
Delyth.Jewell@senedd.wales
Laura.Jones@senedd.wales
Peredur.OwenGriffiths@senedd.wales
Hefin.David@senedd.wales

As well as a copy to the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and Internal Relations Committee: SeneddCulture@senedd.wales

I am writing to you as a small business owner of Gwasg Rily to bring your attention to the serious situation in the Welsh language publishing industry and to ask for your support in addressing this matter.

The Welsh publishing sector is led brilliantly by the Books Council of Wales but sadly, in 2024/25, they saw a cut in their annual budget by 10.5%. This was a particularly devastating blow to us as all of the other major Welsh language organisation saw no cuts to their annual budget and, indeed in many cases, they saw their funding increase.

Since 2009/10, the Books Council of Wales's annual budget has almost halved in real terms (it now represents just 52.1% of what it was then). These cuts have been against a hard economic backdrop where raw materials and supply chain products have constantly increased and then combined with a cost-of-living crisis choking demand to create a 'perfect storm' of crisis in the sector.

The long period of austerity has meant schools struggle to afford books and libraries have closed – both of which were once significant markets for publishers. Against this difficult background, Government support for the publishing sector in Wales, and particularly for the Welsh language publishing sector, is needed more than it has ever been before.

Currently, the Books Council of Wales has an annual budget of £1.5 million per annum. Some of this is spent on their team and running costs but much of this amount is passed on to publishers as grants. Therefore, I am respectfully requesting that this budget is NOT cut any further. In addition, I am asking for you to consider investing a further £1.4 million per annum to restore the real value of their grant back to the 2009/10 levels. The reasons for this request are outlined in the remainder of this letter.

Well-being and mental health

The core purpose of the grants administered by the Books Council to the publishing industry is to create books that encourage *'Reading for Pleasure'*. Reading is a superpower and a foundational block for our society. If you can read, then you function more productively and contribute to our nation as well as being empowered to be more able to 'help yourself' in times of need.

Senedd research shows that mental health is a huge issue in Wales -

<https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/a-mentally-well-wales/>

Here are just a few sources of research which show that reading for pleasure can help to boost our mental health – [The University of Cambridge](#) | [The National Literacy Trust](#) | [The Library and Information Association CILIP](#)

As such, books and, by extension, the publishing sector in Wales is vital to supporting the health and well-being of our nation.

Economy and Jobs

My company employs nine people all across Wales from Anglesey, Gwynedd, Carmarthen, Ceredigion, Caerphilly and Cardiff. Most of our team are part-time female professionals and they are able to work flexible hours to fit around the demands of their family. In many rural and north Wales areas, it is extremely difficult to find professional jobs with good salaries that offer the opportunity to provide a creative outlet, offer a good income, and enable them to support their families.

As well as our employed jobs, we work with over fifty freelancers varying from artists, authors, illustrators, graphic designers, translators, creative editors, copy editors to computer programmers, animators and many others who rely on our commissions. The benefits of online and remote working have enabled us to provide work to freelancers in more rural areas; but all of this is dependent on the support we receive from Welsh Government through the Books Council. Without this support – especially given the economic challenges I've noted above – these jobs and benefits would not exist.

Our books are sold in many small, independent, bookshops all over Wales and these small businesses are often the core of communities – bringing people together and supporting the local economy.

As this shows, the reach of the small amount of funding we have is extensive. It stimulates the creative industry, fuels an innovative industry that Wales should be proud of and provides quality professional jobs across Wales.

Literacy – Schools and Libraries

Reading and books are core essentials when addressing our literacy problem in Wales. PISA data and post-covid literacy level surveys combine to highlight the frightening gap in the literacy skills of our

young people. The years of austerity have created a desperate situation where libraries are closing and reducing in number. Schools are having to use their budgets on retaining staff and paying energy bills rather than on buying books. Our children and young people deserve more.

Gwasg Rily publishes books for children, www.rily.co.uk and publishes a free, digital magazine for young women, www.lysh.cymru. We have even developed reading books that children have demonstrated they love; but schools can't afford to buy them. We have been commissioned to produce books that schools have actually asked for; and they then never bought them because their budgets were cut. So, we now have an excess of books in our warehouse, just sitting there doing no one any good.

Books should not be a luxury product, but an essential resource in the fight to improve the literacy standards of our next generation. Whether rich or poor, it is imperative that all children across Wales should have access to books and reading; and the publishing sector in Wales is vital to supporting the schools, libraries and the drive to improve literacy standards in our nation.

Welsh language

The Welsh Government has committed towards achieving one million Welsh speakers by 2050, but unfortunately, there is no commitment to the Welsh language publishing industry in the Cymraeg 2050 strategy. We have seen government's ongoing support to The Urdd, The Eisteddfod, The National Library of Wales and Cylch Mudiad Meithrin and this is to be commended. However, the Welsh language publishing industry has not seen any such commitment, indeed the cut in the Books Council's funding of 10.5% for 2024/25 means that Welsh publishers get less grant support than ever before and that impacts negatively on people, jobs, productivity, well-being, and so much more.

If we are to prevent the continued decline of the Welsh language and reach the strategy's target, it is essential that the publishing industry is supported. After all, it will not be possible to create favourable conditions for the language if the Publishing Industry withers. To provide the stated increase in Welsh educational resources and the infrastructure for the language to grow, Welsh Publishers are a key partner; and yet we are not mentioned in the strategy.

The publishing sector in Wales supports our culture, and our right to communicate in our own language of Welsh. We want that to continue and for our Welsh heritage to thrive.

We, therefore, respectfully request the following:-

No more cuts. That the Books Council of Wales's funding is 'ring fenced' in 2025/26 and in future years, in a similar way to those Welsh organisations that are in the 'cultural' portfolio.

Although publishing sits in the 'Creative Industries' portfolio, we provide vital Welsh language resources for both children and adults. We strongly believe that our provision should be treated uniquely as a matter of importance not only to safeguard our culture and heritage, but also for all of the economic reasons detailed above. Please do not impose any further cuts on our small grants. We simply will not be able to continue to operate.

Reading for pleasure is a campaign that the UK publishing industry is urging the UK government to embrace and to offer more financial support. Publishers at the Bookseller's recent Children's Conference called on the Prime Minister to "*make a cross-government commitment to prioritise the*

role of reading for pleasure for children. This would be an investment in the well-being, social mobility and life chances of our children and the prosperity and success of the UK". (Please see attached their Open letter to the Prime Minister).

However, in Wales, we have already identified the importance of 'reading for pleasure' by making this the core driver of the charity organisation, The Books Council of Wales. Sadly, since 2009/10, the real value of their funding, including the grant support they pass on to the Welsh publishing industry has almost halved in real terms. This has meant that so much of the excellent work they were able to do to promote the language and invest in skills has fallen by the wayside – to the detriment of both the language and the industry.

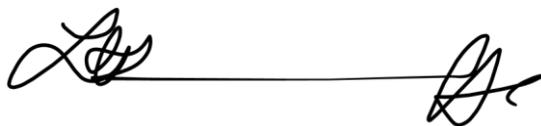
We therefore implore you to **invest now in this foundational industry and in our language by reinstating the real value of their funding** in a similar manner to the way that has been done for nurses and doctors in the NHS. Their real value of their grant in 2009/10 is now calculated to be £2.9 million and funding at this level would help us turn back the tide of decline and allow the language to grow.

Their current budget is £1.5 million and the £1.4 million required to restore the real value of the grant provides excellent value for money. Such funds would support many jobs directly as well as innumerable freelance workers. That funding would also create important products and would support well-being and mental health, the economy, rural communities, literacy, education, the Welsh language and the government's commitment to achieving the one million Welsh speakers by 2050. Please ask yourself what other industry could provide as much benefit for such a relatively small investment?

Our priority is to **prevent any further cuts**, but fundamentally, our industry is heading towards a tipping point, and **restorative investment** would empower our industry and would support many of the goals of the Government.

Please invest now to preserve and kickstart our industry and give hope to the many people who work for us and desperately need to see change put into action.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Lynda Tunnicliffe', written over a horizontal line.

Lynda Tunnicliffe
Director of Gwasg Rily

30 September 2024

Open letter to the Prime Minister on children's reading

Rt. Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP

The Prime Minister

10 Downing Street

London

SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you as a community of publishers, authors, illustrators, booksellers, librarians, teachers, researchers and others working with children's books and reading.

We call on you as Prime Minister to make a cross-government commitment to prioritise the role of reading for pleasure for children. This would be an investment in the wellbeing, social mobility and life chances of our children and the prosperity and success of the UK.

Evidence shows that we face a growing crisis in reading for pleasure, which has been declining since the pandemic across all socio-economic groups and is particularly pronounced in children from low-income families. There is consistent and longstanding evidence of the benefits of reading for pleasure on outcomes for children and its impact on their wellbeing, empathy skills and behaviour in schools.

While there are many demands on your government in a challenging fiscal climate, an investment in reading for pleasure is an investment in our children's, and the UK's, future. Equipping children to access books and to enjoy reading will help to fulfil Labour's missions of growth and achieving opportunities for all and your commitment to a decade of national renewal. In times of division and social challenge, it will equip our young people with the skills of empathy-building, critical thinking and engagement with big ideas and the world. Reading for pleasure does all this and more.

Publishers and charities have worked with schools, libraries, local authorities and other bodies to plug the policy and funding gap under previous governments, but this is not enough. Our children deserve better. This is a challenge and opportunity that reaches across government departments, contributing to policy ambitions in education, culture, health, local government, employment and more. We ask you to mandate your ministers to work with us to build a national reading for pleasure plan.

Building the reading habit will bring untold benefits to Britain as we face the challenges ahead. We look forward to working with your government.

Yours sincerely,

Culture, Communications, Welsh language, Sport and
International Relations Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

SEREN

Well chosen words.

Monday 7 October, 2024

Re: 2025/2026 Draft Budget

Dear Culture, Communications, Welsh language, Sport and International Relations
Committee,

As Welsh Government works towards its 2025/2026 draft budget this autumn, we wanted to draw your attention to the significant and real threat we are facing as one of Wales' very few remaining home-grown, successful independent publishers.

For well over forty years, not-for-profit Seren Books based in Bridgend has built a stellar reputation within Wales and beyond for the literary quality and significance of its publications. Our writers regularly garner critical recognition at the highest level – for example, by the Forward Prizes and Costa Book Award. We publish books which sell and which are read in volume – over 30,000 units for some of our recent non-fiction titles. We also publish books which matter culturally and which trigger change – from exposes of police corruption, to subject re-defining biographies, histories and critical works, to shining a light on previously marginalised places, people and themes, to translating seminal Welsh language texts for non-Welsh speaking audiences. We are tackling inequality in publishing and we're focused on playing our part to address the climate emergency.

We have given a first or an influential platform to writers who have gone on to enjoy global success and contribute to brand Wales. **Owen Sheers, Dannie Abse, Leonora Brito, Gwyneth Lewis, Horatio Clare** and many other major names have found a home with us. Readers and writers seek us out as the last real provider of domestic English language publications of high quality and reach. We employ **6 staff members** in highly sought after publishing roles, and support an **ecology of 100+ freelance** artists, photographers, editors, translators and a **wealth of local and national suppliers**. We work with tv and film companies and broadcasters – currently ITV Wales – and are plugged into the creative industries sector as a unique asset concerning content and legacy opportunities. With an average **annual turnover of £340k over the last decade**, we punch well above our weight.

Seren Books' business model is based on publishing a mixture of non-fiction, fiction and poetry books, some of which are profit-making and some of which are expected to make a loss but are worth publishing because of the additional cultural value they offer. This is an inherently risky model since – as all publishers will testify – it is very difficult to accurately predict sales. Some of our most significant books sell well, whilst other potential best-sellers underperform. Readers and book buyers are heavily governed by trends which the multi-national London-based publishers spend considerable effort to identify well in advance. As books can be a so-called 'non-essential item', buyer confidence is also very sensitive to global economic shifts.

01656 663018 | seren@serenbooks.com | www.serenbooks.com

Suite 6, 4 Derwen Road, Bridgend, Wales, CF31 1LH

 @SerenBooks

Directors: Cary Archard, Duncan Campbell (Interim Chair), Corinne Cooper, Rachel Dawson, Megan Farr, Dewi Knight, Patrick McGuinness, Sarah Morse, Taz Rahman, Huw Thomas, Elena Vaughan

Registered Office: Suite 6, 4 Derwen Road, Bridgend, Wales, CF31 1LH. Registered in England and Wales No. 2262728. VAT No. GB484323148

Seren is the imprint of Poetry Wales Press Ltd, which works with the financial assistance of the Books Council of Wales

Seren Books has gratefully benefitted from Books Council of Wales grant funding for many years, and this mitigates against the inevitable risk involved in making these commissioning decisions. It also justifies our business model, given funding requirements include the need to publish works of significant literary and cultural value.

However, our Books Council of Wales total grant income has reduced from £157,547 in 2014/2015 (**47% of turnover**) to £101,420 in 2023/2024 (**36% of turnover**), despite average 4.4% inflation rates in that same period. If you exclude the New Audiences grant funding we received that year – which is for new activity (not book production) and is 100% income in/expenditure out – the level of public support dropped to £95,170 (**34% of turnover**). This year, forecasted support is only **31% of turnover**.

The level of Books Council of Wales support ten years ago provided a buffer which enabled us to produce works which matter and are read, and to take risks. This support has diminished to the point that we cannot continue to offer likely loss-making opportunities to writers and readers, no matter their cultural value and impact. This has been compounded by the ongoing economic slump. From this year, we are no longer accepting publication submissions other than those aligned with criteria we've identified are most likely to sell. Next year we will only publish **14 books**, down from **23 in 2015/2016**.

Having made a financial loss for the past two years, streamlined the business and put in new cost-cutting / income generation measures this year, we are still forecasting a loss – albeit a smaller one – for 2024/2025. This is at the same time as having the Waterstones Book of the Month in Wales for *Let a Sleeping Witch Lie – Welsh Gothic Stories* by **Elizabeth Walter**. As it stands, we are rapidly heading towards a tough decision: either we slash costs and therefore strip out everything that makes Seren Books what it is or face the prospect of closing for good.

Were that to happen, Wales would lose its last standing significant English language publisher. It would lose the major societal, economic, cultural, environmental and well-being contribution Seren Books makes and will make for future generations. It will lose the ability we have to generate licensing and permissions revenue for our backlist writers along with our custodianship of a significant part of Wales' literary legacy.

Additional funding would mean – plainly – that Seren would survive long enough to build on the foundations we have established this year. We have a cracking publication list slated for 2025/2026 which we're confident will generate the income we need to start returning profit.

As a not-for-profit, all additional funding would be reinvested in culturally significant titles and in Wales' economy. An **extra £50,000** annually to our revenue grant would secure the jobs and the ecology of freelancers and suppliers we support and enable us to grow to the **projected 35% increase in turnover / £130,608** over the next 5-years. **Any further cuts, of however small a magnitude, will likely see us close and standstill funding may have the same effect.**

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Well chosen words.

We understand that Welsh Government is having to make very difficult decisions now, and that arts and culture spend is under severe threat. However, the case for the value-added growth from relatively nominal public investment in Seren Books, set against the alternative of our closing down, underlies the counterintuitive nature of further cuts or standstill funding.

We would be delighted to discuss this further with you and hope that you are able to speak up for us and the sector in the imminent budget discussions. Should you wish to see further evidence to support our case, please let us know.

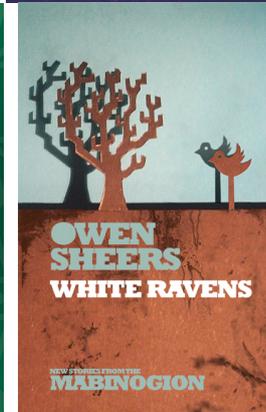
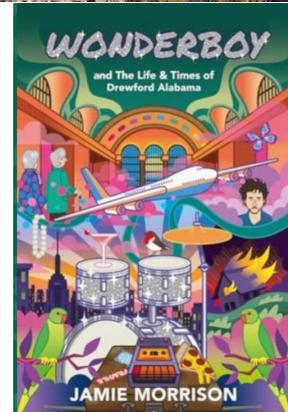
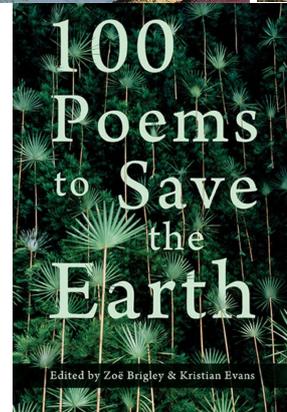
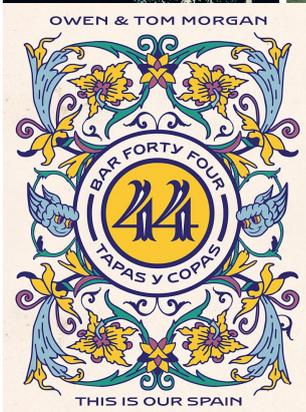
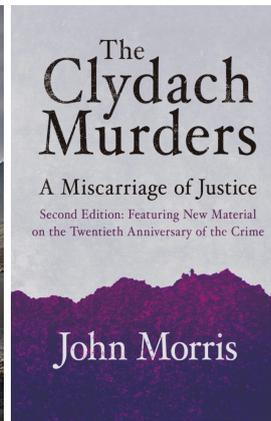
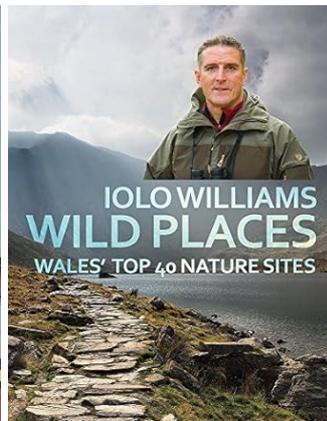
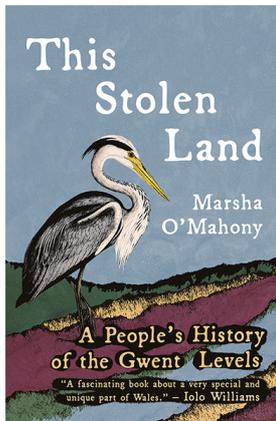
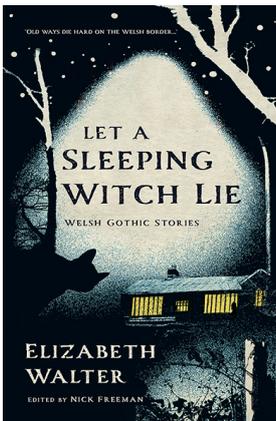
Yours faithfully,



Duncan Campbell
Chair – Seren Books



Bronwen Price
CEO – Seren Books



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Suite 6, 4 Derwen Road, Bridgend, Wales, CF31 1LH

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Directors: Cary Archard, Duncan Campbell (Interim Chair), Corinne Cooper, Rachel Dawson, Megan Farr, Dewi Knight, Patrick McGuinness, Sarah Morse, Taz Rahman, Huw Thomas, Elena Vaughan

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Delyth Jewell MS
Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations
Committee

7 October 2024

Dear Delyth,

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 September to my predecessor, following Lesley Griffiths' appearance before the Committee on 10 July. As culture is now within my portfolio, I am responding to you. Please find below the further information the Committee requested.

Difference in budget allocations between 2014-15 and 2024-25

My officials are working through the budget figures and the information will be provided to you as soon as possible. This has taken longer than expected due to the difference in the way budgets were presented in 2014-15.

The Museum of North Wales

The Programme for Government commitment 'Develop plans for a Museum of North Wales' was being addressed separately to the redevelopment of the National Slate Museum at Llanberis.

My predecessor announced on 10 July that we have stopped further development of plans for the Museum of North Wales. In this current financial climate, we must prioritise protecting and preserving our existing cultural institutions and their collections. Therefore, we will not be progressing work on a Museum of North Wales during this Senedd term.

We remain committed to supporting the redevelopment of the National Slate Museum at Llanberis, which will include opportunities to increase access to Amgueddfa Cymru's collections, including those of direct relevance to North Wales.

The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and officials have met with the College and the Minister for Further Education & Higher Education will continue conversations.

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

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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.

The National Music Service, established by the Welsh Government in 2022, is delivering on a Programme for Government commitment for every child and young person from the age of 3 to 16 to benefit from opportunities to engage in and experience music-making activities. The Service is fully funded by the Welsh Government, via grant to the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

While it is not a key function of the Service to provide higher-level provision in music training, of the type offered by music conservatoires, it does cover a broad work programme, as set out in the [National Plan for Music Education](#), including activity with key bodies such as the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) to support learner progression in music. The overriding focus of the Service's remit is, however, of necessity, to support music education in schools (through provision such as 'First Experiences' and 'Music Pathways').

From the end of September, a new weekend 'Academi' for young musicians in Cardiff and the Vale Glamorgan area has been launched by CF Music Education (the music service for this area).

Developed by, and run in partnership with, tutors with experience of previously delivering youth music activities at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, the new weekly sessions form part of Cardiff Council's Music Strategy. The new 'Academi' sessions will run on Saturdays, at Stanwell School in Penarth and Whitchurch High School in Cardiff, and with scope to expand to other venues across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

Welsh National Opera

On 26 September I held a series of meetings with ACW, the Musicians' Union and Equity, and WNO, to understand the nature of the situation facing the WNO. During these meetings I emphasised the Welsh Government wants to see WNO thrive and flourish as one of our major arts organisations. In my meeting with WNO I urged them to apply for the recently announced Resilience Fund, being administered by ACW to protect jobs in the arts sector. The deadline for applications is the end of September and I understand WNO has applied seeking additional support.

My private office is currently finalising details for the key stakeholder meeting - involving UK Government Ministers, Welsh Government Ministers and senior officials at ACW and Arts Council England – which will take place later this month.

Arts Council of Wales (ACW)

Following the budget announcement for 2024-25 where ACW's budget was reduced, ACW had to change as an organisation, to adapt to a new funding model and to safeguard the sector as much as possible. ACW passed on a 2.5% cut to the sector, whilst the rest was adsorbed within its own running costs.

ACW underwent a process of voluntary and compulsory redundancies as its senior leadership team was reconfigured. While the whole organisation was restructured there was some slippage in timescale on certain initiatives.

The English Language theatre review was launched in July and the work is on schedule for Council's consideration at its December meeting, followed by a public announcement early in 2025. Approved recommendations are still on course to be actioned from 2025-26.

ACW's Strategic Plan is currently with the Welsh Government for approval and will be launched once agreed. It is, however, a development of the priorities as published as part of ACW's Investment Review and the sector is fully aware of this.

Broadcasting and media policy development

The £1 million set aside in the 2024-25 budget to deliver against the broadcasting commitment has been allocated as follows:

- £100k – to support the establishment and operation of a Broadcasting and Communications Advisory Body in 2024-25.
- £500k – to support skills and talent development in the creative industries through the Creative Wales Skills Fund.
- £250k – transferred to the journalism budget in 2024-25, taking the total available budget to support journalism projects this financial year to £350k.
- £150k – to support a Wales presence at the Frankfurt and London Book Fairs in 2024-25.

Terms of reference for the Broadcasting and Communications Advisory Body are currently in development.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JACK SARGEANT". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Jack Sargeant AS/MS

Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership
Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Sgiliau a Phartneriaeth Gymdeithasol

Agenda Item 4.3

Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Sgiliau a Phartneriaeth Gymdeithasol
Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eyn cyf/Our ref - CR0001

Delyth Jewell MS

Chair - Culture, Communications, Welsh Language,
Sport, and International Relations Committee

Senedd Cymru

Cardiff Bay

Cardiff

CF99 1SN

SeneddCulture@senedd.wales

8 October 2024

Dear Delyth,

Thank you for your request of 19 September as Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee regarding an update on stakeholder meetings to discuss the funding situation at the Welsh National Opera (WNO).

On 26 September I held a series of meetings with the Arts Council of Wales (ACW), the Musicians' Union and Equity, and WNO, to understand the nature of the situation facing the WNO. During these meetings I emphasised the Welsh Government wants to see WNO thrive and flourish as one of our major arts organisations. In my meeting with WNO I urged them to apply for the recently announced Resilience Fund being administered by the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) to protect jobs in the arts sector. The deadline for applications was at the end of September and I understand the WNO has applied seeking additional support.

My private office is currently in the process of confirming the details for the key stakeholder meeting - involving UK Government Ministers, Welsh Government Ministers and senior officials at ACW and Arts Council England – which will take place later this month. I will be happy to provide you with a further update following these discussions.

Yours sincerely,

Jack Sargeant AS/MS

Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership

Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Sgiliau a Phartneriaeth Gymdeithasol

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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 respondi

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Agenda Item 4.5



October 2024

Dear Delyth,

We are writing to you to highlight the barriers that remain in terms of accessing services and extracurricular activities for children and young people through the medium of Welsh, and to seek your support and guidance on this issue.

We do so in your capacity as Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language and International Relations Committee. We consider that this is relevant, and relates, to many aspects of your Committee's functions, including:

- oversight of the work of the Welsh Language Commissioner;
- language and education policy, and specifically the link to the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill in respect of activities outside the classroom, which support the objectives of the Bill; and
- leisure and sports policy, including your oversight of Sport Wales.

Our understanding is that the Welsh language standards include a standard for education courses. Nevertheless, more than eight years since Cymdeithas yr Iaith conducted research as the first Welsh language standards came into force in 2016, ([Cymdeithas yr Iaith research on swimming lessons](#)), there are barriers that continue to prevent children and young people from having swimming lessons and engaging in other activities through the medium of Welsh.

There are examples where children who receive Welsh medium education in Welsh schools are having swimming lessons and instrumental lessons, and are engaging in other sporting activities, through the medium of English. Not only does this confirm the notion that Welsh serves only as the language of the classroom; it also undermines Welsh education.

We would therefore be grateful if you could advise us on the way forward, and if you could consider undertaking an inquiry in this area, with a view to establishing, among other things:

- The extent to which the Commissioner's work in the area of sports and music activities has been adequate in protecting and enforcing the rights of Welsh

speakers. We note that the Commissioner told you in a pre-appointment hearing that it is important to ensure that children and young people have opportunities to use the Welsh language outside the classroom.

- The extent to which bodies such as Sport Wales, which is responsible for the Welsh Government's Free Swimming programme, are taking proactive steps to ensure that proactive provision is available in Welsh throughout Wales.
- The extent to which music and sporting provision is monitored to ensure that it is provided through the medium of Welsh.
- The extent to which school governing bodies use their influence, especially in Welsh-medium schools, to organise extracurricular activities and demand that they be provided in Welsh; or whether pupils are obliged to receive English provision or go without.

We would be willing to have further discussions on this matter and our request.

Sincerely,

Cymdeithas yr Iaith Welsh Language Rights Group

Agenda Item 7

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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