

Agenda – Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Meeting Venue:	For further information contact:
External Location – Aberystwyth Arts Centre	Steve George
	Committee Clerk
Meeting date: 6 December 2018	0300 200 6565
Meeting time: 10.00	SeneddCWLC@assembly.wales

- 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**

- 2 Annual Scrutiny of National Library for Wales**
(10:00 – 11.00) (Pages 1 – 10)
Linda Tomos, National Librarian
Rhodri Glyn Thomas, President

- 3 Scrutiny of the Welsh Books Council**
(11:00 – 12:00) (Pages 11 – 16)
Helgard Krause, Chief Executive
Professor Wynn Thomas, Chairman

- 4 Paper(s) to note**
 - 4.1 Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2019–20: Further information from the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport**
(Pages 17 – 18)
 - 4.2 Reply from the Arts Council of Wales: National Theatre Wales**
(Pages 19 – 26)
 - 4.3 Letter from the Chair of Petitions Committee: Change the National Curriculum and teach Welsh history, from a Welsh perspective, in our Primary, Secondary and Sixth form Schools**
(Pages 27 – 28)



5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(vi) to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the following business:

6 Private debrief

End of meeting

Committee visit to The National Library of Wales (12:30 – 13:30)

Agenda Item 2

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Agenda Item 3

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Ein cyf/Our ref : MA - P/DET/4226/18

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Bethan Sayed AM
Chair
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
National Assembly for Wales

28 November 2018

Annwyl Bethan

Welsh Government Draft Budget 2019-20

I am writing to respond to the action points recorded by the Clerk, which arose from the Culture, Welsh Language & Communications Committee Draft Budget scrutiny session on 8 November 2018:

1. Decision-making and governance arrangements for the Media Budget, and the efforts made by the Welsh Government to promote the scheme and let potential applicants know that the fund is open for applications

There was a lengthy discussion at the beginning of the session about funding for film and TV production in Wales, in which my officials and I sought to address the Committee's uncertainty about the funding currently available. I made it clear that we are open for business as usual, and we have production funding routes available under the Economy Futures Fund which we are successfully using to bring productions to Wales. I acknowledged that the specific mechanism for the Media Investment Budget (MIB) is paused for the moment, but we are working hard to promote the sector in Wales and are using all available funding routes to do so.

Proposals for use of the remaining funding allocated to the MIB will be brought forward in due course for myself and the Cabinet Secretary to consider.

2. During the meeting the funding available for owners of listed properties was discussed. The Minister mentioned that the Welsh Government wants to make clear that there are opportunities for co-investment for owners. It was also said that owners with innovative funding proposals will be looked on favourably. Can you confirm if this has been communicated to owners of listed properties?

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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 focus of Cadw's grants for historic building repair schemes is on helping to save listed buildings which are at risk and/or stimulate regeneration opportunities and deliver benefits to Welsh communities. One of the ways in which these benefits can be provided is through skills development and access opportunities. Any investment is based on a partnership approach, with Cadw funding up to 50% of grant eligible works. We seek assurances on other available sources of funding through our application process and encourage innovative solutions and collaboration. Our eligibility criteria and requirements are set out on our website and this will be updated with information on the next round of funding shortly.

3. Please can you let us know how the £100,000 for start-up grants for journalists seeking to set up their own businesses in the hyperlocal sector will be allocated and who is responsible for the budget?

The Welsh Government has committed to providing £100k in 2018-19 and £100k in 2019-20 to support journalists seeking to set up their own business in hyperlocal news. This is additional to the existing support for businesses through Business Wales. This funding is within the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport's portfolio, and we will be considering the administration of the fund soon.

Yours sincerely



Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Twristiaeth a Chwaraeon
Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport

Wednesday 28 November 2018

Bethan Sayed AM
Chair
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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Deur Bethan

National Theatre Wales

Thank you for your letter of 22 November on the above. As you say, the artistic decisions affecting individual arts organisations are matters for the Arts Council, and I'm grateful for your careful approach in this matter.

We're fully engaged in the current discussions. We maintain regular contact with all our Arts Portfolio Wales organisations, but we also have the ability, as in this case, to devote more time if circumstances demand. We also have well-established links with individual artists and part of our role is to be aware of their issues and concerns.

As you'll have seen from correspondence forwarded to you, those issues are complex and capable of different interpretation. I tried to reflect some of this in an article published earlier in the month in "Wales Arts Review". I attach a copy to this letter for your information.

National Theatre Wales' has a particular brief to present innovative and adventurous work that challenges preconception and provokes debate. This can happen with large-scale public events (such as the hugely popular "City of the Unexpected") or with the more local and specific (as "We're Still Here" did in highlighting the impact on a community of changes in the steel industry). This is brave and difficult work which a National Theatre is ideally placed to tackle. And it is our job to try and create the overall environment in which bold, high quality work can flourish.

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Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg, ni fydd gaisiau drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.
We welcome correspondences in Welsh and English, corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay.

As a national company, National Theatre Wales carries a weight of expectation that isn't experienced by other theatre producers in Wales. For perfectly sound reasons, everyone will look to National Theatre Wales to be 'their' company. Not every piece of work produced by National Theatre Wales succeeds, but much of it does and is deserving of support. Equally, there are aspects of their work that could be done differently, and we need to listen carefully to the concerns being voiced by writers and actors.

National Theatre Wales currently faces many demands. It will be honest, respectful debate that will help achieve a resolution. You note with concern that matters are being played out so visibly in the public domain. I would agree. This is why we're working with a range of people, including National Theatre Wales, to facilitate what we hope will be a more productive consensus. I have met – and continue to meet – all of those involved. These meetings have been positive and constructive and I sense a real desire to find an enduring solution. That is what we want to achieve.

You asked for information on two matters:

1. Arts Council funding to National Theatre Wales in 2018/19 is £1,606,405.
2. I would be reluctant at this stage to reveal future plans. The company has exciting ideas for next year, and they have a major programme announcement planned for January. As this is a key moment for the company, I wouldn't want to undermine such an important occasion by revealing plans that are, for the moment, under embargo. I hope you understand.

Finally, I would welcome an opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss matters further.

*Yours sincerely,
Nick*

Nick Capaldi
Chief Executive

Arts Council of Wales Chief Executive, **Nick Capaldi**, offers a personal reflection on recent criticisms of National Theatre Wales.

Passionate and robust discussion usually strengthens and enlivens the arts, but recent criticisms of National Theatre Wales (NTW) point to something altogether deeper that requires careful consideration. As a national company, NTW would be the first to accept that scrutiny comes with the territory. Everyone's got an opinion. But the depth of the criticism expressed in an open letter to the National Theatre Chair from some 40 of Wales' most prominent writers clearly hurt. This has been followed by a letter in a similar tone from Welsh actors. These are all people firmly committed to theatre in Wales. So why does NTW seem to be so at odds with the very people who one would normally expect to be amongst the company's closest supporters?

The writers have a clear list of concerns – about NTW's programme choice, type of theatre, connectedness to Wales and what's perceived to be a reluctance to feature Welsh talent. Information provided by NTW has sought to offer a more rounded view of the company's output and the debate continues.

Of course, there will always be two sides to every story. Even so, the basis of the concerns can't be ignored and we need to get to the root cause of those issues that are causing the greatest discontent.

I won't repeat the various arguments here – they've been thoroughly aired elsewhere – but matters came to a head in an open meeting last month in the NTW offices.

I joined NTW board members and staff along with a representative group of writers. Discussion was frank and direct. All participants in that meeting agreed to maintain the confidentiality that the occasion demanded, so it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the detail. This doesn't mean, however, that the Arts Council doesn't have a view on matters overall.

Until now we've kept our counsel. We know that there are those who've questioned why, given the continuing debate, the Arts Council of Wales hasn't spoken out before. Our reasons will seem old fashioned.

We remain stubbornly attached to the principle of the "arm's length", where funded companies are empowered to pursue their artistic ambitions free from the threat of bureaucratic interference. It would be a sad day indeed if I, or anyone at the Arts Council, started dictating the plays that NTW should choose or the artists it should work with. That isn't to say, of course, that we don't take the closest interest in what's happening. As stewards of public funds we're expected to have an opinion on the way that taxpayers' money is spent and a keen interest in public value. But we start from a position of trust, a recognition of NTW's successes (of which there have been many), and an inclination to believe in the company's ambition to be inclusive and responsive.

In setting out the Arts Council's view, one has to remember that we fought hard to create NTW in the first place. Our inherent support for NTW is a logical reflection of that history. We had felt for some time that a new organisation for English language theatre with an innovative and radical temperament would bring much-needed profile and impetus to the wider development of the theatre sector. And so it proved.

The fillip that NTW gave to theatre in Wales was palpable, and NTW productions such as the Port Talbot “Passion” or “Coriolan/us” in the aircraft hangar at St Athan remain amongst my most memorable experiences in a lifetime of theatre-going. And the timely production of “We’re Still Here” did exactly what NTW is there to do – putting relevant, challenging work at the heart of national events.

An attachment to time and place matters. But the true worth of any arts organisation derives from the creativity that drives its vision and the collaborators who give shape to its work. It’s the creative professionals – the writers, actors, directors, designers – who imbue that work with character, authenticity and relevance. Because it’s the artist, in all disciplines, addressing the world in its hopes and disasters, in its changes and disruption, who reinvents cultural expression appropriate for the times.

This, then, was our founding vision for NTW – cultural expression appropriate for the times. This didn’t mean a national theatre that mimicked some fanciful imitation of 19th century state-building. And unencumbered by a building, NTW was free to build partnerships where it wanted, across all parts of Wales.

There’s been much discussion about what a ‘national’ company should be and, indeed at times, whether they’re needed at all. For the record, it’s our view that healthy, vibrant national organisations are important. They matter in and of themselves, but also for what they signify. We might regret that it’s so, but for many people – especially those outside Wales – the reputation of our national organisations is a barometer of the strength and vibrancy of our country’s arts. But as I’ve said before, to be ‘national’ is a privilege, not a right.

It's a designation that brings with it a particular obligation to be an exemplar in every way: creating work of national and international significance, but rooted unequivocally in the country of its birth; showing leadership in developing the arts in Wales; nurturing the partnerships and relationships that will develop new artists; building the arts audiences of the future.

Yes, we want our national organisations to achieve the highest artistic standards. And we want them to succeed, nationally and internationally. But we've also been clear in our advice to the company that it must think carefully about the nature of its umbilical relationship with Wales – the tap-root to that native talent that gives the company at its best its context and character. This, I think, is a large part of what the current debate is about.

So where are we now?

Nothing that I've said here will come as a surprise to NTW – these things have been regularly discussed over the years. We haven't always agreed, but that's fine. It's never good in the arts for relationships to get too cosy. But I respect the energy and commitment that drives the company, and I believe that given time, space and support Artistic Director, Kully Thiarai, will set out a compelling vision that is bold, thoughtful and engaging.

In the meantime, let's hang on to the deeply held conviction from all concerned that the right answers must be found. I sense a genuine desire to find sensible and achievable solutions. This is certainly what the Arts Council wants.

Reflecting on recent events and what I've heard, it seems clear to me that three matters are central to moving forward as we support the company in expressing its core identity and purpose.

First, NTW needs to revisit the question of 'mix' – in the rich range of what it offers it needs to have 'marquee' events that can attract substantial audiences, wherever this work is staged. And it also needs to have shows with strong texts and persuasive narrative arcs, whether newly written or classic texts re-appropriated.

Second, and talking of text, it needs to continue the process that it has started – rebuilding the relationships at its core with those Welsh writers and creative talents who have felt compelled to speak out. Their criticisms might have been trenchantly expressed, but these are serious people who care very deeply about NTW and who want desperately to see the company thrive well into the future.

And third, NTW needs to look carefully at its marketing and the care with which it nurtures and develops audiences. The success of the company's large-scale spectacles such as the Port Talbot "Passion" and "City of the Unexpected" speak for themselves. However (unsurprisingly), not everything has been a winner. A handful of people for a performance, no matter how meaningful the engagement, is difficult to justify. And failures here may simply have derived from having too many small shows to market effectively.

None of this implies a withdrawal from the core and exciting mission of NTW to open up new possibilities about what theatre can be. Neither does it mean a

lessening of the Arts Council's support for the company. But there's more talking to be done.

Trust and confidence need to be mended on all sides. But get it right, and we might soon be able to celebrate afresh what NTW at its best has always been – that most vital of creative forces, enlivening our nation's cultural life through its ability to reveal those dimensions of human experience that inspire and excite us. That has to be a prize worth working for.

Nick Capaldi

12 November 2018

Bethan Sayed AM
Chair, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

29 November 2018

Dear Bethan

Petition P-05-799 Change the National Curriculum and teach Welsh history, from a Welsh perspective, in our Primary, Secondary and Sixth form Schools

The Petitions Committee has been considering the above petition since February 2018.

We considered the petition most recently at our meeting on 13 November when we discussed recent correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, as well as the recent announcement that the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee intends to conduct an inquiry into the 'Teaching of Welsh history, culture and heritage' in the near future.

In light of this, Members agreed that I should write to you to provide the evidence gathered on the petition to date so that it can inform this work. A brief outline of this follows:

- Correspondence received from the petitioner, Dr Elin Jones and the Welsh Government is available here:
<http://senedd.assembly.wales/ielssueDetails.aspx?Ild=20931&Opt=3>
- An evidence session was held with the petitioner, Elfed Wyn Jones, and Dr Elin Jones on 15 May 2018:
<http://record.assembly.wales/Meeting/4756#A43429>
- An evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Education on 17 July 2018: <http://record.assembly.wales/Meeting/4760#A44426>

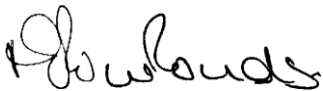


- Most recently, the Committee requested and received a list of the schools who are working on the development of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE):
<http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s80511/24.10.18%20Correspondence%20-%20Cabinet%20Secretary%20for%20Education%20to%20the%20Chair%20Annexe.pdf>

I hope this information is helpful to you in progressing your inquiry. In anticipation of the detailed scrutiny that your Committee intends to give to this issue, Members have also agreed to close the petition at this stage.

If you would like further information on any aspect of the work undertaken by the Petitions Committee, please feel free to contact me or the clerking team.

Yours sincerely



David J Rowlands AM
Chair

