



Ein cyf/Our ref MA/DET/2237/20

Helen Mary Jones MS  
Chair  
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff CF99 1NA

9 July 2020

Dear Helen Mary Jones,

### **Report on the Impact of the COVID 19 Outbreak on the Arts Sector**

Thank you for your letter dated 4 June.

This Inquiry has highlighted the financial challenges that our arts sector is facing, and the evidence gathered by the Committee has been most helpful in clarifying the areas where extra support might be needed.

I therefore welcome this report.

My response to the recommendations are below.

***Recommendation 1.*** *The Welsh Government should lobby the UK Government to urge that:*

- *the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme continues beyond May 2020 and the Job Retention Scheme continues beyond October 2020; and*
- *the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme is revised to ensure no freelance workers fall through the gaps in eligibility for the scheme.*

These initiatives have provided vital support to the sector and those individuals relying on them for their livelihoods. The Welsh Government, through the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd and the Minister for the Economy, Transport and North Wales, has made representations to the Chancellor of the Exchequer urging the UK Government to extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employed Income Support Scheme. With an extension to these schemes now seemingly unlikely, the Welsh Government welcomes the recent announcement by the UK Government of £1.57 billion to protect cultural and arts

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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.

institutions across the UK, which includes an additional £59m consequential to the Welsh Government. We accept the recommendation.

***Recommendation 2.*** *The Welsh Government should establish an events and entertainment working group to:*

- *liaise with the UK Government's Cultural Renewal Task force;*
- *draw up guidance on reopening for live venues, performers and related businesses to be published by 1 August 2020; and*
- *recognise that our major arts organisations may not return to profitability for many years and be prepared to extend the necessary public funding to ensure their survival.*

We are prepared to accept this recommendation but within our established approaches which we have developed to respond to this crisis in an open and consultative manner. As a Culture, Sport and Tourism portfolio our engagement process started in mid-April with a large virtual conference involving a range of stakeholders. Engagement has continued in a range of settings throughout this period with the Minister for International Relations & Welsh Language and myself, for example, meeting the five sponsored bodies within the portfolio, which includes Arts Council Wales, on a regular basis. Discussions across the sector have been very fluid, both at Ministerial and official level, along with regular dialogue with the UK Government. Engagement will continue to guide future activities as we emerge further from lockdown and into recovery.

Working groups have been created to inform and support the development of guidance for our sectors and to inform the 21 day review Coronavirus regulations process. Our guidance will need to evolve as restrictions are eased and further guidance will be required for live venues, such as theatres and concert halls. We will aim to provide additional guidance at the earliest opportunity.

We fully recognise the longer-term challenges facing the sector. Funding initiatives, such as the Job Retention Scheme and the Economic Resilience Fund, have provided a lifeline to the sector but will not be enough over the long-term to protect jobs and ensure our arts sectors can thrive once again. We will continue to work with our arts sectors to ensure that support is designed and targeted in the most effective way possible.

***Recommendation 3.*** *In order to renew and sustain the sector the Welsh Government should begin conversations with representatives from the arts sector to set a long term policy direction which is sustainable, inclusive and accessible.*

We accept the recommendation. Before the current crisis I had commissioned a review of our future priorities for the culture and sport sectors. That work was already underway when the lockdown and the wider crisis intervened. The Welsh Government will be seeking to resume this work but now with an even greater emphasis on engaging with our partners and stakeholders to explore how we can work together to emerge safely and positively from the crisis and set a positive path for the future. I am committed to making a statement later this year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elis-Thomas'.

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