



Ein cyf/Our ref DET/361/20

Helen Mary Jones MS  
Chair  
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications  
Committee

27 October 2020

Dear Helen Mary

## **FURTHER INFORMATION ON SUPPORT FOR THE CULTURE, SPORT AND TOURISM PORTFOLIO**

Thank you for your letter of 29 September which I received on 5 October in which you ask for some further detail on some of the areas we covered in the Committee's session of 17 September.

Thank you for your acknowledgement of the invaluable role that Creative Wales is already playing in terms of providing information and support to the sector. I will answer the other points you raise in the order you have set them out.

### **Funding**

The Welsh Government announced a £53m Cultural Recovery Fund in July to provide essential support to theatres, music venues, heritage sites, museums, galleries and independent cinemas who have all seen a dramatic loss of revenue due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I released a Written Statement last week providing an update to members on this fund. A plan is in place for the evaluation of the programme which will report at the end of the scheme.

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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.

In announcing this funding in July we were very clear that this was additional support to the sector following the £18m package that was announced in early April across my wider portfolio and the other funding support that has been available, such as the Economic Resilience Fund.

We are aware of the high demand for the Cultural Recovery Fund, particularly with regards the recently launched freelance fund, and are exploring options to secure additional resource to meet this demand. We continue to work with all our stakeholders to support the sector through this extremely difficult period and funding for our national institutions will be kept under review as part of ongoing financial management as we progress through the year.

### **Access to heritage sites**

*1) You asked for recent figures showing what percentage of the usual visitor numbers can be accommodated – and have visited – Cadw sites and the National Museum Wales venues since the lockdown restrictions were eased.*

Cadw began the phased reopening of our staffed sites on 4 August and this took place throughout August and September. Each monument has a different capacity due to differing sizes and layouts. Due to the Welsh Government Covid regulations, the actual visitor number that could be safely accommodated at staffed sites was initially set at 30% of the average daily visitor number for the site for the same month last year. This was in line with expectations across the heritage sector.

Visitor numbers are controlled by the introduction of online ticketing. The limits on numbers have been raised incrementally on a site by site basis as sites have developed and become more confident with their precautions.

The number of visitors in August 2020 was 48,898. This is a decline of 78% on August 2019, which saw 218,190 visitors. This was not surprising as no single site was open for the whole of the month and we were unable to open some sites at all.

The number of visitors in September 2020 was 49,078. This is a decline of 57% on September 2019, which saw 114,828 visitors. The majority of our sites were open throughout September but with reduced opening hours.

Some staffed Cadw sites (including some of the larger monuments) have now shut down again due to local restrictions introduced in September and October.

*2) You asked whether access to Cadw sites and National Museum Wales venues is being actively managed - that is, is it possible to give priority to certain groups such as school children? If so, how have you identified priority groups and how was priority access managed?*

Access to ticketed sites is managed by a booking system. Visitors need to prebook tickets either online or by telephone. Cadw continues to offer reduced price entry to the following groups: junior (age 5-17), senior (age 65+), disabled, NUS students, veterans and armed forces members. Group visits are limited to a maximum of 30 people, in line with Welsh Government policy.

Cadw has always worked to accommodate group visits from schools, clubs, organisations, and tour operators.

Pre-pandemic, educational visits to the sites were numerous, but there is now little demand from schools. Cadw's sites reopened in August when schools were closed, and during September schools were adjusting to being open again and adapting to new ways of operating. This no longer includes regular excursions to external sites.

However, school children are being prioritised in terms of online access to Cadw sites and resources. Schools are developing new and creative approaches to teaching. Cadw's Lifelong Learning Team is responding to this by prioritising new resources for schools including :

- online Skype session with a costumed character in Plas Mawr for over 100 children who usually visit our sites, together with accompanying worksheets and activities;
- sponsoring the online Children's Festival of Welsh History <http://www.gwylhanes.cymru/index-en.php>. The films, which include BSL, will be available on the website for a year;
- creating more digital resources and activities such as Minecraft, filmed walkthroughs and 360° films. Filming has already taken place at Denbigh castle;
- creating the 15 minute heritage digital mission to inspire schools to investigate their immediate heritage; this is being piloted with families and schools in the Gwynedd Fusion area;
- Conwy Castle opened its doors to a small group of vulnerable families whilst the castle was closed to the public over the summer. This provided a safe place for staff to catch up with families at a social distance and for vulnerable families to have some 'free play' time in a safe environment;
- launching Digital Open Doors in September, allowing people to visit Neolithic tombs, castles, abbeys and ironworks virtually.

*3) We discussed the drop in visitor numbers to heritage sites and museums. Are you able to provide us with recent figures showing what percentage of the usual visitor numbers can be accommodated – and have visited – Cadw sites and the National Museum Wales venues since the lockdown restrictions were eased?*

NMW reduced the overall capacity for each museum to allow for social distancing. Each museum has different physical context that has to be factored into this but on average it meant revised Covid capacity was around 30% of normal as NMW has also been operating on reduced days. In addition, NMW had phased opening between 4 August (when the grounds of St Fagans opened) and 3 September. Up until late September (when NMW reclosed due to local restrictions some of the internal offers such as NRLM, NMC<NWMS and BP), NMW has under these reduced operations, around 40K visitors, which is around 43% of the maximum capacity as an average across all our museums of the maximum possible Covid capacity. Some museums had around 70% take up others averaged around 35%. NMW also saw fluctuations in levels of visiting when the summer holidays finished as well as usual factors such as weather.

### **Journalism and local media**

A vibrant media sector is an essential component of a modern democratic society, and media organisations play a crucial role informing people across Wales. The global COVID-19 pandemic in particular has highlighted the importance of access to accurate local news and information and brought into sharp focus the challenges the media sector is facing. I have asked Creative Wales to explore options for strengthening the media presence in Wales. This work will include engagement with stakeholders in the industry and consider both English and Welsh language print and digital media. The newly formed Creative Wales Non-executive Board will play a key part in this work. We will use the advice of the newly formed Creative Wales Non-executive Board to inform this work.

I have asked officials to present their findings to me by the end of this financial year with a view to introducing support, as agreed through this exercise and in the context of appropriate government intervention, in 2021. As yet, no decisions have been taken on the budget for this as the level of financial commitment will be dependent on key findings, decisions taken on the form any support might take and in line with wider decisions on budget allocation.

### **Community Radio**

Community radio stations are an important part of the broadcasting landscape, helping to ensure people in Wales have access to news and information of on what is going on in their communities. We will continue to provide support to community radio stations through a range of business support mechanisms, including through Business Wales support. We will explore opportunities to maximise access to these WG funding schemes, and will work with Ofcom ensure as many eligible community radio stations as possible benefit from their Community Radio Fund.

I hope you will find this further information helpful

Yours sincerely,

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

**Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Diwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth  
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism