Dear Dafydd,

Welsh Government Draft Budget 2021-2022

Thank you for attending the meeting of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee meeting on 14 January 2021 to discuss the Welsh Government’s Draft Budget 2021-2022.

During the meeting you agreed to provide further details on a number of issues. I would be grateful if you could answer the following questions by 2 March to inform the Plenary debate on the Draft Budget.

**Funding for the arts sector**

You said in the meeting that you will not be undertaking analysis of the way in which the Cultural Recovery Fund was administered at this time. Jason Thomas also said that officials have ‘built in detailed evaluation into the cultural recovery fund’ and will be ‘going out to tender... to evaluate that product’. Please can you let the Committee know:

- the criteria used to allocate funding;
- which organisations received funding from the Fund; did you take in to account the membership of the group seeking funding? E.g. protected characteristics.
- when this evaluation will be carried out;
- how stakeholders will be involved;
- when you expect to report the findings and
- how this evaluation will be used to inform future funding for the sector?

In your paper, you write ‘Our intention is to provide additional funding for recovery for 2021-22 but the scale and the approach has not been determined at this early stage.’ Please can you give the Committee an estimate of when the decision will be taken on the additional funding? To what extent is this additional funding dependent on increased funding from the UK Government?

**Restarting cultural activity**

You said during the meeting that you were not willing to set a date for when we can ‘join with each other in cultural life again’ because ‘We literally do not know how a virus behaves, and that’s been proved already by the research that we’ve had’.

It is understandable that the uncertainty caused by the pandemic prevents any concrete plans for restarting events and reopening music venues, theatres and museums. However, those responsible for large scale
events, such as live music festivals, need a long lead in time for planning. In order to give greater clarity to those working in the sector, can you outline the criteria on which the Welsh Government will be basing decisions on restarting activity?

Have you been having conversations with the sector on the criteria used to determine reopening?

Given that you do not anticipate cultural activity to restart after March, what long term plans does the Welsh Government, Creative Wales and the Arts Council have for ensuring skilled workers and viable businesses are supported in the medium term and that the arts are an integral part of the Welsh Government’s key priorities for reconstruction and recovery?

Are you speaking to other Welsh Government departments about redeploying those who work in the sector to other work opportunities while venues remain shut?

**CADW capital investment projects**

Please can you provide greater detail on the capital investment projects by CADW which are currently being progressed and those that are planned to go ahead, with estimated completion dates? Given the pressure on funding, can you also list the projects which have had to be paused?

**The National Library of Wales and the National Museum Wales**

Please can you give greater detail on how the National Museum has ‘reorganised their senior management team, so that commercial activity is much more mainstreamed’, as you explained in the meeting? You said that the Museum’s ‘priorities are much more clearly related to its activity in the private sector and the third sector and its outside partnership activity’.

How do these priorities relate to the key performance indicators the Museum are required to report on?

What outputs are you expecting from the Museum to demonstrate they are achieving improved commercial activity and what timescales are these based on?

As you know, the Committee has been looking at the recommendations from the Tailored Review of the National Library for Wales. The Tailored Review said:

‘It is important to ensure that the NLW is financially sustainable. Both the Welsh Government and the Library acknowledge that this has been difficult in recent years, partly due to the financial pressures the Welsh Government has been under, and the Government’s inability to make longer-term commitments for more than one year.’

I note that the revenue funding for the Library remains flat from the 2020-21 final budget to the 2021-22 draft budget, at £11.1 million. During the meeting, Jason Thomas said ‘we will continue to work really closely with the National Library to see where efficiencies can be made, where they can try and come in on budget that we set out for them, but it is extremely challenging’.

As a committee we have been contacted by many people, who have conveyed concern about the financial situation of the National Library. For instance, the FDA has written to me about potential job losses. They write:

‘The Tailored Review of LlGC, commissioned by the Welsh Government, recognises that the current funding model is not sustainable. Indeed, as things stand, the scale of LlGC’s deficit puts at risk up to 30 jobs or 13% of the workforce.’

And go on to say:
‘FDA Wales has also called on the Welsh Government to follow over a decade of cuts to grant in aid (GIA) with a new, and sustainable, funding model. A funding model based on a substantial increase in GIA. A funding model to support Welsh culture and protect Welsh jobs.’

I am also aware of a petition to the Senedd on a ‘Call for fair funding for the National Library of Wales by the Welsh Government’.

In response to a query about the timing of the Welsh Government’s response to the Tailored Review your officials have provided this reply:

‘Welsh Government officials from Public Bodies Unit and The Partnership Team have been in regular contact with the Chief Executive of The National Library to discuss The Library’s response to the Tailored Review recommendations. The regular contact will continue on a monthly basis.

The Library has developed a formal response to the recommendation and wishes to adopt this as an action plan; Welsh Government officials will feed into the action plan where it is in the lead.

The Plan is very much linked to the long-term strategy of the Library and will be monitored regularly, by both the Board of Trustees and the Welsh Government.

The Action Plan will be formally agreed by the end of February 2021.’

Given the worries of those working for and with the Library, and the sheer number of people who have signed the circulating petition on the matter, I would like to stress the need for urgency in agreeing this action plan with the Library. In the meantime, please can you reassure the Committee that there will be no redundancies at the National Library for Wales as a result of the action plan? As I am sure you will agree, this National institution is of utmost importance, and must be supported as such.

Legacy reporting

In order to inform our legacy report I would be grateful if you could set out how the £9 million remaining in the central reserves will be spent on architecture and adaptations to the ‘between four and eight centres’ which will make up the devolved model of the national contemporary art gallery?

Please can you provide an update on the progress of the steering group for the National Football Museum?

In order to inform the work of the committee and the Plenary debate on the Draft Budget I would be grateful if you could respond by 2 March.

I will be copying this letter to the Chair of the Finance Committee to inform its scrutiny of the Draft Budget.

Yours sincerely,

Bethan Sayed MS
Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee