

Dawn Bowden MS

Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport and Chief Whip

Welsh Government

Dyddiad | Date: 6 December 2021

Pwnc | Subject: **Recruitment to the post of Chief Executive of the Arts Council of Wales**

Dear Dawn,

The Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee heard from arts organisations about the challenges they are facing at its meeting on 24 November.

During the meeting the representatives told the Committee of the ongoing difficulties they face from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it has had on their commercial income. The Committee also heard from the Arts Council of Wales ('the Arts Council') about its plans to restart the delayed investment review and take account of the recommendations from the widening engagement reports.

Clearly, the Arts Council is facing considerable challenges in delivering its core business and meeting demand for support from arts organisations at a time when the Chief Executive post remains vacant, and the Committee recognises the pressure they are under and how hard they are working. It is understandable that recruiting the best candidate for the job is not easy when the COVID-19 regulations mean that meeting in person is restricted. Having said this, the situation is becoming critical for organisations awaiting funding, and the urgency to provide leadership is growing each day. Please can you set out what support you have provided to the Arts Council to help them recruit a new Chief Executive, whether financial or otherwise?

Could you also please outline how your officials have been assisting the leadership team during the interregnum? For instance, have your officials provided advice on recruitment learned from similar exercises, or recommended that they hire a commercial recruitment consultant?

Only when the enforced lull in international activity as a result of the pandemic ends will the full impact of Brexit be felt. It is important that the Arts Council is in a strong position to support businesses to develop international relationships. In order to speed up the process of recruitment, have you set the Arts Council a deadline to fill the vacant Chief Executive post?

The need to support the sector to overcome the impact of the pandemic and, in particular, the need to attract freelancers back into the industry following the instability to their livelihoods means the pressure to distribute financial support will remain high. If there is a further round of Cultural Recovery funding, or similar support for the sector, do you think that the Arts Council has the capacity to manage this without additional support?



I would be grateful to know how the Welsh Government is addressing this situation which is having a very real impact on those who are struggling financially and are looking to the Arts Council for help. Unless their needs are met, there is a risk that talented individuals and well-loved cultural venues may not be part of Wales' cultural life in future.

I am copying this letter to the Phil George, Chair of the Arts Council. Given the time sensitive nature of these questions, I would be grateful for a reply to this letter before Christmas.

Yours sincerely,



Delyth Jewell MS

Chair

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