

12 December 2022

Delyth Jewell MS
Chair
Culture, Communication, Welsh Language,
Sport, and International Relations Committee

Cc: Dawn Bowden MS
Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip, Welsh Government
Jack Sargeant MS
Chair, Petitions Committee, Senedd

Dear Delyth

Re: Future of St David's Hall

Thank you for your letter of the 5th December in which you raise a number of questions regarding the proposals for St David's Hall.

There have been a number of discussions regarding this matter which have included representatives of Welsh Government. Since the receipt of your letter, further information regarding the proposals for its future, including a statement from Cardiff City Council, have been published. Therefore, I have responded to each of your questions within this context.

1. What discussions have you had with Cardiff Council regarding the future of St David's Hall?

We have had 2 meetings with Cardiff City Council, on the 1st December and 9th Dec. Both meetings were attended by representatives of Arts Council of Wales, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Cardiff Singer of the World, BBC NOW and Cardiff City Council. Academy Music Group (AMG) and the independent classical music programmer also attended the meeting on the 9th December.

2. Can you provide an update on the meeting that was scheduled to take place on 1 December 2022 between the Arts Council and Cardiff Council?

This information is included in the recent [public statement](#) issued by Cardiff City Council. The Council has also published a series of [Questions and Answers](#) on their own website, providing additional detail.

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Swyddfeydd Lleol/Local Offices:

Caerdydd/Cardiff, Bae Colwyn/Colwyn Bay, Caerfyrddin/Carmarthen
Rhif Elusen Gofrestredig/Registered Charity Number: 1034245

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

3. Have Cardiff Council asked you for any further support in ensuring St David's Hall will be run by a public or non-profit organisation?

No, we have not received such a request from Cardiff City Council.

4. Have you explored possible different models of funding for the future of St David's Hall with, or without, Cardiff Council?

No, as St David's Hall is not a current Portfolio member, we do not have the required information to consider different funding model options.

5. Have you made any assessment of how much it would cost to support St David's Hall as a standalone organisation i.e. how much grant funding it would need? If yes, how much would it cost? If no, are you able to provide such an assessment?

We do not have detailed information on the costs of the capital requirements for St David's Hall. We understand the proposed deal will offer significant capital investment over the period of the lease to upgrade existing facilities. We also understand that AMG will be taking over all liabilities in this respect, along with the revenue contribution of Cardiff City Council in the context of the hall currently operating at a loss of £1m per annum. Without detailed sight of the current business plan it would not be prudent for us to speculate on projected running costs.

6. What assessment has the Arts Council made of the provision of world class classical music facilities in Wales? If St David's Hall were not able to fulfil a function as the "National Concert Hall", what alternative provision would Wales have?

The provision of classical music is an important part of the arts infrastructure in Wales, both within our current Lottery Funding programmes and our Arts Portfolio Wales. St David's Hall is the largest capacity concert hall or theatre in the whole of Wales. Only Wales Millennium Centre and Venue Cymru are comparable in terms of numbers of seats. It's one of only 2 '+1500 seater' venues in Wales, Wales Millennium Centre being the other.

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|------|
| Swansea Grand Theatre | Swansea | 1026 |
| The New Theatre | Cardiff | 1144 |
| William Aston Hall | Wrexham | 1200 |
| Venue Cymru | Llandudno | 1450 |
| Wales Millennium Centre | Cardiff | 1800 |
| St David's Hall | Cardiff | 1977 |

7. How will the Arts Council's investment review be considering the provision of world-class classical music?

As part of the Investment Review assessment process it will be considered alongside other music and artforms, particularly when we reflect on the balancing factors which will play a key part in our Investment Review assessment process in terms of ensuring fairness of funding distribution across geography and artforms.

The full details for Investment Review applications will be published on 12 December 2022.

8. What financial support has the Arts Council given to St David’s Hall in the last five financial years, and is any support planned in this financial year?

Since 2014, St David’s Hall has received nearly £2million in funding from the Arts Council of Wales. This is detailed below:

| Project Title | Grant Scheme | Grant Amount | Approval date |
|---|--|--------------|---------------|
| | Organisations - Programme support for venues and galleries | 94300 | 21/03/2014 |
| | Organisations - Programme support for venues and galleries | 98750 | 20/03/2015 |
| | Organisations - Programme support for venues and galleries | 97000 | 18/03/2016 |
| | Organisations - Programme support for venues and galleries | 98000 | 17/03/2017 |
| | Organisations - Programme support for venues and galleries | 98500 | 16/03/2018 |
| Classical Music at St David's Hall (2019/20) | Pre Oct 2019 / Cyn Hydref 2019 | 89294 | 28/03/2019 |
| St David's Hall Orchestral Music Programme | Large | 99738 | 07/02/2020 |
| COVID-19: Support for Arts Organisations (Revenue) | COVID-19 Cultural Recovery Fund (Revenue) | 1208710 | 16/10/2020 |
| COVID-19: Support for Arts Organisations (Capital) | COVID-19 Cultural Recovery Fund (Capital) | 29227 | 29/09/2020 |
| St Davids Hall Orchestral and Community Music Programme | Create | 62219 | 21/10/2022 |

In 2022, their most recent application was submitted after the classical concert series had already been advertised - tickets were on sale for various events before we received their application. Therefore, as we are unable to support costs already incurred prior to the application assessment and decision, we agreed to support them, but with a reduced amount to cover the costs of the engagement activity with the classical concert series.

Prior to 2014, St David's Hall received on average around £82k per annum as a Revenue Funded Organisation.

In addition to the above funding awarded to St David's Hall, since 2018 we have also provided in excess of £800k in grant funding support to Arts Active, a registered charity that supports education, community audience engagement projects in the Cardiff and South Wales region. The Arts Active Trust is based and closely allied to St David's Hall and the New Theatre in Cardiff.

We understand the proposals seek to protect Arts Active and safeguard its staff under the employment of Cardiff City Council whereas other Council staff of St David's Hall will TUPE across to AMG on the same terms they currently have with the Council.

We wish to note we have not received any written correspondence to confirm the proposals other than that which is already in the public domain and referenced in this letter. However, we understand that the current programme of activity in classical music and community is to be protected, in particular with the 60 days guarantee from Sept – May.

AMG is open to continuing discussions with the Classical Music Stakeholders Group on an ongoing basis.

With regards to acoustic considerations for St David's Hall, the original company Sandy Brown is advising and are providing assurances that any proposed new seating arrangement in the Hall will not impact negatively on the existing acoustics and the proposed changes are to the lower stalls only.

Ongoing maintenance and refurbishment will be scheduled to ensure the programme of events will not be affected.

Accessibility and access issues have been raised and AMG have a relationship with Attitude is Everything who will advise on signage and access requirements. We are still awaiting clarity on whether our own Hynt scheme could play a part in supporting access requirements.

The Box office function will be supported by Ticketmaster, and we have asked for clarity on the provision of a Welsh language service.

The current situation is still developing as conversations on the proposals for the future of St David's Hall are still ongoing and options are being explored and tested, particularly within the context of the current financial climate and budgetary pressures.

The Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee will examine the cabinet report at a public meeting at 5.00pm, Monday December 12th in Committee Room 4, County Hall. Elected Members will test proposals to understand their rationale and evidence base, the Council's requirements and anticipated outcomes, and the next steps. The meeting can also be viewed on a live stream here [Home - Cardiff Council Webcasting \(public-i.tv\)](#) All scrutiny published papers are available

to view here [Agenda for Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee on Monday, 12th December, 2022, 5.00 pm : Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

An extraordinary meeting of Cardiff Council has been called for 4.30pm on Friday, December 9, to debate a motion on St David's Hall. You can view the agenda here [Agenda for Council on Friday, 9th December, 2022, 4.30 pm : Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#) and the motion and any amendments to that motion (which may be published closer to the date of the meeting). You will also be able to view a livestream of the meeting on the day via the same link.

Cardiff Council Cabinet will take the report on St David's Hall at its public meeting in County Hall from 2pm on Thursday, December 15th. The meeting's agenda, reports and papers will be available to view closer to the date here [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 15th December, 2022, 2.00 pm : Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#) where you will also be able to view a live stream of the meeting on the day.

We acknowledge and share your wish to see the safeguarding the activities of St David's Hall and the environs, and will continue to contribute to the ongoing discussions and development of proposals to help ensure this is achieved.

In the meantime, I hope you find this update useful.

Yours sincerely



Dafydd Rhys
Chief Executive
Arts Council of Wales