

Dawn Bowden MS

Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief

Whip

Welsh Government

28 November 2022

Re: Closure of Corgi Cymru

Dear Dawn,

At our meeting on 17 November 2022, we considered a letter that was sent to you (and shared with us) on 20 October 2022 by the National Union of Journalists regarding the recent closure of Corgi Cymru.

We are of the view that media plurality is important. The role the media play in holding those in power accountable for their actions is a fundamental tenet of a free, just and civil society. Wales has a limited number of news outlets in comparison with other nations in the UK; only a handful of these are Welsh language titles. This means that the Welsh Language Digital News Service grant is vitally important in supporting the development of homegrown, Welsh-medium journalism. Therefore, the decision by Newsquest to close Corgi so soon after the demise of its sister title (National Wales), is both disappointing and concerning to us.

Given that Newsquest was awarded £400,000 (over four years) by the Welsh Books Council to assist with the operating costs of Corgi Cymru, we would be grateful if you could confirm the following:

1. To date, how much of the grant was spent by Newsquest on Corgi Cymru?
2. How much of the grant has been recovered?
3. If any portion of the grant has not been recovered, could you please outline why?

The idea of increasing and diversifying the number of Welsh-medium news outlets is something we support strongly. Moreover, we are keen to learn more about the circumstances surrounding how this money was spent, so that we as a Committee can track its value for money. This is all the more important given the limited funding that is available, and as such, we are of the view that any funding spent by Newsquest should be recovered as soon as possible. We would implore you to ensure that any money that has been spent is paid back in full.

Since coming to agreement with Newsquest to wind down Corgi Cymru's activities, the Welsh Books Council have confirmed that they will soon be announcing the process for re-tendering the remainder of the Welsh Language Digital News Service grant funding from 2023 onwards. Given this situation, we would be grateful to receive assurances about what steps are being put in place to ensure that the situation seen with Corgi Cymru is not repeated. We would like to know:



1. What level of due diligence is undertaken by the Welsh Books Council with regards to the financial stability of grant recipients and their ability to deliver on commitments they make as part of a grant application?
2. What review has been undertaken by either the Welsh Government or the Welsh Books Council following this issue with Corgi Cymru and what lessons have been learned? We would be grateful to see a copy of this review if it has been undertaken. If it hasn't taken place, we would be grateful if you could please outline why this has not happened.

Finally, in recent years, support for public interest journalism has been welcome, though sometimes sporadic in nature, and not always underpinned by a clear strategy. We'd be grateful if you could please outline the Welsh Government's overall policy and strategic approach with regards to supporting the development of homegrown media services in Wales.

Given the immediacy of the re-tendering for the Welsh Language Digital News Service grant, we would be grateful for a response to our questions as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Delyth Jewell MS

Chair of the Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

