

Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport & International Relations Committee Report - Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2023-24

We would like to thank the members of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport & International Relations Committee for their report on 'Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2023-24'. We have set out our responses to the report's individual recommendations below.

Recommendation 1: We recommend that the Welsh Government publish a full breakdown of all funding used to fund activities related to the FIFA World Cup 2022. This should include which budget line the funding has come from.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government recognised that the FIFA World Cup 2022 offered a unique opportunity to raise Wales' international profile and, as such, developed a comprehensive programme of activities designed to deliver the ambitions of the International Strategy.

A total budget of £4.65m has been allocated as follows:

- **Partner Support Fund** - £1.8m allocated to 19 projects, BEL 6250
- **Marketing activities, including Lleisiau Cymru** - £2.5m, BEL 6250
- **External Evaluation** - £22,825, BEL 6250
- **Ministerial engagement & visits** - These costs will be published on the database for Ministerial overseas travel at: [Ministerial Code information publication: 5th assembly | GOV.WALES](#), Central Budgets.
- **International Overseas Office Activity** = £310,000 allocated, BEL 3720

Recommendation 2: We recommend that the Welsh Government provide additional targeted funding to the sports and culture sectors to help venues and organisations that face closure but have a sustainable future beyond the immediate crisis, as well as for the health and wellbeing of the public.

Response: Reject

The Welsh Government recognises the exceptional inflationary pressures to utility costs and costs of living pressures at the arm's length bodies and local sector organisations. We have used this draft Budget for 2023-24 to the best of our ability to ensure our resources support as many organisations as possible within the budget available to us.

To assist with these pressures, Welsh Ministers have agreed to provide additional funding to the National Library of Wales; Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales; the arts sector via the Arts Council of Wales, the sports sector via Sport Wales; and the independent museums and community libraries in Wales.

Local museums, libraries, and archives would be eligible to apply to the existing Transformation Capital Grant programme for support to undertake capital works that support organisations' sustainability.

Recommendation 3: We recommend that the Welsh Government provides quarterly updates to the Committee on matters arising with regards to areas facing financial challenges in Wales

Response: Reject

This is already in place through the Committee Schedule and the regular meetings held between the Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport & Chief Whip and Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport & International Relations Committee.

Recommendation 4: We recommend that the Welsh Government publishes the membership of the cultural strategy oversight board and commits to providing regular updates on progress made on the development of the strategy.

Response: Accept

This is already being addressed. At a recent meeting of the Culture Strategy Steering Group, members were asked if they would be content to have their names published and were unanimous that this could now happen. My communications officials have advised that the appropriate mechanism for announcing the Steering Group membership should be via a written statement which officials are now drafting.

I have already committed, through conversations and communications with the Chair of the Committee, and in my [earlier written statement](#) to the Senedd in November 2022, that I will update on progress as key milestones in the development of the strategy are achieved. I am happy to offer further assurances on this matter.

Recommendation 5: We recommend that the Welsh Government publishes its initial report on the development of a cultural strategy, in full, when it is available in March 2023

Response: Reject

The Welsh Government would be happy to offer an update on progress following receipt of the interim report, however, we are not intending to produce and publish an initial report during the development of the Culture Strategy.

The period of engagement with stakeholders, led by the external partner, will complete at the end of March and I expect to receive an interim report from the partner on the findings of their engagement activity. This is a requirement of the contract. However, the purpose of the interim report is to provide a working document which will bring early insights to myself, the Designated Member, the Steering Group, and the team leading on the development of the strategy as we move towards developing early drafts of the new strategy.

Recommendation 6: We recommend the Welsh Government should publish the total amount of funding allocated to sport across government, beyond what is provided to Sport Wales.

Response: Accept

Our spending allocated to sport in Wales is provided directly to Sport Wales with a £23m revenue allocation and £8m capital allocation in 2023-24. Other parts of Welsh Government allocate funding indirectly to sport and physical activity, for example, education provide funding for sustainable communities for learning for facilities in schools, including sports facilities, but it is not feasible to disaggregate the sporting component from our overall spending.

Recommendation 7: We recommend that the Welsh Government undertakes a comprehensive assessment of the impact of expenditure on the Welsh language across government portfolios, and to set out how it plans to monitor the impact of expenditure across policy areas in the future.

Response: Accept

Through our budget process we already publish a suite of documents as part of the Draft Budget, which includes individual Ministers' responses to their respective Senedd scrutiny committees, and which provides a more detailed account as to how Draft Budget decisions have impacted on different groups or areas including the Welsh Language. The Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA) continues to outline the contextual evidence that has supported our spending decisions.

Cymraeg 2050 is a wide-ranging strategy delivered across Welsh Government portfolios. The Welsh language is integral to all the decisions taken and embedded in policy and delivery at the outset. Our approach to integrated impact assessments supports our ambition to work collaboratively across portfolios. By bringing together the range of impact assessment duties including the Welsh language in a coherent framework, the assessment reduces complexity and duplication and is supported by cohesive decision making to inform inclusive policy and delivery budgets. For this reason, it is not possible to separately identify Welsh language expenditure.

We will look further as to how the information contained within the integrated impact assessments can be shared to provide clarity on expected expenditure on the policy areas contained within them.

While we are committed to improving how we undertake and outline the impacts of our spending decisions such an approach must be proportionate.

There are dedicated budgets within the Education and Welsh Language portfolio (Welsh Language / Welsh in Education / Welsh Language Commissioner) and other direct interventions across government such as ARFOR, the Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan, the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and childcare. However, beyond this Identifying the impact of indirect expenditure in particular where benefits are not the primary purpose of expenditure may not be possible to quantify or require disproportionate resource to do so.

Our resources are focussed on the impact of initiatives across government and delivering our action plans supporting our ambitions in *Cymraeg 2050*. In achieving these goals, we will continue to work collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders.

Recommendation 8: We recommend that the Welsh Government reviews the level of funding that is required to maintain and enhance opportunities for Welsh-medium activity in local communities across Wales as a result of the increased costs of living. This review should also consider the impact of spending as well as the amount provided.

Response: Accept

At the time of this response, we await the final independent report of the *Review of the Grant Scheme to Promote the Welsh Language*. As we consider the recommendations and conclusions of this report, we will consider the level of funding provided to this area and how to assess the impact of that spend.

In his oral statement on 24 January this year, *Results of the 2021 Census in relation to the Welsh language*, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language announced £260,000 of additional funding for grant recipients to contribute towards the increased cost of living. A press announcement was made on 6 February: [More funding for organisations who help everyone use more Cymraeg | GOV.WALES](#)

Recommendation 9: We recommend that the Welsh Government reviews how it can provide specific additional revenue funding to support new Welsh medium schools once opened. The Welsh Government should also consider how it could further support schools in the English-medium sector to move along the language continuum and expand Welsh-medium provision.

Response: Accept in Principle

Professional learning is a key feature of our approach to moving schools along the continuum to provide more education through the medium of Welsh. As set out in the evidence paper, we are working with regional consortia and local authorities to ensure practitioners are identified and supported to undertake professional learning in order to improve Welsh language teaching in English-medium schools and support all schools to move along the school categorisation continuum.

Around £6.1m will be allocated in the Teacher Development and Support Budget Expenditure Line in 2023-24 to this end. Under the Co-operation Agreement, £1.675m will be earmarked for the National Centre for Learning Welsh in 2023-24 to deliver courses for young people aged 16-25 and to the education workforce. This funding supports a pilot with the company *Say Something in Welsh*.

Along with the National Centre, they are developing an app to reinforce learners' Welsh language skills and to develop their confidence. Developments like these have the potential to increase the use of Welsh in all of our schools. We plan to roll out this pilot to 10 other English-medium schools and planning for this work starts now.

We are also investing revenue funding of £6.6m over the term of this Senedd to support all local authorities to develop or expand their late immersion provision. Local authority immersion provision has previously been funded through the RSG and this funding therefore offers local authorities the opportunity to re-purpose their funding from the RSG to support new schools.

In addition to this funding, in line with the Welsh in Education Workforce Plan, we are reviewing the funding currently available to support the provision of professional learning opportunities and support for the implementation of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) to establish clear funding streams and outcomes. This work is currently ongoing. Of course, the same approach does not suit everyone and we must continue to find a series of different interventions to support all learners wherever they are on their language journey.

Of the 11 projects prioritised to proceed to the next stage of the business case process under the second phase of the Welsh medium capital grant, total funding of £32.1m was approved, of which £30.8m is capital funding and £1.3m is revenue funding to support the growth and use of the Welsh language in education

Recommendation 10: We recommend that the Welsh Government outlines how it will provide additional financial support to the Welsh Language Commissioner where it is required, for instance to support costly legal proceedings that could not be anticipated

Response: Accept

The Welsh Language Commissioner's estimate for the 2023-24 financial year notes that the costs of legal advice can vary significantly, and that it is difficult to anticipate the circumstances where legal advice or representation will need to be procured.

Due to the budgetary alignment of central government bodies, it is not possible for bodies to keep reserves for unpredicted purposes that may arise or may not. We have advised the Commissioner that her financial estimate should include a reasonable and sufficient level of funding to pay for legal advice and representation. The Commissioner's expectation is that legal costs over the medium term will continue at around £80,000 per annum. The Commissioner has therefore allocated a budget of £80,000 from her 2023-24 revenue budget to pay for legal costs.

If the Commissioner's legal costs would exceed the sum in the budget, and funds could not be allocated from elsewhere within her budget, the Commissioner would need to write to Welsh Ministers and seek additional in-year finding. Ministers would deal with such requests on a case by case basis if and when they arise.