



**Ymddiriedolaeth  
Genedlaethol  
National Trust**

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28 August 2024

Sent to: culture@gov.wales  
cc: Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Dear Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

National Trust Cymru welcomes the opportunity to engage with Welsh Government's consultation on Draft Priorities for Culture in Wales 2024 to 2030.

Our response to this consultation reflects our position as a heritage and cultural organisation caring for Wales' natural and historic environment. National Trust Cymru looks after 46,000 hectares of land, 157 miles of coast and 18 of our nation's most special historic houses, gardens and industrial sites.

We are a key employer in Wales with over 750 staff members, and the support of 2000 volunteers, and 185,000 members. Our places welcome more than 1.8 million visitors a year, and we care for over 90,000 collection items in Wales.

National Trust Cymru welcomes the Draft Priorities for Culture in Wales. We are pleased that we were able to play a role in shaping the priorities through the Historic Environment Group, and as a result believe that the priorities set out are well aligned to those of the National Trust. Furthermore, we welcome that they are closely linked with the framework set out by the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

However, there are several areas we would like to highlight the importance of:

Firstly, National Trust Cymru shares Welsh Government's principle that every person in Wales has the right to access, create, participate in, and see themselves reflected in the cultural activity of our nation. However, there is a need to recognise within the draft priorities that the ambition set out for culture in Wales will not be realised without supporting resources and prioritisation by both the UK and Welsh Governments.

Currently, the UK has one of the lowest levels of government spending on culture among European nations and was one of a small minority of countries to reduce total culture spending per person between 2010 and 2022.

The State of the Arts report found that between 2009-10 and 2022-23, per person in real terms:

- Local government revenue funding of culture and related services decreased by 40% in Wales alongside rising cost and demand pressures on statutory services (especially social care).
- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)'s core funding of cultural organisations decreased by 18% to only 0.17% of total public spending per person.
- The Arts Councils' core Government funding decreased by 25% in Wales.

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Over the same period:

- Tax relief for the creative industries increased by 649%.
- In 2017- 18 this investment exceeded the DCMS' core funding of cultural organisations for the first time.
- The BBC's total public and grant funding decreased by 23%.
- National Lottery grant funding for arts and heritage projects increased by 19%, but fluctuated considerably over the period and was lowest at the start of the pandemic.

As you can see from these figures, coupled with the Welsh Government's 10.5% budget cuts to cultural bodies such as Amgueddfa Cymru, Arts Council Wales and the National Library of Wales, this is a particularly challenging time for Wales' arts, culture and heritage sector. National Trust Cymru recognises that Welsh Government are facing exceptional funding pressures, and we appreciate that difficult operational decisions are having to be made in the face of reduced UK and Welsh Government budgets.

However, if the resourcing trends outlined above continue as they have done over the last fourteen years, Welsh Government and our Welsh arts, cultural, and heritage organisations will be unable to meet all three priorities set out in the consultation document, and the 20 ambitions that sit below them.

Arts, culture and heritage transform our lives, society and the economy for the better. Prior to the pandemic, the heritage sector contributed more than £1.72 billion to the Welsh economy. It is crucial that our national collections and cultural heritage are protected for future generations and that we do not lose valuable heritage craft skills which are critical to the conservation of our precious historic environment.

National Trust Cymru believes that to realise the ambition outlined in the draft priorities the Welsh Government should commit to a strategy for the arts, culture and heritage sector which sets out a clear action plan to ensure a resilient and sustainable future for the sector in Wales. This would help the sector to deliver the three priorities set out in the consultation and protect the sector from further cuts and de-prioritisation from future Governments (both UK and Wales).

National Trust Cymru also recognises that we all have a role to play and that collaboration across the sector remains key. We have been reaching out across the sector to offer our support as a delivery partner and would value a meeting to explore how we can play our part to support the Welsh Government and our cultural partners during this challenging time.

We would like to discuss further if there are collections or items with connections and relevance to National Trust Cymru sites that we may be able to exhibit to help maintain public access and engagement opportunities across Wales. For example, we recently visited St Fagans National Museum of History to see dresses connected to the Morgan family and Tredegar House, items we would be pleased to display at the property if there was an opportunity to do so.

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Secondly, it is important for Welsh Government to note that cuts to the arts, culture and heritage sector have a knock-on effect on direct public access and public benefit. National Trust Cymru were pleased to see the cultural and social justice portfolios merged under the most recent cabinet reshuffle, so that access for all, could be better addressed.

The National Survey for Wales was conducted between April 2022 and March 2023 and reported that 64% of people had attended an arts event in the last 12 months. Analysis using the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation reveals significant disparities in arts attendance. Among the least deprived fifth of the population, 70% had attended an arts event in the last 12 months, but among the most deprived fifth of the population, only 58% had done so.

Access to the cultural sector must be equal and unless funding for education, participation and careers in the cultural sector are protected the gap in access will only increase.

Lastly, we are playing our part to support skills and apprenticeships in the heritage, culture and tourism sector. However, there is still an urgent need to foster skills within the heritage sector, as well as a need to create spaces such as artist studios, and maker spaces. With job losses across the sector due to budget cuts, consideration must be given to how we ensure heritage skills are protected and preserved for future generations.

National Trust Cymru would like Welsh Government to work with the sector to create a workforce action plan which would focus on attracting and retaining the talent needed to safeguard the future of the sector and manifest the many social benefits of heritage, which we believe is a key factor in enabling the success of the priorities and ambitions outlined in the consultation document.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on the draft Priorities for Culture in Wales 2024 to 2030. National Trust Cymru would welcome a meeting with yourself or your officials to discuss further, if this is agreeable, please do let me know and I would be happy to arrange.

Diolch yn fawr,

Lhosa Daly,  
Cyfarwyddwr Cymru/Director for Wales