

Jane Hutt MS

Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Social Justice, Trefnydd

and Chief Whip

Welsh Government

9 September 2024

## **Scrutiny of the former Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice**

Dear Jane,

I write with some questions that have arisen in light of your predecessor's appearance at our meeting on 10 July 2024 for scrutiny of the Welsh Government's culture activity. There are some matters on which our committee would appreciate some clarification.

### **Difference in budget allocations between 2014-15 and 2024-25**

Given the changes and the impact in this year's budget, we would like to know how do the Welsh Government's budget allocations for culture and sport compare in 2024-25 budget to the 2014-15 budget in real-terms?

### **The Museum of the North Wales**

During the session, the former Cabinet Secretary confirmed that the Welsh Government remained committed to developing the National Slate Museum site at Llanberis. She also confirmed, however, that plans for the Museum of North Wales would not progress further "at this moment." When asked about whether the National Slate Museum and the plans for a Museum of North Wales are separate initiatives, she said that there was some uncertainty about the concept of a national museum for North Wales.

Understanding the status of these plans is crucial for stakeholders, as well as the broader community who are invested in the cultural heritage of North Wales. I would therefore like to request clarification on the following points:



- Are the plans for a separate Museum of North Wales distinct from the development of the National Slate Museum at Llanberis?
- Has the decision not to progress with the Museum of North Wales been made on a temporary basis, or have these plans been permanently set aside?

### **The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama**

During the session, the former Cabinet Secretary spoke about her intention to discuss the proposed closure of the junior music and drama departments at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama with the Cabinet Secretary for Education. As you will be aware, the situation has developed since that meeting, and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama confirmed its decision to proceed with the closure on 19 July 2024.

The Committee remains deeply concerned about the abruptness of the closure, which leaves a significant void in music and drama education for young people in Wales. In light of this fact, I would like to request the following information:

- Could you please provide an update on any further discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for Education about the closure?
- What steps is the Welsh Government taking to generate alternative opportunities in music and drama for our talented young people?
- What measures are being implemented to secure sustainable pathways into professional training within Wales, so as to ensure that our young people do not have to seek opportunities elsewhere?

### **Welsh National Opera**

During the session, the former Cabinet Secretary noted that she was in the process of writing to the Arts Council of Wales and Arts Council England to explore potential avenues for securing additional funding for Welsh National Opera.

Given the importance of this matter to the continued success and sustainability of Welsh National Opera, I would appreciate an update about what has transpired from your correspondence with these organisations. Specifically, I would appreciate any information about:

- The responses you have received from the Arts Council of Wales and Arts Council England.
- Any steps being taken to secure additional funding, or steps towards this
- Any further actions that may be required or anticipated to support the Welsh National Opera.

Understanding the latest situation will be invaluable for our ongoing dialogue with Welsh National Opera.

## **Arts Council Wales**

During the session, we discussed the Arts Council's progress towards the publication of its new strategic plan, the review of English language theatre, and the evaluation of the investment review grant application process. We remain concerned about the delays in these important work streams. The extended timeframes are creating significant uncertainty within the sector, affecting those organisations who rely on clear direction and guidance from the Arts Council. We would like to understand the reasons behind these delays and the challenges the Arts Council is facing in completing this work within the originally set timeframes.

Could you please provide further information on the following points:

- The specific reasons for the delays.
- Any obstacles that have hindered the timely completion of the review of English language theatre.
- The current status of these work streams, and revised timelines for completion of them.

We believe that transparency about these matters is crucial for maintaining trust and confidence within the sector.

## **Broadcasting and media policy development**

I would be grateful if you would please provide further information about how the £1 million which was originally set aside for the Broadcasting and Communications Advisory Group has been allocated, and what work will be undertaken by the Advisory Group.

I would be grateful for a response to the Committee's questions by 7 October 2024.

Yours sincerely,



**Delyth Jewell MS**  
**Committee Chair**

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.