

Planet: the Welsh Internationalist
(Berw Ltd.)

[REDACTED]

23.09. 2024

[For publication]

Dear Chair and Members of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee.

I'm writing to clarify and correct the record re. the points Helgard Krause raised in her letter of 17 September 2024 to the Committee. Many thanks for your continued engagement with and scrutiny of this issue.

1. Krause writes 'The fact that some publishers have been receiving funding over many years may have created the impression that our funding is to support particular businesses and titles, but this is not the case'. Here I would like to reiterate a point I and others have made within *Planet* editorials on these issues, throughout the open letter campaign and in correspondence with yourselves as otherwise this could become rather a red herring to distract from the main issues at hand: we (and other magazines involved in these discussions) don't contest in the slightest that BCW grants should be open, competitive tenders, with no guarantee that existing publications will continue to be funded. The case I have presented doesn't contradict this whatsoever.

If, firstly, another publisher had submitted a stronger application than us to the 2023 tender, which performed better against the tender priorities than ourselves, and consequently there was not enough money in the pot to support all publishers adequately and we had simply lost our funding as a consequence (and if, secondly, there had been no unfair or untrue feedback about us) we wouldn't have contested the decision at all. However, the key thing here is that neither of these things were the case.

We are raising these issues not only for *Planet*'s benefit, but for the benefit of all Welsh publications, established and new, as we wouldn't want another publisher to experience what we are undergoing.

2. In July I published on our website a free, expanded version of the editorial in the final issue of *Planet*. This includes additional information about the circumstances behind

us losing our funding and a Postscript with more recent developments. You can read it here: <https://www.planetmagazine.org.uk/planet-online/253/editorial/emily-trahair>

One new section gives full detail about the (extraordinarily unfair, illogical and absurd) ‘rationale’ given for denying us funding. Please see the subtitle ‘What ‘rationale’ was given for *Planet* losing its grant?’ in the link above. The case made to us by BCW in justifying their decision would likely be defamatory if they were to articulate it in the public sphere. BCW termed this ‘the full extent of the sub-committee’s feedback’ regarding panel criticism of *Planet*.

This brings me to another claim made by Krause that ‘unsuccessful applicants to the old tender were welcome to submit applications for new proposals that responded to and met the criteria for the new brief’.

In my letter from 02.07.24 I explained that obviously we as a publisher would not have been able to submit an application as *Planet* as we are neither ‘brand new’ nor a literary magazine (but have much wider remit). I explained that nothing in all our correspondence with BCW since the funding decision was made known to us suggests that we - as *Planet* or as a publishing company more generally - would be eligible, let alone welcome, to apply for this new tender.

Furthermore, if you read the section in the editorial re. the funding decision rationale as indicated above in full, it will become clear that we would not have been ‘welcome’ as a publisher and company to submit applications for the 2024 tender for a different magazine of narrower focus, even if we had wanted to, as we had been – as a company and publisher – criticised so unfairly and absurdly as the rationale for denying funding to *Planet*. (Criticism, which in short, in my opinion amounts not only to victimising us as employees for raising concerns about the impact of successive grant cuts on working conditions, but also victim-blaming us for these very same concerns as were articulated in the open letter campaign, a *Planet* editorial and our grant application.) I believe there was no way we could have received a fair appraisal in the 2024 tender if we had wanted to launch a new kind of magazine.

There also remains the concern that the set of funding decisions deprives Wales of adequate provision for hybrid political-cultural-literary publications that have been so essential for Welsh democracy for centuries, and form a unique part of Wales’s living radical tradition, as is articulated more fully in the updated version of the editorial (under the sub-heading ‘Why independent political-cultural-literary magazines are so vital’).

3. Helgard Krause notified you that the tender process to award the remaining money left over from the 2023 tender has been completed. However, this changes nothing with regard to the need for ongoing scrutiny of the decisions and campaigning for reform of the funding system, reform that so many readers, writers and publishers are desperate for. Our focus will continue to be on proposing constructive root-and-branch reform of BCW and its funding strategy, and restoring sustainable grant levels, to help safeguard all magazine and website publishers (established and new), and to enable a fair and trustworthy funding environment so that *Planet* can consider re-applying for funding in the future. If this proves impossible, to campaign for funding responsibilities for magazines and websites to be transferred to another body.

It would be a great concern if this issue were to be swept under the carpet at this juncture – I continue to be approached by a huge number of people who are deeply alarmed by how *Planet* and *New Welsh Review* have been treated, and the precedent this sets: Whether the

untruth propagated by BCW that *Planet* couldn't receive the minimum £75,500 we applied for due to limitations on the BCW budget and the strength of submissions to the 2023 tender (when in fact there was c. £95,000 left over) and so could not receive any funding; or the 'rationale' given for the decision, which is a reflection of an environment where publishers and their employees increasingly fear losing their grant if they raise awareness about the impact of grant cuts on working conditions.

I'm very grateful for the time taken by the Committee to read through these issues.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Emily Trahair'.

Emily Trahair
(Editor of *Planet* 2012-2024)