

Cyfieithiad i'r Saesneg gan Gomisiwn y Senedd | English Translation by Senedd
Commission

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To:

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as well as a copy to the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and
International Relations Committee: SeneddCulture@senedd.wales

I am writing to you as an author, to express my concern regarding the financial
support provided to the publishing sector in Wales.

That sector is led by the Books Council of Wales, which saw its annual budget from
the Welsh Government cut by 10.5 per cent in 2024-25. That came in the wake of
years of zero budget uplifts; before the cut, the grant had remained flat for more than
ten years – without taking into account the impact of inflation. The possibility of a
further cut to its budget in 2025-26 worries me greatly.

Government support for the publishing sector in Wales is needed now more than ever:

The publishing sector supports literacy at the exact time when reading standards among 15-year-old school pupils in Wales have fallen to an all-time low – a situation that was exacerbated by the repercussions of the COVID pandemic. According to the PISA test results released in December 2023, Wales is the only country within the United Kingdom in which pupils' reading scores are lower than the international average.

The publishing sector supports the Welsh language and has a key role to play in reaching the Welsh Government's target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. In terms of the use and viability of the language, the role that the sector plays is as central as the roles of Mudiad Meithrin, the National Centre for Learning Welsh and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, three national bodies that have been protected from cuts in 2024-25. In the case of the National Centre for Learning Welsh and the Coleg Cymraeg, a decision was made on 'maintaining budgets at 2023-24 levels to cause the least disruption to the Welsh language sector'.^[1]

The publishing sector supports the Welsh economy, and many publishers employ a number of freelancers – such as editors, designers and writers – who live and work in rural Wales.

The publishing sector supports the health of the nation: among its many other advantages, reading has proven benefits in respect of mental health and well-being. Here is a recent report from the National Literacy Trust, one of several pieces of research that confirm this important point: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/reading-for-mental-wellbeing-in-2023/>

The Chancellor of the Exchequer in the new Labour Government pledged that there would be no more economic austerity. With the publishing sector in Wales still trying to cope with the devastating impact of the 10.5 per cent cut in 2024-25, I ask that you honour this pledge and ensure that no further cuts are made in 2025-26. That would constitute one step towards trying to ensure that an already challenging situation does not become a truly critical one. In addition, not only do we need to ensure that there are no further cuts, but there is also a genuine need for investment and a real increase in the Welsh Book Council's budget next year. That body has already suffered far too much.

Yours faithfully

Ioan Kidd

Author

[1] *Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25 – Ministers' written evidence to Senedd scrutiny committees regarding the allocations within each Main Expenditure Group – December 2023*, gov.wales, p. 339.