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18 October 2024

By email

Annwyl Gadeirydd,

Inquiry on the impact of funding reductions for culture and sport

Thank you for your letter dated 14th October and the request for evidence from Amgueddfa Cymru to be considered as part of the Committee's current inquiry into funding reductions for culture and sport.

To respond to the questions asked:

Can you outline the impact of the cuts in the 2024-25 Budget on Amgueddfa Cymru and how they were implemented?

We understand the context within which the culture sector funding decisions were made, nonetheless, they represented the biggest cuts to Amgueddfa Cymru's budget ever. The fact they led to in-year funding cuts of 10.5% (£3million) to the revenue Grant-in-Aid (GIA,) which we were asked to deliver by the 2024-25 financial year meant Amgueddfa Cymru had to operate at unprecedented pace to deliver the savings within a very tight three-month timescale. As we had also been running at an annual deficit, we aimed to deliver £4.5million savings and a balanced budget by the 2024-25 financial year to satisfy the GIA cut and address our longer- term financial sustainability.

Over 80% of Amgueddfa Cymru's GIA is staff related. The Museum therefore had to deliver a full restructure by April 1st, 2024, to produce a balanced budget and to avoid having to make deeper cuts by going into the new financial year without having identified the full savings. Following the announcement of the budget reduction in December 2023, the Museum sought approval from Welsh Government to deliver a voluntary severance scheme. Full approval for both a compulsory and voluntary scheme was given in mid-February 2024, and the Welsh Government made funding available to

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cover the costs of any voluntary severances made by the end of the financial year – meaning a period of some six weeks to implement.

We looked to Amgueddfa Cymru's Royal Charter, the Amgueddfa Cymru 2030 strategy, Programme for Government and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act duties to inform the budget cutting exercise. The Museum established a change programme entitled, 'Shaping our Future' to oversee a staff reshaping, a reduction in operating costs, and a focus on increasing the profitability of income-generating activities.

In establishing the Shaping our Future change programme, the Senior Executive Team identified the following principles to guide and inform decision making. These principles were supported by the Board of Trustees who were kept informed throughout the process:

- focus on core purpose;
- reduce in size to deliver with excellence;
- provide learning and visitor experiences through relevant collections;
- deliver long-term financial sustainability;
- create an environment that is agile in practice, policy and thinking;
- be a truly 'national' museum;
- do it big to do it once; and,
- limit the requirement for redundancies.

During the process, consideration was given to whether roles needed to be modernised, amended to enable Amgueddfa Cymru to be better equipped to face the museum's future needs, or were no longer needed. The Museum also identified those roles critical to its operations and duties that needed to be safeguarded and maintained. This was against the priority areas mentioned above and based upon assessment by Directors and Heads of Departments collectively. Roles were defined by the following criteria:

- Deleted.
- Amended (opportunity to do differently).
- Retained.

All roles were considered within the context of the agreed priority areas to understand whether there was potential to change (do differently and / or to modernise the job description to meet future needs) or to be deleted. Where a role was seen as critical to future needs, it was retained. Assessment was on roles rather than individuals. Any new roles created acted as suitable alternative roles to avoid redundancies.

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The voluntary severance scheme launched first for senior staff on the higher grades G and H. By doing this, certainty was given to those making decisions on future structures and potential changes to the senior leadership positions. This empowered leaders to lead on reshaping the teams with Directors and was designed to protect those on the lower grades. (A restructure of the Directors had been undertaken just prior to this process.) A wider voluntary severance scheme to all staff was opened in February, running alongside a compulsory scheme. This period of intensive consultation involved team and one-to-one discussions. Despite the very tight timescale, many hundreds of hours of consultation were undertaken during the restructure process.

All the redundancies to date have been voluntary. Most of the staff reductions were made by April 1st, 2024. The process is still underway with the visitor experience teams at National Museum Cardiff, National Waterfront Museum Swansea and St Fagans.

The Museum has also used the Shaping our Future process to ensure that the museum has a fit-for-purpose structure with a clear set of agreed priorities that all departments will deliver against. These priorities will strengthen the visitor experience and place the emphasis on the public learning through the national collection. Both are at the heart of what we do, and the latter is the Amgueddfa Cymru purpose as defined in the Royal Charter. Changes have been made to Amgueddfa Cymru's divisional structure to deliver this, with the new structure as follows: Collections and Research; Experience, Learning and Engagement; Finance and Resources; Priority Programmes, and Relationships and Funding.

The Amgueddfa Cymru Leadership Forum has engaged with teams across the Museum to identify non-critical activities implementing a 'stop, start, do different' model. This will both achieve efficiencies and enable our reduced teams to focus on the most critical areas of work for the future of Amgueddfa Cymru.

We are now in phase two of the Shaping our Future programme. This has three workstreams:

1. **Ways of Working** - which is looking to enable the Museum to create a more involving, participative culture with confident decision making and creative collaboration at its heart.
2. **Collections** - which is exploring ways in which the Museum can capitalise on the breadth and richness of the national collection to generate more income.

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3. **Review and Learn** - given the very constrained timetable within which we had to deliver the changes, a group of colleagues from within the Museum is peer-reviewing the process to identify whether any corrective action may be required and where lessons could be learnt for the future.

All three workstreams actively involve staff from across the museum and from all grades. Trade Union representatives have and continue to be engaged throughout the process.

How is the additional in-year grant-in-aid funding allocated by the Welsh Government to Amgueddfa Cymru being spent, and how is it mitigating the impact of funding reductions?

Amgueddfa Cymru has received two non-recurrent in-year awards in the 2024-25 financial year.

The first of these, a grant, for £787k, was announced in May 2024 through the Co-operation Agreement. It was to mitigate against job losses at Amgueddfa Cymru following the reduction in revenue Grant in Aid. Having had assurance of this funding, the Museum has invested it in supporting staff and in retaining and developing specialist skills needed for the Museum to operate within its new, post Shaping our Future, structure. Conversations are ongoing with Welsh Government to enable the Museum to actually draw down the funding.

Amgueddfa Cymru [was also awarded an additional £940k in September 2024](#). This was from Welsh Government reserves and is to 'strengthen the financial stability of culture and sport arm's length bodies' and to support our investment 'in some of the key services [we] provide the people of Wales.' Our intention is to use this funding to strengthen and support the following priority areas:

- Commercial Development;
- Purpose and Brand;
- Developing Visitor Experience;
- Improving Governance; and
- Culture and Wellbeing

This funding is being allocated on a phased basis through GIA.

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How have you used the additional in-year capital funding to mitigate the risks to the national collections? How is the Welsh Government working with Amgueddfa Cymru to protect the Cardiff site over the longer term?

The security and care of the national collection are paramount. National Museum Cardiff (NMC) is over a 100-years old and was specifically built to house and showcase Wales' very special national collection. However, as the Committee is aware, the age of the building and a lack of investment has led to critical maintenance issues.

Amgueddfa Cymru was grateful therefore for an [additional £1.3m of capital expenditure announced by the Welsh Government on 10th July 2024](#) as part of a wider 'capital funding package to protect and preserve Wales' national treasures.' This will enable us to start on some of the critical work needed to safeguard NMC and to begin to undertake the work in a phased, planned way. We have a five-year plan for the most critical work at NMC.

The Museum has developed a Business Justification Case to access the £1.3 million. We are awaiting confirmation that we will be able to access the funding and will then seek to undertake the necessary works before the end of the financial year.

To deliver the five-year plans to undertake the most urgent work at NMC, the work must be phased and planned. Other than the work which has already taken place within 24-25, we need to undertake detailed surveys of NMC this financial year to advise and steer the rest of the works deemed most critical in the most efficient way. We are in discussions with Welsh Government about this.

What is Amgueddfa Cymru's contribution to the Welsh Government's National Contemporary Art Gallery project? What funding has the Welsh Government committed to providing Amgueddfa Cymru to support their contribution to the project post-March 2025?

AC is a partner in the Welsh Government's National Contemporary Art Gallery Wales (NCAGW.) This initiative is providing access - both digitally and physically - to the nation's collections across Wales and was a commitment of the Programme for Government.

In collaboration with Arts Council of Wales and the National Library of Wales, Amgueddfa Cymru and the nine venues that are members of the network of galleries are developing and implementing a dispersed loans model to enable

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the people of Wales to explore the collection within their own localities. We are also ensuring people can have improved digital access to the national collection – wherever they are.

Supported by a total revenue and capital investment from Welsh Government of just over £6.3 million in the period 2023-25 (in addition to initial investment of £1.4million to begin the work of digitising artwork in 2019), the current active project delivery phase is due for completion by the end of March 2025. This end point will deliver a substantial programme of investment in the existing infrastructure of the nine galleries comprising the dispersed network. In addition, 30,000 artworks in the national collection held by Amgueddfa and the National Library have been digitised and are available on the dedicated social media platform [Celf ar y Cyd](#) which is hosted by the museum.

Key achievements include:

- Exhibitions using the national collection at Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Plas Glyn y Weddw, Storiol (Bangor), Newport Museum and Gallery and Oriol Mostyn, Llandudno. Others are planned at Ruthin Craft Centre, Oriol Davies, Newtown and Storiol.
- Delivery of learning programme activity related to all above exhibitions. Most of the partner galleries do not have specialist learning staff and Amgueddfa Cymru has supported the development of materials and the co-ordination of schools activity.
- Developing a series of commissions working with artists from across Wales. We have commissioned a total of 22 artists working across the 11 sites to create new work in response to the national collection. The programme also delivered a special commission involving five artists to make work for the Eisteddfod.
- The establishment of a genuine partnership with the nine galleries across Wales and a new approach to co-working and collaboration.

The establishment of the Celf ar y Cyd website which showcases contemporary art from the national Collection. This is proving to be a popular and well-used resource with both the public, and schools.

Amgueddfa Cymru remains a committed partner in NCAGW and we believe it is a valuable programme to enable people across Wales to have access to the national art collection in their own communities. Amgueddfa Cymru is supporting exploratory conversations with potential funders for project related elements of NCAGW's work after the current revenue funding ends

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this financial year. We have submitted a Business Case to Welsh Government which requests funding of £560k for 2025-27, to facilitate the ongoing delivery of the programme and to cover essential core costs relating to conservation, learning programmes, loans advice and support and technical support. These costs also include NCAGW staff at both Amgueddfa Cymru and the National Library. This is not something which has been factored within the Museum's current Grant-in-Aid funding.

The Welsh Government has committed to investing in Amgueddfa Cymru's Llanberis site. Can you outline the funding commitments the Welsh Government has made, and how these fit with your plans for the site?

The Llanberis redevelopment plans will transform Amgueddfa Lechi Cymru – National Slate Museum into a world-class visitor attraction and the main interpretation hub for the internationally significant Slate Landscape of northwest Wales UNESCO World Heritage Site. This project will allow us to create spaces to support traditional skills, learning and well-being and better connect with everyone, from local communities to those from further afield, enabling them to find their story through our national collection. Amgueddfa Lechi Cymru will also be the anchor site for Amgueddfa Cymru in north Wales, providing us with an opportunity to bring geographically relevant items from the national collection to Llanberis. The site closes to the public for some twenty months from 4th November, and we are working with partner organisations across the UNESCO World Heritage Site to offer pop-up initiatives of Amgueddfa Lechi Cymru during the site closure.

To date, funding for the Amgueddfa Llechi Cymru Redevelopment project has been secured from a range of valued sources, including; £6.2m from Cyngor Gwynedd as part of the 'Llewyrch o'r Llechi' project (funded via UK Government, formerly Levelling Up); £412,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (with a further £9.5m subject to a successful Delivery Phase bid in February 2025) and £2.5m from the Welsh Government, announced in 2023. On the 10th of July 2024, the Welsh Government also committed to investing 'funding... in the redevelopment of Amgueddfa Cymru's Llanberis site, which will create opportunities for greater and improved access in North Wales to the national collection'.

The current estimate is a funding gap of approximately £3.2m. We are in constructive discussions with Welsh Government for additional funding as well as fundraising to endeavour to reduce the remaining gap via a variety of philanthropic sources.

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We would be delighted to welcome the Committee to Llanberis again to see the redevelopment.

Can you outline aspects of Amgueddfa Cymru's activity that you see as examples of preventative spending?

Our 2030 Strategy directly supports the ambitions of the Welsh Government's Programme for Government and embeds the Goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015). Our planning and our programming are driven by the six commitments outlined in the 2030 Strategy. We are committed to delivering against the Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, LGBTQ+ Action Plan and other equalities plans as outlined in our Widening Engagement Action Plan 2022/25. We will continue to align our operational planning and our programming with the Welsh Government's Priorities for Culture 2024-2030 and the First Minister's four key priorities.

Amgueddfa Cymru is the largest provider of learning outside the classroom in Wales. Our extensive learning programme supports family learning; schools and groups; adult and community learning; people with additional needs; and health and well-being. Our in-person and virtual visits can be adapted to support learners. We are currently developing a Child Anti-Poverty Action Plan in collaboration with partners, children and young people in response to Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy for Wales.

Recent examples of preventative spending within learning include:

- Our Family and Early Years Learning Programme; we partner with organisations such as Flying Start to provide families from underserved communities with opportunities for young children to explore our collection through themed play, craft, and sensory activities. The free to attend drop-in sessions take place in safe, supervised spaces and use interactive resources that encourage curiosity, inquisitiveness, and learning.
- In 2023/24, 288,000 children and young people engaged with our school-based learning programme. We have active programmes in all 22 counties of Wales. When determining which schools to engage in our programming, we review the data on schools with the highest allocations of free school meals and target those schools.
- Pinc College are based at National Museum Cardiff, and we collaborate to create and deliver learning programmes to support neurodiverse

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young people who have excluded from the traditional educational system pathways.

- We also engage directly with people living with dementia, their carers, and care homes through Museums Inspiring Memories (MIMS). MIMS is a partnership project with Alzheimer's Society Cymru which aims to use our museums, collections and resources, to develop a sustainable programme of activities to engage with and support the wellbeing of people affected by dementia.
- We are a partner in Public Health Wales' Hapus scheme and are also developing an initiative to support Social Prescribing at Amgueddfa Cymru museums.

To instigate the changes needed in our organisation, within the sector, and in Wales, we believe that individuals and communities should be able to contribute to the debate about what counts as culture, where it happens, who makes it and who experiences it.

We engage with a collective known as the Amgueddfa Cymru Producers, a network of young people aged 16-25 from different sectors and a variety of backgrounds who are contracted to challenge and disrupt the way we think. These are paid opportunities to work alongside Museum staff to develop a variety of youth-led projects, challenge institutional structures, platform their voice within the Museum and engage with communities. They work on collections, events and displays on themes encompassing anti-racism, LGBTQ+, and the environment. Our plans also involve communities to help ensure the programmes we run and the spaces we develop better represent people across Wales.

A recent example of preventative spending in terms of our representation work is:

- Our Reframing Picton project whereby Amgueddfa Cymru Producers commissioned two artists to amplify the voices of those originally neglected in the telling of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton's story, or those whose lives are most affected by his legacy today. The group were also instrumental in shaping a learning offer related to the exhibition.

We have also developed our approach to involving people and communities in our work and provided opportunities for community artists to have their

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works alongside eminent artists. By doing so we ensure that voices the most underrepresented are given a platform.

Other examples of preventative spending include:

- Over the past few years, people and communities in Merthyr Tydfil and the Cynon Valley have been working with us to create new stories about the visual art collection through The Valleys Re-told project. This culminated in The Valleys exhibition, the first major exhibition to explore the visual culture of the south Wales valleys and the communities that have shaped it.
- With support from Welsh Government and in collaboration with Arts Council Wales and visual arts organisations, creative practitioners are developing authentic and decolonised interventions as part of *Safbwynt(iau) / Perspective(s)* at each Amgueddfa Cymru museum.
- Our museums continue to be safe spaces to welcome the communities of Wales with events such as Diwali Mela, Black History Wales and the Welsh Somali Heritage Day.

Our decarbonisation work across Amgueddfa Cymru and the resulting improvements to the environment and health is also an example of preventative spending.

We are in the process of developing an impact framework for the Museum, which will enable us to demonstrate not only what we are doing and with whom, but the impact that work is having on individuals and communities.

I thank the Committee for its continued interest in, and support of, Amgueddfa Cymru.



Jane Richards

Prif Weithredwr
Chief Executive

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