



CCWLSIR Committee – 28 November 2024

Welsh Government's evidence paper

28 November 2024

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Overview

1. The policy areas within my portfolio reach across many aspects of government and have the potential to make profound and lasting change to the lives of people and communities across Wales. 'Culture', 'Heritage', 'Creative' and 'Sport' are essential components of our national life and are an integral part of our individual and collective identity and well-being. Museums, archives, libraries, theatres, music venues, sports clubs, and historic sites are often the focal point for many communities throughout Wales.
2. I recently submitted a [written evidence paper](#) to the Committee's inquiry into the impact of funding cuts on culture and sport and I welcomed the opportunity to discuss a number of issues relevant to the above inquiry during my appearance before the Committee. The session was useful in setting out the current financial context and an opportunity for me to outline some of my priorities as Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership.
3. This part of my portfolio is responsible for a budget of around £175m (£120m revenue and £55m capital), with most of the funding allocated directly to five arm's length bodies (ALBs). Funding is also allocated to Cadw as the Welsh Government's internal historic environment service and Creative Wales as our internal agency responsible for supporting and developing the creative sector.

Priorities

4. Together, these sectors make a significant contribution to wider social outcomes including community cohesion, mental health and wellbeing. The portfolio is also well placed to deliver against the First Minister's priorities including the focus on education, the economy, tackling poverty and climate change. Examples include:
 - **Iechyd Da** - Alongside our continued investment in sports facilities and improving access to sport, research shows that culture, the arts and our historic environment has a positive impact on people's health and well-being. The Culture and Sport ALBs, local sector museums, archives and libraries and Cadw deliver a range of activities to support positive mental health and wellbeing including Cadw's award-winning volunteering programme, as a partner in the Hapus project, social prescribing, Arts, Health and Wellbeing in Wales and House of Memories Cymru to support dementia. The Books Council of Wales supports the delivery of the Reading Well scheme and makes an important contribution to our health and wellbeing objectives. Creative Wales is working with priority sectors to improve health and wellbeing in creative workplaces, through the Wellbeing Facilitators project and the alignment of funding mechanisms to the Economic Contract wellbeing pillar.
 - **Green jobs and Growth** - Our ALBs play a vital leadership role in tackling all aspects of the climate and nature emergencies by helping the public engage through exhibitions and supporting our cultural organisations and sports clubs to become more energy efficient and enhance biodiversity. Cadw leads research into the impact of climate change on historic assets and is helping to develop National Occupational Standards, retrofit qualifications and training materials for those working in the renewable energy sector. Through our own work programmes and

capital grants, Cadw provides work for skilled conservation practitioners. Creative Wales continues to work closely with key partners to deliver against the recommendations in the Screen New Deal Transformation Plan for Wales, to support a sustainable future for the Welsh production sector.

- **Opportunity for every family** - Education is at the heart of the work our ALBs, local museums, libraries and archives undertake, both in terms of formal and informal lifelong learning. For example, Amgueddfa Cymru is the biggest delivery body of education outside the school system in Wales and alongside our investment in the local library network, we also fund literacy schemes including the Summer Reading Challenge. On housing, the skills developed on our Cadw capital projects are transferrable and can be applied to the thousands of traditional buildings which make up a high percentage of our national housing stock. In publishing, the Books Council's work on the promotion of reading and the provision of books and educational resources plays an important part in improving literary standards and educational attainment. Creative Wales is supporting a range of projects to develop skills and talent, in an inclusive, open and accessible way.
- **Connecting Communities** - Some responses to the Priorities for Culture consultation stress the importance of transport in relation to access to culture – this will inform our implementation. Cadw brings communities together by making its historic sites available free of charge for community events, many sites are located at the heart of communities and are therefore ideal locations for local events. Local libraries are now regarded as community hubs in many areas and are therefore crucial in bringing communities together. Creative Wales' support for the broadcasting and independent screen sector makes an important contribution to social cohesion and inclusion, connecting people from different backgrounds, as well as building a sense of national identity and belonging.

5. I would also highlight some of my portfolio's main priorities. These include:

Culture

- 'Priorities for Culture: 2024-2030'. Much of the future vision for the portfolio will be around the Priorities for Culture which is being developed following the recent consultation over the summer. There has been a very positive response to the consultation, with good representation from across all sectors which are in scope of the new Priorities, and from other stakeholders. We will be publishing a summary of responses report in due course which will outline the responses in more detail.
- Protecting our national cultural institutions for future generations – We aim to prioritise protection of Amgueddfa Cymru and the National Library of Wales as custodians of our cultural heritage, working with both institutions to develop viable estate strategies and to protect their futures in line with their respective commercial strategies.
- National Contemporary Art Gallery for Wales - The Programme for Government commitment to the dispersed model of the gallery is progressing well. The new dispersed model, Celf, will provide increased access to the national collection and bring contemporary art closer to communities through a network of nine galleries, which are already established, across Wales. Discussions are continuing with the

project partners on the funding required and potential sources, to support both the transition from completion of the capital investment to delivery, and future operating costs. Access to more of Wales' collection will also be provided in a digitised format through the Celf ar y Cyd website which also includes wider features and resources.

Redevelopment of Theatr Clwyd and the Creation of a National Football Museum -

Both of these major Programme for Government Investment projects are on track to launch in 2025-26. Our funding of Theatr Clwyd represents a significant investment in the arts in north-east Wales and recognition of the considerable social, cultural, and economic benefits Theatr Clwyd offers right across north Wales. The development of Wrexham Museum to incorporate a new Football Museum for Wales will be a major development in the city.

Heritage

- Cadw governance review —Work is progressing well to implement the recommendations in the review which are affordable and will allow Cadw to grow and operate more effectively. An overarching steering group and four workstreams have been established to deliver the recommendations. One of those workstreams is looking at the relationship between the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales and Cadw. Engagement with staff and partners is currently being undertaken and I expect to receive the outcome of that work early in 2025.
- Invest in, and grow the audience to, Cadw's historic properties – to improve safe public access, visitor offer and audience development, grow commercial income and conserve and maintain them for future generations – with a current capital investment focus by March 2026 on Caerphilly Castle, Castell Coch, Tintern Abbey and Castell Conwy.
- Tackling heritage at risk – oversight of the legislative and policy framework for the historic environment of Wales, building on the groundbreaking Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023, and supporting the owners and managers of the tens of thousands of protected historic buildings and places throughout Wales.

Creative Wales

- Investment - Creative Wales continues to target its investments in the creative industries at the screen, music, gaming and digital sectors, and to the publishing industry through the Books Council of Wales, to build on successes and drive further growth.
- Support – Our focus remains on a number of key themes, including skills and talent development, diversity and inclusion, culture and well-being, maximising opportunities to promote the Welsh language and supporting a sustainable creative industries sector in Wales.
- Broadcasting and media – Oversight of Welsh Government broadcasting and media policy, working closely with stakeholders including the UK Government, Ofcom, TAC, Pact and public service broadcasters on broadcasting and media matters.

Sport

- Investing in sports facilities – Recognising the preventative power of sport and physical activity in relation to health and wellbeing, we will reinforce our Programme for Government to use our capital funding to invest in facilities, particularly focused in more disadvantaged areas.
- Promoting equal access to sport - We will continue to promote equal access to sport and tackle inequality in all its forms.

Conclusion

6. Since being appointed as Minister, I am excited about the positive developments we have in progress, as outlined above, and I am extremely passionate for the portfolio. During the last few months, it has been a pleasure to meet partners and stakeholders within the portfolio and I look forward to meeting others soon.
7. Looking to the future, the Welsh Government will be taking spending decisions as we develop our draft Budget for 2025-26 which will be published on 10 December. I will continue to work closely with organisations within my portfolio to support them in the context of the financial climate within which we now operate.
8. I want to be ambitious about ensuring people from more deprived communities have access to culture and to challenge our cultural institutions to ask what they are doing to achieve this. Arts, culture and creative industries broaden the mind and bring with them so many opportunities in life. Similarly, I am keen for the employment opportunities created by the huge growth in these sectors to be open to everyone.
9. Since being appointed as Minister I have regularly stressed that every person in Wales has the right to access, create, participate in, and see themselves reflected in the cultural and sporting activity of our nation. We all recognise that these have been tough times and that years of austerity damaged our cultural as well as social fabric. As we build the foundations of recovery, we must remember the benefits of delivering growth should be done inclusively by ensuring that everyone can access and benefit from our wonderful cultural and sporting scene.

Additional Information requested by the Committee

10. I am providing information below on other specific queries requested by the Committee:

Creative Wales – Digital/Gaming

11. Creative Wales and the Welsh Government are committed to helping Welsh companies in the sector to grow and trade internationally, as well as support inward investment opportunities. Creative Wales is taking forward a range of actions to support the games sector:

- The Creative Wales production funding offer was revised in 2022 to include support for the games industry. To date we have contracted one project – ‘Wales Interactive, Sker Ritual’, but are actively seeking more.
- In 2024/5 we will again fund Games Talent Wales – a programme delivered through Wrexham University that provides stipend funding for studios emerging out of University course attendees, enabling them to develop a new title for exhibition at one of the UK games conferences.
- We are currently preparing to launch a Scale Up fund for new project development, providing funding between £50,000 and £150,000. This will be launched in November 2024.
- US specialist gaming company, Rocket Science, was secured to Cardiff in 2023. The move will create highly skilled and highly paid job opportunities for games industry graduates and professionals in around the city. In 12 months, the Wales team has grown to nearly 40 strong and looking to hit the 50 Welsh jobs target much sooner than the original 5-year goal.
- Creative Wales first made contact with Rocket Science in San Francisco during GDC 2022, an annual trade mission for the Welsh games industry delivered through WG’s export programme. The subsidised trip provides delegates with the opportunity to connect with 28,000 gaming industry professionals from around the world in order to network, share ideas and make new business links.

Contribution to the Welsh Government's international priorities

12. The Programme for Government highlights the importance of Wales’ global relationships, of celebrating different cultures and embracing internationalism.

13. The draft Priorities for Culture clearly recognise the importance of international relations and the role culture should play in establishing, developing and deepening relationships with other countries – this is expressed in draft ambition 12.

14. The culture arm’s length bodies play an important role in projecting Wales to the world through:

- developing international cultural and research partnerships
- their engagement in learning exchange programmes
- making best use of digital technology, digitisation and digital events to enable world-wide engagement with Welsh culture

- engaging with Welsh diaspora.
15. A good example of this is the Welsh Women's Peace Petition which, in 1924, was taken to America by a delegation of Welsh women. In 2023, with support from Welsh Government funding, the peace petition was returned to Wales to mark the centenary of a women-led, Welsh anti-war effort. Work is underway at the National Library of Wales to catalogue and digitise the petition, which was on display at Amgueddfa Cymru earlier this year. The project shows the benefits from Wales' cultural institutions working with international partners. The Welsh Peace Memorial Declaration, accompanying the Memorial Petition, recounts the historic ties between Wales and America and appeals from the women of one proud nation to another to "hand down to the generations which come after us, the proud heritage of a warless world."
16. We have also funded several projects through the Culture, Heritage and Sport grant programmes, which focus on widening cultural interpretations to include a diverse range of cultures that shape Wales. These initiatives position Wales as an example on the global stage, showcasing it as a place that celebrates different cultures, values and welcomes all.
17. Wales Arts International (WAI) is the international arm of the Arts Council of Wales (ACW). It is a strategic partner supporting Welsh Government to deliver arts and cultural aspects of the international Strategy. WAI also leads on Arts Council of Wales' Ten-Year International Strategy, which will be live in Spring 2025. Some highlights to date include
- Wales' international profile has risen dramatically in recent years
 - The cultural programme at FIFA Men's World Cup 2022, run by WAI, reached 864 million globally
 - The "Team Cymru" approach has proven highly effective for cultural diplomacy
 - Successful values-led partnerships between artists, athletes, and youth organisations like Urdd Gobaith Cymru.

Wales-Ireland relations as they relate to the portfolio

18. The Ireland-Wales Shared Statement was launched in 2021. It includes six priority areas, one of which is Culture, Language and Heritage.
19. Examples of cultural events and exchange delivered under the shared statement include:
- Other Voices festival which started in Dingle, and now includes a Cardigan iteration is in its fifth year.
 - Ongoing partnership between our respective youth organisations the Urdd and TG Lurgan
 - Our respective Arts Councils meet regularly and share learning on common challenges.

- Partnerships continue to grow including a Welsh musical theatre production *Nia Ben Aur*, based on a Welsh poem about the Irish legend of Oisín and Tír na nÓg,
- Wales in Ireland team are working with Irish Government on the next Ireland-Wales Shared Statement. Two priority areas will be expanded, one will also include Energy and another will also include Innovation, reflecting ambition of both nations. There will be opportunity within these to collaborate on skills.
- The Ireland-Wales shared statement and joint action plan has allowed Amgueddfa Cymru to build up a good working relationship with the National Museum of Ireland to enable closer collaboration to share collections for display as appropriate at both national museums and to share expertise e.g. conservation, learning and educational programmes.
- With support from the Welsh Government, the National Library of Wales is engaging with the National Library of Ireland and the Counsel General of Ireland. They have already identified many opportunities for collaboration which can deliver against the current and future joint action plan.

Charging for Exhibitions

20. The admissions policy for a museum is a matter for its governing body. Charging models for independent and local museums in Wales vary, and range from free entry to free entry with charges for some services, events, group visits and/or exhibitions, to full admission charges to enter sites.

Amgueddfa Cymru

21. Visitors can enter all of Amgueddfa Cymru's seven sites for free. To help it become more financially sustainable, Amgueddfa Cymru is testing and trialling a range of options for further income generation. This includes reviewing its retail offer, trialling different charging models for specific exhibitions, exclusive hiring options and looking at ways to increase the donations it receives. I have met with Amgueddfa Cymru's Chair and Chief Executive and re-emphasised the importance of ensuring the national collections are accessible to all. This was reflected during my Committee appearance on 13 November.

22. Amgueddfa Cymru has trialled charging for underground tours at Big Pit National Coal Museum. Two separate trials have been completed – one over the summer and one this autumn. During my meeting with the Chair and Chief Executive last month, they informed me that feedback on the summer trial has been positive from visitors, staff and trade unions. I am also aware that Amgueddfa Cymru is testing 'pay what you can' models for some of its exhibitions with a minimum charge of £1 for 'Art of the Selfie' and £3 for 'Streich! 84-85 Strike!'.

23. Colleagues at the Museum continue to test a combination of options and it is important to allow Amgueddfa Cymru, led by its Board of Trustees, to carry out and fully evaluate these trials. I have asked to be kept informed as this work progresses.

24. Ensuring Amgueddfa Cymru's financial sustainability is very important and the right balance needs to be struck. As I mentioned during my Committee appearance on 13 November, I am mindful of the possible impact of charging on some groups and I understand concerns about ensuring access for all in a manner that does not exclude anyone from participating fully in cultural life in Wales, which should remain relevant, attractive and engaging for everyone. We will seek additional information from Amgueddfa Cymru about the impact of its charging trials on access and participation for people on low incomes, pensioners and the communities it has sought to engage via the widening engagement plan it published jointly with the Arts Council of Wales.