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Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Sgiliau a Phartneriaeth Gymdeithasol
Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref JS PO 36 2025

Delyth Jewell
Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language,
Sport, and International Relations Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN

SeneddCulture@senedd.wales

3 February 2025

Dear Delyth,

Thank you for your letter following up on issues discussed during my appearance before the committee on 28 November 2024. I have addressed each of your questions below.

Broadcasting

Over the last few months, I have been carefully considering our next steps following the Welsh Government's response to the Expert Panel on Broadcasting's report. Broadcasting is a complex area, and these next steps must be considered within the context of ongoing sector changes and a new UK Government with whom I hope positive conversations can progress. I will provide an update on next steps in due course.

The Welsh Government maintains the view that the current broadcasting and communications framework does not meet our needs. I am committed to ensuring a sustainable, vibrant and fit for purpose broadcasting and communication framework that delivers the media Wales needs.

Welsh National Opera

All Welsh Government funding for the arts is channelled through the Arts Council of Wales (ACW). Under the arm's-length funding principle, it is for ACW to determine how that funding is allocated. The Welsh Government does not, and should not, intervene in those decisions.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Since assuming my portfolio responsibilities, I have held a series of meetings regarding the WNO including with ACW, Equity and the Musicians' Union, and the WNO. I have also met with the UK Government Minister of State for Creative Industries, Arts & Tourism and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales. We collectively recognise the value of the Welsh National Opera and its work and agreed we want to see a positive long-term future for the organisation.

I recently announced that I have provided additional revenue funding in the 2024-25 financial year to support organisational resilience in the arts sector via ACW. Sixty arts organisations will be receiving support from the £3.6m Resilience Fund, with ACW awarding £755k to the Welsh National Opera. I look forward to seeing the positive impact the Resilience Fund will deliver to arts organisations across Wales, and I will monitor the WNO's situation closely.

Sport

Our term of government remit letter to Sport Wales sets out our expectation on several of our Programme for Government commitments to promote equal access to sports for everyone, to support young and talented athletes, and to support local sports clubs and community organisations.

To support Sport Wales in delivering on our ambitions, we have provided them with an allocation of £21.798m revenue and £10m capital in the draft Budget for 2025-26. The funding we have provided is targeted at reducing the impacts of deprivation and wider inequalities.

One example is the Be Active Wales Fund. It directly supports grassroots sports, offering grants from £300 to £50,000 to sports clubs and community organisations to support projects that promote equality, sustainability and innovation in sport. This helps clubs and organisations access support for equipment, coach education, training, pitch maintenance and a wide range of other interventions that directly support sport to take place. In addition to upskilling volunteers and helping with equipment costs, the fund also supports outreach aimed at people who are currently under-represented in sport and physical activity.

In relation to one of the Committee's previous recommendations around auditing sport and leisure facilities, we continue to work with local authorities, through the Chief Leisure Officers of Wales Group, to help us better understand provision of leisure facilities across Wales and understand where there may be gaps. This work has been complemented by data on the provision and use of school sports facilities, collected by Sport Wales through the School Sport Survey.

Video Games

Growing the games industry is a strategic priority for the Welsh Government. During summer 2024, we saw two success stories which highlight both the strength of the games industry we already have in Wales and which highlighted the real potential to grow the industry.

Wales Interactive launched Sker Ritual and saw it reach top three on Steam, five on Xbox and ten on PlayStation worldwide achieving over one million downloads in the process. As a

studio, Wales Interactive reported that they have had over ten million downloads to date of their games since they were founded.

Last summer I also visited Rocket Science, who continue to grow rapidly, now employing 35 staff from their office on St Mary's Street, working on technical challenges for global games titles. I was impressed by their operation and their commitment to the Welsh games industry.

We are aware that the USW report indicates a proportionally low percentage of the games industry are based in Wales compared to the wider UK. However, the same report suggests a current **8%** growth rate of the industry in Wales. Over the coming years, we want to focus on growing further as we build a sustainable, internationally focussed industry which builds on the successes I have highlighted in summer 2024.

The report also states that '*Wales based companies are in a strong position to make games with extensive public value, specifically where Welsh culture and language are concerned*' which is a statement we fully agree with and plan to build on as we grow a sustainable industry for the future in Wales.

Cultural Diplomacy

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 which is expressed in draft ambition 12.

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, and engaging with Welsh diaspora.

The Culture ALB's 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.

An example of this is the Welsh Women's Peace Petition which, in 1924, was taken to America by a delegation of Welsh women.

The petition had been preserved and exhibited by the National Museum of American History, in Washington DC. 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 of 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."

Wales-Ireland

The First Minister is leading the work on the new Wales-Ireland Shared Statement. In October 2024, the First Minister travelled to Dublin and Cork for the fourth Ministerial Forum and met

with President Higgins and the Tánaiste, Micheál Martin. A future shared statement was discussed, with the caveat that details would have to be confirmed by the incoming Irish Government due to the general election in Ireland which took place in November 2024.

The 2021-2025 Ireland Wales Shared Statement has been a success in providing a framework for both governments and organisations across both countries to forge new relationships. A renewed 2025-2030 Shared Statement will aim to support continued delivery of the key themes identified and focus action plans on delivering on new areas across portfolio areas. A future shared statement, developed in partnership and agreement with the Irish Government, will span a wide number of portfolio areas covered by different ministers. We envisage these will include greater collaboration and joint work in areas such as offshore renewable energy opportunities in the Irish Sea and promoting national languages and policy exchanges in areas of education and curriculum development.

The future draft statement will be circulated across Cabinet for consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JACK SARGEANT". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Jack Sargeant AS/MS

Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership

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