

P-06-1443 Re-instate core funding for TRAC Cymru (Music Traditions Wales Traddodiadau Cerdd Cymru) – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 09 June 2025

About Trac Cymru

Trac Cymru is Wales' national development agency for its traditional music. A registered Charity and Company Limited by Guarantee, it was formed over 20 years ago by Welsh traditional musicians to work strategically to protect our traditional music from extinction and increase the amount of participation and professional excellence in the sector, working across Wales and internationally. Since we began, our activities have generated more than 188,000 in-person attendances. Our online video resources have been accessed 280,000 times. We have run 1,800 workshops and training events, 80 separate youth and community courses creating 500 freelance jobs in over 70 locations throughout the whole of Wales. Our professional development programmes have seen us deliver 580 performances, 35 professional training courses and continued to represent the music of Wales at over 40 showcases and conferences internationally. Arts Council of Wales' (ACW) own figures show that we are the sole organisation to have repeatedly reached more than 60% of ACW's own Welsh language music audience engagement. We work bilingually and have seen a tremendous growth in the usage of Cymraeg, the Welsh language within both the amateur & professional sectors and we consult & collaborate internationally with other cultural organisations who work with threatened, minoritised & indigenous languages to share best practise.

We are the founding organisation of the European Folk Network, a constituted organisation that now has membership from the Arctic to the Azores that speaks on behalf of at least 2,000,000 Europeans active in the promotion, participation and delivery of folk & traditional music.

We co-ordinate the World Pan Indigenous Music Network, a global forum for indigenous, first nation and minority language music industries.

We are the major representative voice for Wales' unique cultural assets in the development of the UK's adoption of the UN's Intangible Cultural Heritage convention.

More recently we have established #WelshMusicAbroad in partnership with Focus Wales and Tŷ Cerdd to establish the basis for a Welsh Music Export function that creates evidence based strategies to help our emerging and under-developed music industry reach the global markets it needs in order to trade successfully.

We work with organisations such as Eisteddfod Genedlaethol, Tafwyl and others to make sure that our traditional music has centre stage in our national festivals.

We mentor individuals and organisations from the Mentrau Iaith and other societies, festivals and cultural enterprises to help them achieve their ambitions to use our traditional music in their own projects.

We advocate for recognition of our traditional music within the education system, arts in health and other areas of public life.

Alongside this we run education and youth engagement programmes such as Gwerin Gwallgo so that our young people have inspirational engagement with our traditional music, song & dance to ensure that we are not the final generation in the Land of Song to steward the lived experience of Wales for rising generations to come.

I have attached our 2023 21+1 campaign document 'This is Trac Cymru' which, along with our website www.trac.cymru, offers a more in-depth description of who we are.

All of this has been made possible by core funding of less than £100,000 a year for twenty years from ACW - and the removal of that core funding places all of the above under immediate threat.

Why Core funding matters

For us, and for any cultural organisation, core funding is the key element of any organisation. It allows us to retain a small team that develops strategy, projects, long-term plans, professional relationships which can be used to bring in the necessary funds that deliver the visible, public facing activities. Project funding will never support the development work necessary to be able to apply for Lottery and other funds, nor does it allow for the development of regional, national and international professional relationships that can then be turned into:

- international tours for Welsh musicians
- artform engagement and development
- the development of a pack to deliver GCSE music through Welsh traditional arts
- or the engagement with other indigenous and minority cultures that then gives, for example, Wales Arts International the ability to deliver WOMEX in Cardiff, or work with Welsh Government to commit to the UN International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

Only core funding allows an organisation to have the stability to retain expertise, invest in capacity building and develop long-term strategies.

Well Being of Future Generations

We are all aware that the seven pillars of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act are:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

As can be shown, our work aligns with developing prosperity, resilience, health, equality and cohesion, global responsibility through relationship building and most importantly for us and the people of Wales, the safeguarding of our cultural assets and language.

It is this capacity that is under threat from the withdrawal of core funding.

The Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice to the Chair- Petitions Committee

As I indicated earlier I had not seen the correspondence between Lesley Griffiths and Jack Sergeant : Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1443, Ein cyf/Our ref LG/05304/24, Jack Sergeant MS, Chair - Petitions committee, Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales, 18 June 2024) until you forwarded it to me on April 29th this year. We have been delivering a number of projects including international exchanges that required the attention of our whole team and have not been able to respond until now.

In the letter you attached, Ms Griffiths gives a general overview of the Investment Review process, the appeals process and post decision activity. While this is accurate it does not

address the petition's call to re-instate Trac Cymru's funding to protect Wales' unique cultural activities from the threat of extinction. Nor does it address the balancing factors that could apply, for example deciding not to fund National Theatre Wales did not mean that there would be no provision for theatre production in Wales. She states that "Under the arm's-length funding principle, the Investment Review is an issue for the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) and the Welsh Government does not interfere in its funding decisions." However it does lay out the broad operating priorities which it wishes the Council to follow, specific areas of focus to develop and requires the Council to comply with the Well-Being of Future Generations act and a number of other policies & initiatives. ACW are on the record as saying that whilst Lottery funding is governed by the legal principle of 'additionality' (i.e. not using Lottery money to deliver work that would normally be funded directly from taxation), its Lottery distribution should take due regard of the priorities of the Welsh Government.

Ms Griffiths points out that "...organisations who were unsuccessful in their application to the Investment Review 2023 continue to be eligible to apply to ACW through its published National Lottery programmes for funding for specific project activity." However all properly constituted organisations in Wales, whether or not they are in receipt of ACW multi-year funding agreements, are eligible to apply for National Lottery funding. However in turning down an application to continue a project, previously funded through 50% funding from ACW Lottery, Colwinston Trust and other grant-making bodies, and 50% earned income from performances, an un-named ACW officer wrote on 22 May 2024 that "We [the panel] felt that you would benefit from focussing on developing a more sustainable business model through your Transitions funding at this point." Which perhaps indicates that that application was viewed not solely on its merits or the capacity of Trac Cymru to successfully deliver.

A Brief Update since 2023

We are very proud to have been commissioned by ACW, along with Tŷ Cerdd and consultant Angharad Wynne, to deliver ACW's Traditional Music Review. That document now lies with ACW and is due for publication this week (11th June). while the content is embargoed it should not surprise anyone connected with our traditional music sector. We on its behalf have been advocating for a comprehensive overhaul of how ACW and the Welsh Government recognise, support and develop those traditional arts at grass roots, professional and educational levels with dedicated funding along the lines of Arts Council Ireland, Arts Council Northern Ireland and Creative Scotland and we have repeatedly pointed towards other support organisations across these islands and in continental Europe with stable and adequate funding arrangements in place to be able to deliver long-term strategies. For comparison Arts Council Ireland invest approximately 2% of their distributable

funds solely to traditional music and Creative Scotland between 4.5 and 5% of their funding. ACW's investment has not been more than 0.7%. We have had informal conversations with ACW about their proposed actions following Council's receipt of the Review and Conclusions and we are convinced that they have taken them seriously and have a measured and appropriate suite of measures which I am sure they will share with the Minister, Civil Service and other Welsh Government Stakeholders.

Since September 2023 we have undergone a long review of our own work and what we aim to achieve for the people of Wales as the national development organisation for Welsh Traditional Music. We continue to have a working relationship with ACW, with both of us acknowledging that any future investment in the traditional arts of Wales will have to include both of us working together for the benefit of the people of Wales. Their decision to invest in traditional music-making with the aim of making it easier for more people in Wales, from all of our communities and traditions to access funds is to be welcomed, especially as we have been advocating exactly for this for over 20 years. But it is one step of many to ensure that the traditional arts of Wales contribute to the 'vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language' enshrined in the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

We have continued to deliver *Cân y Cymoedd* - a three-year project funded by Heritage Fund in Rhondda Cynon Taf as well as renew our youth projects post COVID and access some ACW funds to work in schools. The loss of our core funding has meant that we have lost two members of staff and now have a full time Director supported by four part-time staff funded from project delivery. Our international work is funded by international partners and occasional small sums from British Council and project work. We are grateful to Welsh Government for the receipt of Jobs Protection funding while we develop a more sustainable business model. But this is a temporary fix not a long-term solution

Re-instate, Renew and Re-frame

We and the sector - according to the responses to the Traditional Music Review - remain convinced that there can be no strategic development within the world of traditional music without a strategic body that represents, advocates and delivers traditional music. There remain larger questions about how Wales chooses to support and protect its unique, indigenous cultural assets. In 2005 we were repeatedly told that there was no possible ability for folk singers singing in Cymraeg to perform in Europe or the US. Now we have our musicians appearing across the globe.

Who else in Wales can do this? Who else has nurtured professional and personal relationships within Wales, the UK and globally to be able to offer impartial advice on how to tour the US, which festivals in northern Italy are looking for bands from Wales and how to bring University research to the value and size of the European folk sector? Without Trac Cymru's gentle presence at Eisteddfod Genedlaethol since 2003 there would be no Tŷ Gwerin as the most popular stage at that festival. Without Trac Cymru's projects Gwerin Gwallgo and 10 Mewn Bws, the three artists showcasing at 2023's Showcase Scotland, Cerys Hafan, Gwilym Bowen Rhys and VRî would not have their careers. Without Trac Cymru working with Tŷ Cerdd and Focus Wales a whole generation of emerging professional musicians would not have the careers they enjoy today. Who other than Trac Cymru built the European Folk Network to be a voice for Wales leading that continent-wide forum. To whom can young musicians, or development officer in the Mentrau Iaith turn to for advice, mentoring and practical help other than Trac Cymru. Who else in Wales has a resource section online that shows over 280,000 people how to play our tunes and sing our songs? Who else kick started 11 music careers in the pandemic and got a folk band of young Welsh musicians a gig for £10,000? Which other organisation has changed the way we as a nation and the rest of the world values our music and can articulate that value to grassroots and government?

While we disagree with the decision and we argued our case against it at the time, we see little point in revisiting the detail of it or to rehearse those arguments. That decision was made 2 years ago. What concerns the traditional music sector that we represent is what Wales does now and next.

We welcome ACW's review and the overwhelming support for Trac Cymru and our activity within the responses. ACW have decided to shift the direction of their support to directly engage with traditional music and to make accessing funds easier. However, all strategies have to be the responsibility of a small team to deliver them and there is no such organisation in Wales to take on this work other than Trac Cymru.

At some point Wales will have to invest in a traditional music development organisation, as does every other nation we know of to work with our traditional arts. We know how long it takes to build that body of expertise and living relationships, both of which we have now and which is under threat due to the loss of our core investment. What we can say with certainty is that Trac Cymru is the only organisation on this planet whose constitution places the traditional music, dance and song of Wales at its core. We are the only organisation in the world that works strategically with our traditions for economic, social and cultural benefit and who has sustained a small team of dedicated staff and Trustees to that end.

We would welcome the opportunity to continue to work with the Senedd and ACW's strategic investment to develop added value activities both within and outwith Welsh public life, with independently funded projects that continue to reach and engage with all the people of Wales of all traditions and cultures. We look forward to being able to discuss this further.

Yn gywir